

Conference report

LILAC 2025: Reassurances and new insights

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In my everyday work life, I work as a teaching librarian at one of the bigger university libraries in Denmark. Based in Copenhagen at the Aarhus University campus I mainly teach information literacy (IL) to students studying educational science. The 2025 LILAC was my third LILAC attendance in a row.

For previous editions of the conference, I went to Cambridge and Leeds, and always came back upbeat, inspired and hopeful. Jokingly I referred to the conference as ‘my Roskilde Festival’ (a Danish equivalent to the Glastonbury Festival) when speaking to colleagues. The thing about attending music festivals is that you often return stimulated, hopeful and a bit tired. Sort of like my experience of attending LILAC.

In the last couple of years, I had come away motivated to try new things in my own teaching practice. Whether it was drawing cartoons to talk about IL (Trowell, 2023), using cake as a metaphor for talking about ethics and AI (Bali, 2024) or bringing the artist studio into the library (Wood & Appleton, 2024) to make library fanzines.

In this conference report, I will zoom in on two central takeaways from LILAC 2025 – how the conference continues to bring attendees inspiration and valuable insights, while also serving as a benchmark and reassurance of own practices for those attending.

In line with the presentation by Jess Haigh, from her and Eva Garcia Grau's research on LILAC and the attendee experiences; *LILAC Stories: exploring the long-term impact of the LILAC conference on the information literacy community*, (Haigh, 2025) a central and very valuable outcome of attending a LILAC conference is how attendees return to their practice and institution inspired or reassured by new experiences and talks. Reassured that the work they are currently doing is in line with what other libraries are engaging with in terms of their IL outlook.

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Returning to work both encouraged and comforted resonates with my own experiences. However, some of the inspiration needed to be 'translated' into my own local context. In a Danish context, there is both the advantage and the disadvantage of being a smaller population. From a library standpoint, it means that you often know what library professionals at other institutions are doing. In addition, new ideas tend to lean on previous practices. We attend the same webinars, conferences and workshops, and inspire each other. However, there comes a time when you need new input and insight to progress and develop, and this is where attending LILAC really makes a difference.

Reassurance - finding validation in mirroring others

In Denmark (and I suspect most parts of the world) artificial intelligence (AI), and how to navigate it in an educational setting, is a topic that takes up a lot of space. On the Tuesday of the conference, Oduronke Eyitayo, spoke about navigating it in the classroom in her session, *Enhancing AI literacy and responsible use: innovative approaches for the classroom* (Eyitayo, 2025) The session focused on a practical approach to using AI, not discouraging the use, but rather thinking about it as a "tool for thinking".

From a Danish outlook, when talking about AI literacy (and the use of, specifically Generative AI), it usually ends up dividing the classroom into sections of "doomsters" or "Tech boosters" (Jørnø et al., 2022). People either being for or against the use of new technology in classrooms and in some instances, more broadly, higher education. I was reminded of Maha Bali's (Bali, 2024) stance at last years' conference, where she adopted a pragmatic stance on AI, neither for nor against. This session was perhaps no different in that aspect, in dividing opinions on AI, but I was encouraged by Oduronke Eyitayo pragmatic statement that "AI starts and ends with humans", which resonates with the values I try and pass and pass on to students in my local teaching practice. The move from information and resource sharing to action and keeping it 'grassroots' were some of the points made in the session *Learning from and with each other: developing and sustaining a community of practice for library instructors* (Power & Harper, 2025). Working at Aarhus University, one of the three larger University Libraries in Denmark, also counting Copenhagen and Roskilde University Library, I am a part of the Royal Danish Library.

Some of the benefits of this construction is a shared interlibrary loan system and organisationally it means, there is a degree of formal and informal resource and knowledge sharing in terms of teaching practices in IL. In Power and Harper's session, they applied the theoretical framework of "communities of practice" (CoP) as a theoretical scaffolding for the work they are doing. This resonates with my own approach to teaching with colleagues from one of the previously mentioned university libraries. Not the same as the work presented in this session, but a translation, of sorts. Especially approaching CoP with an emphasis on reflective teaching practices and cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary connections is something I have adopted as a framework in my own practice.

New insights – impressions from the information literacy frontier

Working with IL in the capital of 'hygge', you might think that politics from a different corner of the world does not and will not affect your working life.

Turns out this might not be the case much longer, because Joel Burkholder had a warning for us. In his session *Defending information literacy: a dialogue for action and advocacy in a*

politicized landscape (Burkholder, 2025), Joel expertly (and with the help of US linguist and philosopher George Lakoff) sketched out the current situation at libraries in the US. Specifically concerning language used in connection with children's literature in school libraries and the access to information and research. Taking a cue from Lakoff's "Strict Father Morality" theory (Lakoff, 1996), Joel made the point that IL "could be next" in an information and media landscape where "fear and simplicity beat nuance". At the time of writing (May, 2025) one of the major US resources that our students use, here in Copenhagen, has seen their budget cut in half. Maybe we should think about defending IL, locally and globally.

On a new day, and what almost felt like a new brief from the US IL landscape, Tracey Overbey and Amanda Folk presented their take on the question of race within libraries and IL. The session they presented encouraged me to not shy away from thinking about how we, as library professionals, think about what we represent as institutions and how this resonates with the demographic of the students we teach. In *Decentering whiteness in information literacy through critical theories and methods* (Overbey and Folk, 2025). Overbey and Folk presented the work they are currently doing. A massive research task, focusing on race and libraries and I was saddened to hear that, under the current administration in the US, there is a major concern that access to important data will be difficult. Some of the key take-aways were the "discourse of racelessness in libraries", the lack of diversity within the librarian community (in the US, but safe to say the same is the case in Denmark). Overbey and Folk also talked on the lack of race and a social justice within the ACRL Framework, a framework I often use as a reference point, when planning my own IL teaching.

On day three another LILAC was over. Another LILAC of reassurance in own teaching practices as well as new insights and inspiration. Another LILAC of helpful and kind organisers. Another LILAC of dancing to ABBA at the Conference Dinner. Another LILAC of spending time with colleagues and sharing knowledge and jokes. Moreover, unlike at outdoor music festivals, no sunburn or muddy wellies.

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Declarations

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AI-generated content

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