

Conference Report

LILAC 2026: Thoughts and reflections about my first conference experience

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Tom Cross

Assistant Librarian, Hobson Library, Joint Services Command and Staff College Defence Academy of the UK. Email: Thomas.Cross@da.mod.uk.

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As my first conference it was great to be among so many other librarians all at various stages of their careers, from the New Professionals table through to meeting experienced professionals in the breaks between the sessions. I came away from the conference with a much greater knowledge of Library and Information Science (LIS) and Information Literacy (IL) more widely, and how it fits into my own work at the defence academy library.

I was keen to explore and challenge my own views on IL, its place in being a librarian and how it relates back to my day-to-day working life, in particular the teaching aspects of IL ranging from *Pedagogical Approaches in Medical Librarianship* (Watson, 2026) to *Reflections from the Next Generation of IL Educators* (McKinney, Webber and Holdridge, 2026), showcasing the next generation of librarians understanding of IL. Taking advantage of the chance to network and learning about curriculum mapping from an academic librarian gave me a great overview of how my library can support students in their course materials and built my awareness of book purchase requests which are concurrent with their weekly subject content. This will be advantageous for the forthcoming academic year in ensuring the physical and digital stock of the library is beneficial to the modules being taught. A follow-up from gaining this new perspective of the intrinsic links between library and academics is promoting the building of professional relationships. This helps librarians and academics benefit from clear pedagogical clarity in building learning objectives and content that the librarian can then use to develop learning resources which are accessible. This can be used to develop a model in line with their library policy, mine being a *digital first* model.

Being a part of my library's learning and teaching team, I was particularly interested in developing my understanding of *Threshold Concepts* and investigating the teaching of Artificial

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Intelligence (AI) in an IL framework. There was a particular focus on creating a balance between ensuring the ethical use of AI and promoting independent research to ensure the researcher develops critical skills independently. Further to this I was also keen to investigate how gamification can be used to enhance subject understanding.

Having previously worked in the NHS as a librarian, I was particularly interested in the lecture on *Pedagogical Approaches in Medical Librarianship: Exploring Non-Lecture-Based Methods for Teaching Information Literacy* (Watson, 2026). This session outlined a range of pedagogical approaches used in medical librarianship and moved away from lecture-based teaching to a more hands-on approach. This seemed like a novel way to approach what is often a complicated and difficult subject area, especially for those who don't interact with the library services regularly and have engaged in hands-on simulation-based learning. I have observed teaching sessions in the past guilty of passive teaching, moving through PowerPoint slides letting the words do the teaching as opposed to taking an active teacher approach, where the librarian would direct the lesson where they felt it needed to go to reflect the roles of the attendees, noting differences between teaching clinical and professional staff. The notion of hands on, active learning approaches is appealing, but the need for librarians to have the courage to experiment with learning is not always easy in a high-intensive environment with multiple areas pulling on our resources and time. To achieve a move away from lecture-based learning the librarian must assess the pedagogical learning differences between clinical and professional services. The idea of co-teaching, especially being a newly qualified professional in this role, was of particular interest, making use of more experienced colleagues who would be able to assist in not only developing active-based teaching, but showcasing alternatives in course design and delivery, reinforcing the importance of professional relationships in communication and in promoting the library.

As you can probably tell by now, most of my interest in this event was of the teaching aspects of IL. But I am drawn to a key fundamental question in our profession - am I a teacher who subsidises as a librarian or a librarian with teaching responsibilities? For me I am in the latter and will remain so for the foreseeable future; we are teachers not with a capital T, but a lowercase t. It was this that led me to book onto the *Empowering Librarians Who Teach: Using Transformative Learning Theory to Evaluate a Teaching Professional Development Program* (Hammons and Folk, 2026). Being aware of the PGCAP/PGCHE qualification I was interested to see how American institutions manage librarian training with teaching qualifications due to no universally recognised qualification being available and more in line with an institution-by-institution mindset on teaching, mainly provided by internal instructional sessions. This is similar to my interactions within the NHS Library Service, no PGCAP or formalised external qualification, rather the Trust providing the instruction. The Ohio State library staff engaged in a self-reflective discussion as a way of understanding their teaching experience before beginning the Teaching Information Literacy Certificate. This has given me inspiration to consider my own knowledge of what I think teaching is in the pedagogical sense, but also my knowledge and understanding of IL prior to attending this conference. With the knowledge acquired from attending LILAC I was then able to return to my role better informed on the need to fit the session to your audience and ensure follow-up support and development is retained across the time students spent on their course. This is not always easy, especially in a distance learning environment.

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