

Forum for Interlending 2019 Conference, 24 – 25 June 2019 in Belfast.

I was fortunate to receive SWRLS funding to attend the 2019 Forum for Interlending in Belfast, on the theme of “Learning and Evolving Technologies”. The conference took place in the impressive surroundings of the Belfast Hilton, on the banks of the River Lagan.

About me.

My name is Stephen Rankin and I work for Library Services at the University of the West of England in Bristol. I work as a Library Information Administrator within in our collections team. My role is in the Document Delivery and Digitisation Service, so this covers inter-library loans and alternative formats for students, as well as digitisation requests from academic staff, which can then be added to our reading list software via Talis.

The conference.

I arrived in Belfast on the Sunday afternoon, which gave me a chance to explore the city a bit. I'd been to Belfast before, but not in a long time, so it was good to acquaint myself. The hotel was very pleasant and well-placed for exploring the city.

Monday 24 June.

After a rather impressive breakfast, we met for refreshments before the conference started. Fortunately there were various people I knew from previous events, so I wasn't short of people to talk to!

The first talk of the day was **Careers of the Future, jobs of tomorrow, by Barbara Band**. Barbara's background advice support and training to libraries in educational settings. Barbara discussed some of the challenges facing educational libraries, and libraries in general. It is not a statutory requirement for schools to have a library so, in a time of austerity that might be a tempting area for some schools to cut in order to maintain services that are a requirement. The different learning requirements for “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” were discussed, and the fact that, whilst those who have grown up with the internet may be very proficient online, they are often lacking in IT skills that were once thought of as basic, such as word processing and spreadsheets.

Public libraries in particular have struggled to combat the increasingly prevalent view that libraries are not relevant. This, combined with cuts to services and the fact that volunteers are often relied upon to run services, presents yet more challenges. Sometimes when libraries have spent money on technology, it has been technology that people aren't necessarily interested in, or that is quickly out-of-date.

After a coffee break, **Matthew Lambert from the British Library gave a talk about copyright and the supply of e-chapters and scans of articles**. Firstly, Matthew gave an overview of the British Library supply service; nowadays 80% of all document supply requests are provided electronically. In addition to copies requested for individuals, the British Library can also supply copyright-cleared articles for use, for example, on reading lists; this is a service used by UWE Bristol, currently via EHESS but in the future we hope to source direct from Talis. This covers materials not owned by an institution but, in addition, a service is offered to supply scans of materials owned by institutions too (in other words the scanning is outsourced). The British Library also offers a service for the supply of judicial and parliamentary proceedings.

The British Library runs a service to provide accessible copies for users with disabilities. Prior to 2014 this meant someone with a visual impairment but since 2014 this has included anyone with a

physical or mental disability. However, material held only by virtue of the legal deposit restriction cannot be used for the supply of these materials. The implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty means that there is no longer a requirement to look for commercially available copies as a priority. This service is of interest to me as, as well as working with inter-library loans, I also work with Alternative Formats and digitisations.

In terms of lending, materials deposited purely by deposit restriction are unavailable for loan. Ideally materials would be provided the end user electronically, though this is not possible for whole books. Additionally, materials held electronically via deposit restriction can only be viewed in the reading rooms, and are not available for document supply.

After lunch **we visited Belfast Central Library** which was a very enjoyable and informative visit. We were shown around the library by two collections librarians, Darren and Janet, who have both worked at the library for some time. The publicly accessible part of the library consists of three floors at the front of the building, but there is a vast space behind over six floors, housing material than can be requested for viewing (and sometimes for loan).

Work to build the library was started in 1884 and the library was officially opened in 1888 by Earl Spencer, whose next act was to officially declare Belfast as a city of behalf of Queen Victoria; so the library was opened before Belfast was declared a city.

Being on the northern fringe of the city centre, in what is now known as the Cathedral Quarter, the library is very close to the sectarian flashpoints of the Falls Road and Shankill Road and, as such, was often affected during the Troubles. It's estimated that every single pane of glass in the windows has been replaced at least thirteen times through acts of violence (though the number seems to vary a bit!). As one might expect, the library contains a lot of material relating to the Northern Irish Troubles, from every sector of the community, some of it controversial in nature.

The library also owns a collection of very rare materials, including a 14th century book worth about £14,000. We were informed these materials are not available for inter-library loan!

The final talk of the day, by **Debbie Hicks was on Reading Well and Reading Friends**. Debbie is a great believer in the power of reading to tackle life challenges. The Reading Agency, which promotes this scheme, is funded by Arts Council England. Debbie described the scheme as “an evidence-based health intervention providing escape, and giving permission to talk to others”.

Libraries are key to success, for example through “books on prescription” (which we have promoted at UWE) which can be used to target those who wish to read around areas such as anxiety and depression, amongst other topics. Debbie is keen to build partnerships with academic libraries as well as public libraries.

There are various Reading Well schemes, for example for young people, those with long-term conditions, mental health conditions, and for families to engage with reading with their children. The Reading Friends scheme aims to befriend isolated older people, to combat loneliness, which can be so detrimental to health.

The Reading Agency website can be found here <https://readingagency.org.uk/>

Tuesday 25 June

At **The AGM** at the beginning of the second day it was announced that next year's conference would be in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The fact that there were fewer delegates this year than last was discussed, meaning that some rooms had to be paid for that were not used in the end. Various options to combat this were put forward, such as having an earlier closing date for applications (and therefore being able to still cancel unneeded rooms).

The first talk of the day was by Kerr Gardiner on **Learner Analytics**. This involves the use of data such as library use, attendance, student record and use of the virtual learning environment to achieve better student retention and achievement. Whilst universities currently do have data, it is often "in silos" based on department, student cohort, service and location. The aim of Learner Analytics is to draw this information together.

Learner Analytics can also be used to bring data together, for example those using different names in different contexts, or those with multiple student records (both of those issues can be a big problem at UWE). Kerr discussed how, even though libraries are at the centre of student experience, libraries are not always part of the conversation about data gathering and use.

Whilst we can use data to improve user experience, there is always the danger that, in doing so, we could end up changing student behaviour (though this can be an opportunity too). It's important that Learner Analytics are not relied on as the sole criteria in the student experience; it should be used to make decisions without human intervention.

Kerr finished by talking about how universities will need to change to cope with digital expansion. The University of Oxford has the expectation that their Wi-Fi should be able to deal with internet access for at least three devices per person without loss of functionality. Also, with the expanding digital landscape and increasing provision by open-access, will the need for inter-library loans and libraries themselves disappear?

Next to speak was Ian Ibbotson on **Project Re: Share**, which "aims to create a community-owned resource sharing platform for libraries", to make items more discoverable via library search interfaces. Ways are being explored to make materials available at other libraries more discoverable, thus encouraging a user-centred inter-library loan experience.

The aim is also to provide more analysis of inter-library loan usage. It would be possible to create different criteria for different scenarios, such as "if a book is requested three times, you should consider buying it for stock".

Alex McIlroy was next to speak, on **delivering on the CLA Licence for Health and Social Care Bodies, Northern Ireland (HSCNI)**. HSCNI has an arrangement with the CLA for the supply of 1000 copyright cleared articles per year for those working for HSCNI. What this means is that staff within HSCNI can share the documents with colleagues (only within Northern Ireland), and that the Queens Belfast Medical Library can keep a copy of these articles so that they can re-supplied in the future if necessary. However, this material cannot be shared on an intranet/internet site available to all staff; they must be requested on a case-by-case basis. One chapter or 5% of a book can requested, or up to 2 articles from a journal (so this differs from, say, the HE licence). This arrangement has been quite successful, but there concerns that not all of the 1000 available requests have been made.

After lunch the next talk, by Lucia Meijuero Barros, was on the **service review of interlending at Manchester Metropolitan University**. The inter-library loan service is based in the customer service team at Manchester Metropolitan. Previously, those requesting inter-library loans had been using paper forms for the requests. There had also been a charge for inter-library loans, but this was removed in April 2017. The combination of moving the requests online and abolishing the charge resulted in the number of requests nearly trebling. Students can check the progress of their request in their online library account.

The largest number of requests are from History and Economics students, with History being by far the largest. There are problems with students not checking holdings properly before making requests (a problem with which I am well-acquainted!). The introduction of a fee for uncollected loans has been discussed but not implemented.

In addition to the inter-library loan service, the library also operates a scheme called “Books buy you”, whereby students may request up to 3 books a year for purchase for library stock. Electronic supply is preferred.

Jo Cox presented a **British Library update**. A new finance system has been introduced, which has presented a few teething problems. If people are having problems with invoicing etc. they should contact British Library Customer Services. The new claims form involves a lot of scrolling, so ways to improve this are being explored.

The new accessible copies pilot is now running, with six volunteer institutions taking part initially. Chapters, articles or entire books can be changed to an accessible format. The pricing is set to be £22 for the first 50 pages, then £0.02 per subsequent page.

The British Library will be building new storage space at their Boston Spa site.

After this it was time to say farewell to colleagues and head back to the airport, but not before a quick pint with Jo in a nearby pub! I would like to thank SWRLS for funding my place at this conference, and feel I have gained a great deal from my attendance.