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Conference Corner

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative.* New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

LILAC goes to London

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Countries involved in LILAC 2011

I was tasked with writing an account of the Librarian's Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) 2011 as a condition of winning the Student Award to this truly international conference. It's becoming increasingly apparent to me, as I am inducted into the inner mysteries of librarianship, that the bookdust-and-cardigans image of librarians does not bear any relation with their professional remit which involves keeping the information tidy, getting it out there, and making sure people use it effectively.

Matt Harvey

I could tell that LILAC took information literacy (IL) seriously from their dissemination of information about the event: a simple and intuitive conference website[1] an online session-booking experience that actually worked; and a stream of handy emails explaining what my student award consisted of, how to get it, and what to do with it. A second conference website, specifically for social networking, was also set up[2] to facilitate discussion between delegates and speakers before the conference even started, arranging travel and accommodation with each other. Once I actually arrived at the conference, life was made just as easy: the LILAC team glided about, t-shirted and smiling: greeting delegates; answering every single query; and most importantly, showing the way to the buffet. This was information literacy in action.

The first keynote speaker, Professor David Nicholas, described the move away from researching in the library to researching online, anywhere in the world, at all times of day, and completely unsupported. Information professionals need to re-embed themselves in peoples' research behaviour, and this means getting there first. The other keynote speakers broadened my awareness of what information literacy can mean outside of my familiar context of online research and university or public libraries. Nikki Heath, school librarian and human dynamo, reported that reading in schools can now mean reading web content and text messages: educators have to accept that literacy, and information literacy, is now about more than just books. Jesus Lau gave an insight into information literacy sans frontières, with the use of information literacy indicators as signifiers of cultural development for organisations such as UNESCO. Worldwide, as at home, the challenge is to find ways of comparing literacy across the board, taking into account cultural and national differences.

Social networking, and the web 2.0 phenomenon in general, turned out to be a major theme at LILAC 2011 and tweeting was actively encouraged, with many speakers adding their Twitter names to their slides, and even showing a rolling feed of tweets with the conference hashtag, #lilac11[3]. A conference account, @lilac_2011, provided frequent news and comment throughout the week. Twitter was being used to effectively minute the conference, allowing me to track what was happening in other rooms while attending parallel sessions. I myself used Twitter to minute the

[1] http://lilacconference.com/WP/ (last accessed 23/05/11)
[2] http://lilac.spruz.com/ (last accessed 23/05/11)
[3] An archive of tweets can be found at http://twapperkeeper.com/hashtag/lilac11 (last accessed 23/05/11)

sessions I was attending, with a view to turning my tweets (and those of the other delegates) into blog posts. Conversations were taking place throughout the room, and across the whole venue, before, during and after presentations. Some speakers replied to tweets after their presentation, allowing it to continue beyond the confines of a brief Q&A. The spruz site for LILAC came in handy once again as a place to comment and exchange opinions, and post more substantial blog entries relevant to the conference[4].

Lunch at the British Library

Of course, it wasn't all hard work (if listening to enthusiastic and informed people talking about interesting stuff can be called work). There was also food, and lots of it. The BL Conference Centre is a relatively small building, but it uses its space cleverly, and served as a neat and high-tech environment for the delegates to bustle in. The food was unbelievably good, with amazing salads and pastries and a large choice of cool drinks – much appreciated as London was in the middle of a heatwave.

For the final day of the conference, we relocated to the London School of Economics (LSE), and enjoyed another imaginative buffet on the 12th floor terrace, overlooking a park and with a view of St. Paul's. The grand conference dinner and awards were held at Gibson Hall, with its gilt and marble dining hall. Awards were distributed, with my colleague Sonja Haerkoenen being named runner-up for the Information Literacy Practitioner of the Year 2011.

Gibson Hall

In conclusion: LILAC, London, literacy, libraries and 'lectronics: a highlight of this library year and a fantastic opportunity to meet colleagues involved in information literacy education. I'm definitely going back next year.

[4] See the entry I posted at http://lilac.spruz.com/profile/Matt-Harvey/ (last accessed 23/05/11)