Conference update

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Does lilac tone you up or calm you down? A selective synopsis of a report for Hungarian library and information professionals

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The title of my conference report – written for the readers of a journal aimed at a wide range of professionals, working in varied libraries – is a play on words, because looking at the abbreviation of the Librarians’ Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) you may think about the colour. The title is also based on my experience that you can listen at any conference both to excellent and less relevant presentations, so delegates can experience something that cheers them up or calms them down, depending on how they feel about the given presentation.

The first keynote at LILAC 2018 was delivered by Barbara Band, who touched upon reasons to acquire and teach information literacy skills in the age of information overload, underlining that information literacy plays a decisive role both in learning and in workplace settings, even though it has acquired less weight in schools. On the other hand, she reminded us of the empowerment potential of information literacy.

In the second keynote, Ola Pilerot highlighted that the phrase information literacy often serves as a label for a field of activities relating to professional practice, research or policy-making. On an empirical level, however, it is used to denote activities related to information seeking and information use. While this level is more distinctive than the first one, it is hazardous in the sense that it may take a normative dimension that results in prescribing something that should be rather described. On the third level, information literacy can be used as a theoretical concept.

David White’s keynote addressed the ways of mitigating the symptoms of disinformation by looking around to see if someone else has already fact-checked the claim or provided a synthesis of research. He underlined that it is also useful to go to the source of the claim to understand the trustworthiness of the information. He added also that we can use what other people said about the source (publication, author, etc.).

At the conference, there were several papers and workshops that focused on education. The masterclass by Sam Aston and Anna Theis addressed critical reading. When going through the steps of critical reading, for me it was challenging to understand the text, because I am a non-native speaker of English. At the same time, I had the impression that I was composing an abstract when comprehending the message, probably because writing abstracts it is one of my frequent professional occupations. The presenters also stressed the importance of summarising information.

The ‘Playing the Publishing Trap’ game, developed by Chris Morrison and Jane Secker, was both instructive and enjoyable for me and for most participants. Learning about a way of developing teaching philosophy (from Sheila Corrall and Amanda Folk) made me think about how I work as a teaching staff member. Additionally, there were presentations related to various issues around information literacy and on the last day of the conference, we became acquainted with its brand-new Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP) definition.

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