

A personal account of a first-time delegate at the Health Libraries Group Conference held in Glasgow

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Abstract

The theme of this year's Health Libraries Group conference was *Health Libraries under the microscope: perfecting your formula*. The conference had sessions split into four categories: anatomy of evidence-based practice; biology of library services; chemistry of collaboration and networking; and physics of information technology use.

As a first-time delegate to any type of conference I was apprehensive and nervous as I did not know what to expect. The friendly reception and seeing a few familiar faces soon helped me. The networking with people from so many services was really beneficial.

I attended sessions covering all four categories and have been able to bring back many ideas that I would like to explore further

in my own library service and personally for my own development. Highlights for me included the use of a live customer enquiry service, learning about the Information Standard, the changing role of the information professional, writing for publication and studying for management qualifications

Reflections

The first keynote speaker was Gerald McLaughlin, (Chief Executive, NHS Health Scotland) who presented on 'Getting Knowledge into Action for A Fairer Healthier Scotland'. Knowledge into Action is an NHS Scotland national strategic framework that aims to define a national system for knowledge management and utilisation in order to help practitioners to apply knowledge to frontline practice and embed use of knowledge in healthcare improvement activities whilst supporting practitioners and managers to translate knowledge into better health outcomes, i.e. safe, effective, person-centred, efficient care (NHS Education for Scotland, 2012).

This presentation was very interesting and a great way to kick-start the day. It also gave me an idea of the future role of librarians within knowledge management and how using our skills and knowledge can help achieve the aims and objectives of the Knowledge into Action strategic framework.

A number of parallel sessions followed, and I attended three presentations under the theme the 'biology of library services'.

The first was 'Dissecting the heart of users' needs: planning for the future needs of a merged library service', the second 'Three into one will go: how to merge three libraries from different sectors and stay sane' and finally 'Customer service triage: the changing role of the Library Assistant in NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde'

These three presentations were very relevant for me as in my day to day job I lead the Customer Care Team and was interested in learning from others experiences. I was extremely interested in the final presentation as implementing a live customer enquiry service is something that I would like to investigate using in the future. As a result of listening to this presentation I am will be investigating the Electronic Live Library Assistance (ELLA) software further. Another interesting point from this presentation was the use of a task board. The task board is used when a library assistant requires help with their workload, they post the task on the task board and another available library assistant takes over responsibility for this task. This is something again I would like to investigate for use in my organisation as we have three library sites with four library assistants, as some tasks are not site specific these can be posted on a task board for another library assistant to pick up.

After lunch I attended some more parallel sessions, the theme being 'Chemistry of collaboration & networking' with three presentations consisting of 'The perfect formula: collaborating with multi-disciplinary teams to develop an Information Service for Long Term Conditions', 'Patient information leaflets and the

Information Standard' and 'Self health isotopes – more than one solution to a collaborative project'

I found the presentation on patient information leaflets very interesting as I was unaware there was an information standard that should be adhered to when compiling a leaflet. The Information Standard is a certification scheme for all organisations producing evidence-based health and social care information for the public. It helps the public and patients quickly identify reliable sources of quality, evidence-based information through the use of an easily recognised quality mark. To achieve the Standard, an organisation has to demonstrate that the consumer/patient information that it produces is clear, accurate, impartial, balanced, evidence-based, accessible and up to date. Organisations that adopt the Information Standard are demonstrating their commitment to trustworthy health and social care information as well as providing assurances of the quality of their internal processes (The Information Standard, 2012).

Another session straight after looked at 'Chemistry of collaboration and networking' – it was entitled 'Countdown to innovation: 90 days to collaborative solutions'. This presentation looked at a 90 day cycle broken down into 3 sections, the first 30 days are used to plan the project, search for the literature and enrol experts. The second 30 days are used to focus and test the theory and the final 30 days are used to summarise and disseminate (Wilson, 2012). The speaker Suzanne Wilson (Healthcare Improvement Scotland) was very

knowledgeable and keen to emphasise that the cycle worked if applied in full and used for appropriate topics.

The evening entertainment was memorable; we had a civic reception arranged by the Lord Provost's Office. We had an opening address from the Lord Provost himself before the meal. The remainder of the evening's entertainment came from a magician, comedian and the céilidh. I did not partake in the dancing but did appreciate the music and the ambience of the venue the Old Fruitmarket as well as the delicious food and wine all sponsored by Springer.

'The Genetics of the Librarian: the Changing Role of the Information Professional' was keynote address that got the second day off to a flying start. The speaker, Professor Peter Reid (Head of Department of Information Management, Robert Gordon University & President of CILIP in Scotland) spoke about how in these tough times we need to be advocates for our profession and that we need to raise our profiles within our organisations by emphasising our skills and abilities. He also discussed the need to ensure there were professional development opportunities for all. I was very interested in this speech as I am passionate about talent management and the need for experience and vocational skills to be recognised as well as professional qualifications.

The Bishop and LeFanu Memorial Lecture came next and was on the topic of 'Doping in sport: the evidence for performance enhancement at the Olympics' and was provided by Dr Yannis

Pitsiladis (Reader, Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences, University of Glasgow & Prohibited List Expert Group, World Anti-Doping Agency). This lecture was good as we were given the opportunity to get interactive and vote on different scenarios as to whether we thought a certain substance should be put on the banned list of substances. Dr Pitsiladis was engaging and knowledgeable and with the interactive section of the presentation it was very enjoyable.

Following the lectures I attended another parallel session themed: 'Anatomy of evidence-based practice' entitled 'Challenges When Writing for Publication' which was a workshop organised by the Health Information & Libraries Journal (HILJ), the official journal of the Health Libraries Group. I attended this session as I have never written for publication before but needed to do so in the future. We were tasked with thinking about a story we wanted to write about, give it a title and told to write for a set amount of time without stopping. After our set amount of time we swapped stories with someone else and critiqued each other's work. Maria Grant was very knowledgeable and as the current editor of HILJ provided us with great hints, tips and ideas as to how to get our writing accepted for publication.

The final parallel session I attended was on the theme 'Biology of Library Services'; 'how competent a manager are you? Using SVQs to promote management competency in Library Site Managers & Assistant Librarians'. The speakers - Charlotte Boulnois (Glasgow Royal Infirmary) and Steven Watson

(Inverclyde Royal Hospital) both had personal experience and were very knowledgeable and able to provide an in depth analysis of the practicalities of undertaking the qualification. The presentation highlighted that some librarians have degrees and professional library qualifications but no recognition of management skills. Therefore undertaking the SVQ is was a way in which to prove competency in this area. I found the presentation interesting and informative.

Final thoughts

I would like to thank Libraries for Nursing for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference by generously providing a bursary for the conference fee, without which I would not have been able to attend. The conference was extremely informative and an excellent opportunity to find out about initiatives going on in other areas. As someone who works in England it was very enlightening to hear about NHS Scotland and the way in which knowledge management is at the heart of everything. I found the conference a useful experience, my highlight was meeting and networking with other library and knowledge management staff and being able share experiences and good practice. I now feel more confidence in meeting new people and came away with a head full of ideas and a heart full of pride for our profession.

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