M25 CONFERENCE 2025 – SHAPING THE FUTURE

Dr. Janice Fernandes

As part of your award, we will look forward to receiving your Conference report (up to a 1,000 words) after you attended, outlining what you did at conference, how it has/will benefit your work and any other observations from the day.

I work as an Academic Support Manager at UWL. I am also the Subject Librarian for the London College of Music and the School of Medicine and Biosciences.

The SCONUL report on CPD for libraries (2024) describes how “CPD can shape confident, reflective leaders who can respond to complexity and change”. My knowledge and decision-making are strongly embedded in Continuous Professional Development and to me, professional development means learning and practicing, then relearning new skills and techniques. I am truly grateful to my line manager Davina Omar who recognises and supports these initiatives.

This year the M25 Annual Conference 2025 was held on 24th June at the Old Royal Naval College campus, University of Greenwich. The theme of the conference was “Shaping our Future” provoked me to realise the responsibility and direction we should provide for librarians entering the profession.

With my 35 years in librarianship and inspired by Leo Appleton’s article [Library conferences:Why bother?](https://www.uksg.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/Editorial408.pdf) I applied for and was truly delighted to be offered a bursary place at the M25 conference. Along with that I was co-presenting at the Lightning Talks with another colleague. The icing on the cake was the beautiful location of Greenwich, with more than 100 delegates attending and the opportunity to network with promises of collaborations.

My colleague Mary Blomley and I arrived early to walk through the park and appreciate the grandeur and heritage of the building and its surroundings with the river flowing gently and majestic buildings dotting the skyline. After registration, there was tea and coffee, which provided the perfect opportunity to greet old friends and make new ones.

Soon we were all seated in a lovely auditorium for the inaugural speech by David Archer, followed by the provocative keynote by Lawrie Phipps, Senior Research Lead at Jisc, and Dr Donna Lanclos, Researcher and Speaker, Anthropologist and Folklorist. Titled *“The Wolves are at the Door they* challenged assumptions about technological transformation in libraries and advocated for a “trophic cascade” approach to change.

The next session by Banji Adewumi, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Greenwich was titled “Shaping the Future and Making an Impact: EDI Strategic Action Planning”.

My takeaway from this – Ginder + Garlic = “Gingerized” a useful collaboration

Banji was followed by Jon Ray from the University of Oxford who spoke about Building a Digital Sustainability Action Plan and GLAM’s efforts to measure and reduce our digital carbon footprint.

These discussions got me thinking about the issues shaping our libraries, our buildings, resources, services, and our careers. What are our Job Descriptions going to look like 5 years from now ? How are libraries going to be defined 10 years from now? What do we need to do today to embrace that fast approaching change and stay relevant in our institutions? These were some of the issues we spoke about during the tea break.

The parallel sessions were all interesting and it was really difficult to choose which ones to go to. The options were –

* Paola Marchionni and Peter Findlay who discussed how Jisc has worked in close collaboration with university libraries to create a [Digital Transformation Library Lens (DTLL)](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/innovation/projects/digital-transformation-library-lens-supporting-digital-practice-in-academic-libraries).
* Davina Omar and Cliff Van Dort who presented the key findings of the [Diversity Group](https://www.m25lib.org.uk/m25-resources-and-activities/task-finish-groups/task-finish-group-diversity/) survey 2024 and discussed what we needed to do to amplify marginalised voices and foster EDI within libraries.
* Eloise Carpenter who represented the [Sustainability Group](https://www.m25lib.org.uk/m25-resources-and-activities/task-finish-groups/task-finish-group-sustainability/) that explored the role of library and information services with respect to environmental and sustainability challenges.

I chose the Diversity Group Survey. The session had thought-provoking questions on inclusive recruitment and having been on several recruitment panels, I now want to delve further into guidelines for inclusive job descriptions.

Lunchtime had us all chatting away, visiting the sponsor stalls and looking at the posters submitted, taking in some sunshine and the breathtaking views and exchanging email addresses with promises of “getting back to you later”

After lunch we all convened together in the auditorium for the lightening talks.

I was co-presenting with a colleague on the topic “ **Brave + librarians AND (a) Prompt AI Adventure”.** We hopedthat the presentation would motivate information professionals to move bravely into experimenting with Artificial Intelligence.

The parallel sessions in the afternoon consisted of the following

* Wellbeing in Libraries: Steps to Creating Kind, safe workplaces I am a huge fan of Helen Rimmer founder of The Kind Brave Leader and I was definitely attending this one. My takeaway from this session was the 4 domains of the Kindness Culture Map - Behaviour, Policy, Communication and Space.
* Regina Everitt and Tim Wales in “ Your Space or Mine?” a discussion about effective collaboration with Estates & Facilities, drawing on themes from their book [Privileged Spaces:  Academic Libraries in University Estates Strategy](https://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/page/detail/privileged-spaces/?k=9781783306466)
* Karen Jackson explained how the University of Warwick addressed the challenges posed by generative AI tools by fostering collaboration between staff and students, building a community of practice. I am sure that must have been very interesting and innovative given that students nowadays are one step ahead of us when it comes to technology and AI.

The final sessions for the day were those by Alison Mackenzie about the Royal Horticultural Society Library and Michael Day from the University of Greenwich about Moving Towards Post-Digital Libraries in Higher Education.

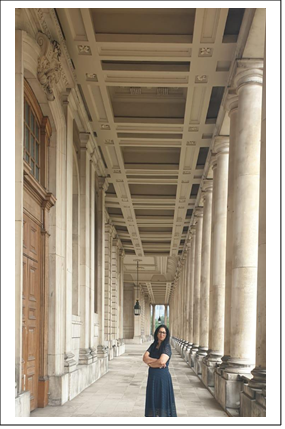
I am truly grateful to the organizers of the conference for granting me a bursary place. Attending the M25 conference not only connected me to new people but also to new thoughts and ideas that I could implement in my organization. One of these was the thought of being known hence forward as “The kind recruiter”. I shared insights with other librarians about how recruitment was not an exam but a showcasing of skills and experience to fit the Job description. I was also rewarded by some insightful thinking, sharing and networking with regard to the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence tools in the academic sector.

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AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A presentation on a wall

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I believe that Librarianship today is a set of transferable skills built on a solid foundation of knowledge and practice made better through research. The basic knowledge and the fundamentals of Librarianship remain the same. Ranganathan’s 5 rules of library science are still valid today. Everything that I learnt in my previous roles in India I use in the UK and everything that I learned in public libraries I use in academic libraries today - customer service skills; understanding the unspoken needs, time management, marketing, event management, research methods, taking stock, funding bids. It is conferences like this that bring it all together and make it connective, relevant and inspiring and I am truly grateful for this opportunity to experience and exemplify the value of Librarianship in an information wo