

LISA CONFERENCE 2026

M25 CONSORTIUM STAFF DEVELOPMENT AWARD

POST-AWARD PIECE

CALLUM TILBURY, ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA

The fact that the 2026 LISA Conference took place during a vicious heatwave is, unfortunately, the first thing I remember about attending it. But luckily, the scorching temperatures were completely overshadowed by the rest of it, which was an altogether wonderful experience, despite the heat.

The day began in a small conference room at Mary Ward House (which mercifully filled up with more and more oscillating fans as the day wore on). Librarians have a reputation for being introverted, but this roomful was defying that reputation by chatting animatedly to the other attendees. As someone relatively new to the profession, I hadn't yet met many other library assistants or supervisors, so that in itself was a thrill, and we had plenty to chat about.

The first session was an excellent keynote from Helen Rimmer about kindness in times of change. It was an invaluable reminder that, as stressful as change can be in the workplace, we must never let it get in the way of the kindness we show to others, or to ourselves. As the challenges facing the HE sector continue to grow, this idea feels particularly timely, and the presentation was filled with pithy nuggets of wisdom.

Next, we embarked on a library tour. Given the choice between Senate House Library (which I had visited before) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, I chose the latter, firstly because I had never been, and secondly because my dad studied there in the 80s and I was feeling nosy. The ten minute walk through the furnace of central London was unpleasant, but well worth it, because the library at the LSHTM completely blew me away. It felt majestic, but not garish; serious, but not stuffy. The reading room was spacious and warm (as in, the décor, not the temperature, even though that was also true!). Despite all this, though, the thing I was most impressed by was the realisation that the LSHTM must have a very tight collection development policy, because there was so much free space on the shelves! The library I supervise has shelves full to bursting, so there is a valuable lesson to learn there about the weeding of outdated stock.

After drinking in the beauty of the LSHTM's library, we returned to Mary Ward House for a quick lunch, and the afternoon sessions. We had a brilliant, high energy, interactive workshop with Neil Johnstone about responding to change, which I found very enlightening and relatable. He took us through the rollercoaster of emotions that most

people experience in response to change in the workplace, and gave us some excellent tips on handling it.

Next, we enjoyed some lightning presentations from library assistants at the Global Banking School, and the University of Birmingham, about changes they have had to deal with recently, and how they managed. It was great to get a snapshot into some other libraries and see some examples of how they work.

By the time it came to our final session, the heat was having a soporific effect on the room. To combat this, I had had a coffee at every opportunity throughout the day. But the hot coffee certainly didn't help with the heat, and with every cup I found myself back at square one, creating a cruel cycle. I made a mental note to pack a flask of ice next time. Nevertheless, with the final session Thomas Pratt managed to cut through the heat-induced torpor and deliver a fascinating session on career development in uncertain times. As someone who, like Thomas, has had a non-linear career trajectory, I found it an excellent reflection on the transferable skills we pick up from seemingly-unrelated jobs, and a reminder that the reason some people take 'the scenic route' is not the destination, but the views along the way.

And with that, the conference was over! It really was an excellent day – slick, well put together, and filled with many positive ideas to take back and apply to our own libraries. As the library in which I work is going through a structural overhaul at the moment, I found many of the sessions to be directly applicable and useful, which was fantastic. What's more, the opportunity to meet fellow library assistants and supervisors was the cherry on top.

Thanks go to the M25 Consortium for a very successful conference!