

M25 Consortium Staff Development Award – LISA Conference 2026 Reflection

I feel very honoured to have received the M25 Consortium Staff Development Award and to have had the opportunity to attend the 2026 LISA Conference. Looking back, the day was a mixture of learning, reflection, networking, and, quite honestly, the heatwave was absolutely roasting in one of London's hottest days of the year that made the day even more memorable.

One of my favourite parts of the day actually happened before the formal sessions started. I had a great conversation and knowledge exchange with another librarian working in the art and drama field. We came from different professional settings, but it was interesting to discover how many of the challenges we face are similar.

The first session, "Kindness in Times of Change" by Helen Rimmer, set the tone for the whole conference. What stayed with me most was the difference between being kind and simply being nice. Kindness is not about avoiding difficult conversations or always saying yes. Sometimes, being kind means setting boundaries, being honest and giving people the space to develop for themselves. The session also encouraged us to think about self-kindness and wellbeing when dealing with pressure and uncertainty. This made me reflect on my own working life. In a busy library environment, it can be very easy to keep helping, keep taking on extra tasks and tell ourselves that we can manage "just one more thing". But there is a point where this stops being sustainable. One message I took away was that looking after ourselves is not a selfish act; it helps us support our colleagues and our users better in the long run.

The Senate House Library visit was another highlight. The building itself was impressive, but I was equally interested in hearing how the library manages its collections and adapts its spaces for different purposes. It was particularly interesting to see how a traditional library environment can be used in creative ways, including supporting activities beyond conventional library services.

Then came Neil Johnstone's session, "How Do We Respond to Change?" This was one of the most interactive parts of the conference. Rather than simply telling us how people respond to change, Neil got us to experience those reactions ourselves. Through simple activities, we were encouraged to notice our emotional and behavioural responses when something feels unfamiliar or uncomfortable. I found this particularly useful because change does not affect everyone in the same way. Sometimes we expect colleagues to "just get on with it", without recognising that they may be at a completely different stage of accepting the change. The session reminded me that listening, patience and good

communication can make a significant difference when introducing new systems, procedures or ways of working.

The final session, “Career Development in Uncertain Times” by Thomas Pratt, probably gave me the most personal food for thought. Instead of thinking about a career as a straight ladder where the only direction is upward, we were encouraged to think more broadly about our direction, capabilities, energy and support. The idea that a career can develop through different routes, including sideways moves and unexpected opportunities, really resonated with me. Looking back, I think that was the biggest lesson I took from the conference: change does not always mean starting again; sometimes it means seeing what we already have in a different way.

The conference also gave me plenty of ideas that I can bring back to my own library practice. I would like to become more conscious of how I respond to change, support colleagues through transition, communicate more openly, and maintain healthier professional boundaries. Most importantly, I want to remember that professional development is not just about collecting new knowledge or attending another training session. It is about taking those ideas back to work and turning them into something useful.

I am very grateful to the M25 Consortium for this award and for making the LISA Conference experience possible. I came away with new ideas, new connections and, perhaps most importantly, a renewed reminder that in times of change, we do not have to choose between being effective and being human.

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