British and Irish Association of Law Librarians Conference
Glasgow, Scotland

Final Report by Ciara Ward, NCLA Library

This year's conference theme was *From the Clyde to the Cloud: Legal Information in Transition*

Plenary: Heads out of the Clouds: How Librarians can Create Change with Legal Tech
Speaker(s): Katy Snell & Sarah Glassmeyer
-the way information is consumed and the vehicle its being delivered in, is changing. Law is full of tools … the most underrated? Librarians
-Legal tech is knowledge work – it is moving, storing, and using legal knowledge
-Legal information has always needed organizing, curating, making it findable
-librarians understand the provenance, quality etc. those things matter to Ai which ingests data
-"garbage in, garbage out" – Ai's problem is an information quality problem; data curation is key
-workflow →reference interview, research guides, librarians have always mapped how people find and use information – process design
-Our job is to guide the people to the information
-Analysis and verification: output stages is becoming more important; we are experts in source analysis, sifting through information
-Displaying output in a readable and easy to understand way
-Our time is cheaper than fee earners; we can do the "verification tax" – lawyers ultimately are responsible
-Training: legal tech fails most often not at implication but at adoption; leading is about the learners' needs, and not the tool
-Hype problem: what do we offer that technology can't? Librarians are well practiced at evaluating sources
-"Don't be 'just' a librarian" – don't turn down opportunities because you think you're "just" a librarian
-librarian parallel: we have always translated between users and systems
-"any skill that you need, you have"

Navigating Change: HE Libraries and the Shifting Landscape of Legal Learning
Speaker: James Kay
-peoples' perspectives and experiences with change is very personal
-library change: continuous! Rising costs of resources, reduction of print resources, increased demand of physical spaces – need for scalability of support for users. There are online delivery and recording of teaching/re-synchronous learning
-virtual v. physical; financial insecurity, constantly demonstrating the value of a degree in a challenging job market.
-constant rebranding by overseers to keep the library "relevant" (i.e. Courthouse Libraries = "practice resource centres"); while adding new expectations
-opportunities: expanding portfolios; collaboration skills; other skills: digital, networking, etc. Experience: great resilience, individual and team care
-Challenges: communication, lack of knowledge, duplication of information; document management, loss of responsibilities: wider awareness of frontline activity
→you can overcome these by having clear guidelines and duties and expectations; share responsibilities, support each other and share experiences; focus on achievements too – this is important

Plenary 2: Ai in the Courts: From Case to Trial

Speaker(s): Kirsten Maslen & Alan Parfery

-AI in courts; significant criminal backlog in UK – publishers want to leverage AI to help streamline workflows for lawyers

→demo/skit of a lawyer using AI to prepare for a criminal trial; TR was careful to (constantly) emphasize that the lawyer double checked all sources and that CoCounsel was clear about "not making anything up" (generative AI)

-closing comment was about being as accurate as possible

-"AI is not going to take your job; someone who is better at AI will"

-lawyers can use AI to demonstrate value to clients in meaningful ways

-Clients often adopt AI before lawyers because it feels more efficient; lawyers are expected to pass back value to clients because it is an "efficiency driver"

-if lawyers can't explain the security measures in place of the value it adds then clients are less likely to be ok with it

Plenary 3: Evolving roles and realities in Canadian academic law libraries

Speaker(s): Yemisi Dina & Sharon Wang, Alexia Loumankis & Sooin Kim

- Canadian Law Libraries→MLIS, some have JDs; academics are usually unionized (the dream)

-University enrollment and law school enrollment is growing

-new, shorter programs are beginning, increases librarian workload

-changing funding and budgets are a huge challenge; universities are putting an emphasis on revenue generation – but because *library* this often means the library is left vulnerable

-expertise driven services models are the answer: instruction, research support, etc.

-financial pressures affect staffing; expectations continue to grow, librarians now take on more responsibility

-two models: centralized (no autonomy) and faculty based (lots of freedom)

→*courthouse libraries are kind of a hybrid of the two??*

-Alexia spoke about the TRC and equality, diversion, inclusion and accessibility

-libraries are starting to include more tools/areas for neurodivergent users (like waterloo!)

Plenary 4: Willi Steiner Memorial Lecture: A New Chapter: changing the setting, not the story

Speaker(s): Renate Ní Uigín, Jas Breslin

-the values of participating in your professional association *(→same advice as Kim Clarke's talk at CALL regarding career management; get involved to avoid stagnating)*

-legal information professionals must remain informed, on top and ahead of legal information trends

-the profession is still new to BIALL (founded in 1969)

-contributions are key to the profession when little relevant information about the profession is available

-****ask Denise to write a "what a trial coordinator wished lawyers knew" or a "day in the life" article from other members of the "legal machine" etc MAG, security, etc.*

-changing landscape of our jobs, as documents through law librarian journals – a study over time, framed through BIALL's journals

-switched from Cambridge University Press to Edinburgh Press; includes product showcases

-usually ask people to write articles on specifically identified topics, don't always take unsolicited papers

-moved away from paper copies to only digital →cheaper, reaches a wider audience

-you can always email/query LIM editors: limeditor@biall.org.uk

Researcher in the Loop - AI driven business research
Speaker: Samuel Wiggins
-Pressure for faster turn around times; rising end user-self led AI research
-tech promising users prompts with unreliable outputs
-can they use a no-code tool?
-is there a verification method in place?
-looked at workflow for ideas; two proposals: 1 “no code” solutions, 2 AI assisted solution
-firms are now building their own AI tools in-house

Purpose, Positioning and Presence – raising the profile of Information and Knowledge teams
Speaker: Claire Fox
-the people we work for often don’t understand all we have to offer
-misconceptions on what we can/can not do and we need to make an effort to demonstrate by clarifying and re-positioning ourselves/increasing our presence; valuing information teams as essential contributors *(**OCLA needs more emphasis on working as a TEAM and less on individual successes, Hamilton and Durham this means you)*
-Clarify purpose – define role within organizations
-empower and advocate for resources
-Impact through mission; operating with a strong mission increases confidence and impact
-not a static thing; this is constantly changing/adapting
-where we need to be to add value
-proactive communication and self-promotion also ket to raising awareness
-when we do these things to future proof, we become more visible in our own organizations

BIALL Volunteers
Speaker: Claire Mazer,
-getting involved in professional organizations is ket for your career advancement *(**Again, Kim Clarke!)* and satisfaction
-you can develop new skills, connect with people you normally wouldn’t, grow your confidence, raise your professional profile
-build genuine connections and shape the future of the profession
-“you don’t need to be an expert” to get involved and make an impact. Volunteering and getting involved is how to build the confidence to do things

→*would be interesting to have a huge CALL/AALL/BIALL/IALL convention (G7 for libraries) to compare and contract how technological changes are happening in every country – feels like North America is further ahead than UK/Europe*

You can't google expertise
Speaker: Matthew Leopold, LexisNexis
-having information is not the same as being an expert
-sometimes the answer to the question isn’t the answer for the problem; don’t mistake using AI for easy answers as actual expertise
-**AI makes answers easier to generate but not easier to trust**
-Dreyfus Model
    -different levels of experience; novice: literal; advanced beginner: plausible answers; competent > proficient > expert: knows when the answer needs more
-process creates a reliable output

-knowing what to do and doing it well in situations are not the same
-confidence and speed are not the same as expertise; expertise is checking what others assume
-do not underestimate professional instincts

From Scotland to Canada: Building a legal career through libraries, community and change

Speaker: Laura Dickson, *Hamilton Law Association*

-when she moved to Canada she initially found support with her local law association; Ontario law associations are meant to "maintain and support lawyers in Ontario"
-relationships matter and your legal community is your most important resource
-"law libraries should be at the heart of the professional community"

> *→it's genuinely frustrating to hear the FOLA/law association lawyers talk about the courthouse library system when they have never WORKED in a library, and have no real concept of our system, our jobs, or our profession – and this happens more with the regional/large areas than the locals!!!*

Plenary 7: A Tale of Two Stakeholders: Balancing Access and Preservation in the Law Library's Gordon Duncan Collection

Speaker(s): SarahLouise McDonald & Anna Richards,

-Edinburgh law library, discussion of the Gordon Duncan Collection
-stakeholders: heritage collections and the academic staff in the law school > two different sets of concerns with the collection
-complicating factors: environmental concerns (monitoring RH, etc), physically storing the archival materials, conservation, staffing and responsibilities, support for the staff looking after the collection
-more stakeholders: ED help team and collections management teams – biggest issue was increased workload and space
-one of Europe's largest law libraries: 31,000 books on site
-collection didn't come with provenance so things were unclear
-the stakeholders were very invested, consulted and concerned
-heritage staff were obviously concerned with preservation and conservation
-academic staff were concerned about access
-ended up splitting the collection, then splitting it again into items pre and post the year 1900

Plenary 8 - Keynote Lecture: How to Think About AI

Speaker: Richard Susskind OBE, CBE, KC (Hon) FRSE, world-renowned Scottish author, speaker and independent adviser

-what is the fundamental value you bring to clients, and how do you bring it?
-automation = innovation; achieving/possibility of providing a new or streamlined service
-"AI is not a football team; you don't have to support it or not"
-there are always risks/benefits
-Chatgpt; new general purpose tool; its still far from perfect, but also remarkable
-we should notice how fast it was accepted and adopted
-Generative AI is just the latest evolution where AI is taking us, where are we taking it?

a. AI is peaking and will eventually "go away"
b. AI will continue to evolve and become reliable without human supervision
c. AGI – Artificial General Intelligence at some stage AI will take the full range of human cognitive tasks

d. Super Intelligence hypothesis: if we create a computer system that can self-improve then it will be the last great invention humans ever make
e. Singularity; organic humans merge with AI; “transhumanism”
f. Humans replaced by technology – end of humanity