



March 2018

MY Presidential year has been very busy so far. I have been to Bangladesh, where the Government is developing a national library strategy. The country was preparing to celebrate its first National Libraries Day. I met the President of the Bangladeshi Library Association, Ali Ahmmad, and supported a strategy day.

My presidential theme for the year is “international”, and I am a UK representative on the buildings committee of the International Federation of Library Associations. I recently hosted the IFLA Library Buildings and Equipment Committee Meeting. Members from 16 countries visited two new libraries and one located in a Grade I listed building: the new Birmingham University Library; the Hive in Worcestershire; and Stratford Upon Avon Library in Warwickshire. I was also involved in an associated international seminar on library buildings held at the Library of Birmingham, and was part of the panel answering questions. Reflecting on the seminar, I was reminded of a quote from Winston Churchill: “We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us.” You can get a flavour of the seminar here: #iflabuild2018.

Co-location and neutrality

At the end of February, I chaired a seminar on the joint SCL/Jisc Single Sign On project (see <http://bit.ly/2BRJwVk> for more info). I also attended a meeting of the Westminster Advisory Board looking at the future of the authority’s libraries – and we had a good discussion around co-location. What emerged was the need to ensure the distinctive nature and neutrality of libraries in their own right. However,

March 2018

there is evidence from the Carnegie UK Trust’s *Shining a Light* report (<http://bit.ly/2EV17Rq>) that access to a range of council services in the library actually drives increased use. We need more debate on this issue.

CILIP members

It has been said many times that what a library does is more important than the building it’s in. Wherever we work, we are trusted professionals. CILIP’s recent advocacy campaign quoted a public poll that placed librarians in the top five professional groups for trustworthy information (<http://bit.ly/2EVDZ2R>).

I’ve just come back from Lancaster where I spoke about mid-career development at the CILIP North West Members’ Day. I am looking forward to attending CILIP conferences in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For me, the best part of this year is meeting CILIP members from different parts of the country and sector.

As President I get invited to different types of libraries and recently visited the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust where Mareike Doleschal, Head of Collections, showed me some of the amazing treasures in their archives. Mareike also flagged up an international collaborative project that CILIP members might be interested in joining – The Skype Book Club. Started three years ago in Estonia, it brings together people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds for webinar discussions. Contact [mareike.doleschal@shakespeare.org.uk](mailto:doleschal@shakespeare.org.uk) to find out more.

On home turf

Back at the day job, I called in at Nuneaton Library when one of two new Warwickshire Library makerspaces opened. It was half term, and children



Ayub Khan MBE (@ayubkhan786) is Head of Libraries and Face to Face Services, Warwickshire County Council and CILIP President.

and adults were having great fun playing with digital kit and being creative in the new Let’s Make space. Nuneaton Library serves some of the county’s most disadvantaged communities, so it was good to see so much excitement and enthusiasm.

In another Warwickshire library, I came across a “knit and natter” meeting – a band of mostly older ladies (and two gentlemen) chatting over their knitting, crochet or embroidery. It reminded me how much public libraries do to combat loneliness and isolation – and got me wondering whether there might be a potential link to the county’s makerspaces, introducing the nattering needleworkers to digital embroidery.

I am honoured and privileged, as CILIP President, to attend high-level meetings and conferences that look at the bigger picture – nationally and globally. But my Warwickshire visits reminded me that there’s no substitute for seeing what’s actually happening in local libraries – and one need look no further for inspiration.

I’ll be updating my activities on twitter: @ayubkhan786. | P