

Conference 2025

RESILIENCE,

RELEVANCE, AND REACH:

Libraries making an impact!



Techno Centre, Coventry University Technology Park, 10th September 2025

Conference 2025

Programme

Time	Session
09:15	Registration
09:45	Platinum Sponsor Presentation
10:00	Keynote
11:00	Break
11:30	Breakouts 1
13:00	Lunch
14:00	Breakouts 2
14:45	Break
1505	Mercian Leaders Panel Discussion
1600	Close





Conference Sub-themes

Sustainability in Libraries

Relevance & Engagement

Student Voice

Digital Innovation





Keynote


Dr Beth Montague-Hellen,
Head of Library & Information Services at The Francis
Crick Institute

Mercian 25's keynote speaker is the inspirational Dr Beth Montague-Hellen. Beth has recently authored “Practical Tips for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries”, Facet, September, 2024, which has been well-received and seems more important than ever.

Beth started off academic life as a Molecular Biologist studying at Manchester University. The next 14 years were spent as a bioinformatician, accruing an MSc and a PhD on the way.

Following this, Beth decided that supporting others to do excellent research was far more rewarding than actually doing the research and so moved into Libraries and Research Support.

Beth takes an as open-as-possible, EDI focused approach to research support and is a big advocate for green OA alongside a completely transparent research cycle including radically open data and software sharing.





Breakout Sessions 1

Building a greener future: designing online activities to promote digital sustainability

Dr Inga Jones and Jo Elliot
Open University



Environmental Sustainability in Libraries: Developing a Special Interest Group to support Mercian institutions.

Steve Bull, Steve Parton, Charlotte Stockwell, Lizzie McCauley, Jo Elliot, Jess Taylor
University of Birmingham



In the FUN channel! Teambuilding through writing a library research paper

Holly Austin-Davies
University of Birmingham





Breakout Sessions 1

Turning “I think that happens a lot” into “Here’s the data”: enquiry logging with PowerBI

Katie Mann

Birmingham Newman University



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Just Read! a library initiative to get students reading

Hayley Chevell

Coventry University



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The Power of genuine staff-student partnership to enhance and communicate the value of libraries in a changing university landscape

Madalene George, Victoria Collins, Anastasia Kennett

University of Worcester





Breakout Sessions 1

Increasing student engagement with library-led
dissertation support

Tracy Lowe, Vandana Sharma, Colin Rogers
Nottingham Trent University



Digital Badges and Libraries: an opportunity to lead
innovation

Joe Carey
University of Wolverhampton



Fortune Telling: Achieving accuracy through
integrating the LMS and Finance systems

Adam Robinson, Heather Cripps
University of Derby





Breakout Sessions 2

Re-imagining Library Spaces

Kate Marshall
Nottingham Trent University



Collaborating with academic staff to transform Library
Teaching and Learning support

Emma Brown
Birmingham City University



Student outreach through a curator Internship
initiative

Emma Hibbert and Kat Halliday
Loughborough University





Breakout Sessions 2

Truth Wars: Guardians of the Galaxy or just False Witnesses? The power of Libraries and Archives in the era of 'fake news'.

Sian Hewitt
Coventry University




“About the Role” – A Spotlight on Professional Pathways

Jodi Heap & Kim Hepburn-Woods
Keele University & University of Nottingham Libraries



Mercian Leaders Panel Discussion

Leaders from Mercian member institutions sharing their thoughts and insights about the conference themes, and future priorities, opportunities, etc for Libraries and Information services and staff, and also the wider sector where relevant.





Abstracts


Breakout session: 1


Building a greener future: designing online activities to promote digital sustainability

Dr Inga Jones and Jo Elliot
Open University

Sustainability

This session explores the process of designing and developing a collection of short, public-facing online activities centred on digital sustainability. In the ever-changing world of HE and the technological leaps that affect education it is more important than ever to educate staff and students about the impact technology has on our digital footprint. Understanding how sending emails, downloading and storing materials, and using generative AI tools impact the environment are considered core competencies that are in line with the Open University's mission as an educator that places sustainability at the heart of its teaching, research and knowledge exchange. The session will highlight how libraries can play a pivotal role in climate action by framing digital and information literacy skills as essential sustainability competencies. We will share insights into the rationale, design principles, and content development involved in creating these activities. Attendees will also be encouraged to use these activities to empower their own communities to make informed, sustainable choices when working online.





Environmental Sustainability in Libraries: Developing a Special Interest Group to support Mercian institutions.


Steve Bull, Steve Parton, Charlotte Stockwell, Lizzie McCauley, Jo Elliot, Jess Taylor
University of Birmingham


Sustainability

At the 2024 Mercian Conference, colleagues from the Open University and University of Birmingham presented on different aspects of sustainability. Post-conference, the speakers exchanged details and along with colleagues at Nottingham Trent University and Keele University, put together a successful online Mercian Training event on Sustainability in February 2025. The event was well attended, with 44 attendees representing 19 Mercian libraries. Post-session feedback was positive with ratings of good to excellent from 99% of survey respondents. Feedback also suggested there was a strong sense that sustainability is an area that lends itself to cross-library working, both for sharing ideas/ experiences and to capitalise on the strength of a combined voice.

To this end, we are keen to explore what a combined voice might look like, how we can work in collaboration, and the potential for a Mercian Collaboration Sustainability Special Interest Group (SIG).

This 45-minute interactive workshop will explore these themes further.






In the FUN channel! Teambuilding through writing a library research paper

Holly Austin-Davies
University of Birmingham

Relevance &
Engagement

This session explores the process of designing and developing a collection of short, public-facing online activities centred on digital sustainability. In the ever-changing world of HE and the technological leaps that affect education it is more important than ever to educate staff and students about the impact technology has on our digital footprint. Understanding how sending emails, downloading and storing materials, and using generative AI tools impact the environment are considered core competencies that are in line with the Open University's mission as an educator that places sustainability at the heart of its teaching, research and knowledge exchange. The session will highlight how libraries can play a pivotal role in climate action by framing digital and information literacy skills as essential sustainability competencies. We will share insights into the rationale, design principles, and content development involved in creating these activities. Attendees will also be encouraged to use these activities to empower their own communities to make informed, sustainable choices when working online.





Turning “I think that happens a lot” into “Here’s the data”: enquiry logging with PowerBI


Katie Mann
Birmingham Newman University

Digital
Innovation

In an era of shrinking resources and increasing workloads, academic libraries must find efficient ways to track and evaluate their services. This session explores the journey of a small academic library with limited frontline staff, where monitoring Service Desk enquiries was initially non-existent. Over several years of trial and error, we developed a self-built enquiries dashboard using Power BI – an accessible tool that helps visualise trends and assess service impact.

Rather than a technical deep dive, this session will focus on the why and how of logging enquiries, sharing lessons learned, challenges faced, and the benefits of structured enquiry tracking.

The session will conclude with an open discussion on the broader significance of enquiry logging and its role in demonstrating the value of library services and in assisting with resource allocation and service planning.





Just Read! a library initiative to get students reading


Hayley Chevell
Coventry University

Student Voice

When demonstrating the relevance and reach of a library, what better use of resources and staff time than an initiative to encourage reading!

Reading improves our mental wellbeing, increases our vocabulary, enhances our personal development and impacts our academic ability. This relates to any form of reading, from magazines, newspapers and websites, to fiction and non-fiction titles. Basically, the more you read, the easier it becomes, and developing good reading habits can improve the quality of your life and give you a greater understanding of the world. We wanted to share this with our students and staff, and so this year the Coventry University Group libraries launched Just Read!

Through Just Read! events, library staff have had the opportunity to chat with students and staff about reading, and also promote our amazing collections. For the launch event, we had a 'Read the World' theme which showcased a selection of fiction titles written by authors from across the globe. We also asked students to recommend us titles from their home country which we could add to the collection, and hopefully bring a sense of belonging to the community.





Increasing student engagement with library-led dissertation support


Tracy Lowe, Vandana Sharma, Colin Rogers
Nottingham Trent University

Relevance &
Engagement

The School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences at NTU has a high proportion of students from Widening Participation groups. Notably, 49% of students have disclosed a disability, and many hold university entry qualifications that are not A-levels.

Final year students expressed a need for more dissertation support, yet historically, drop-in sessions had very low attendance. Recent NTU research highlighted that final year students prefer familiar, consistent, and accessible support, and they value the library as a place for help and guidance. The Academic Engagement Team could provide this support, but the challenge was increasing attendance.

Delegates will learn about our work and how a small shift from drop-in sessions to timetabled support made a substantial difference. We will share our successes and future plans and encourage delegates to reflect and share ideas.





Digital Badges and Libraries: an opportunity to lead innovation

Joe Carey
University of Wolverhampton


Digital
Innovation


Over the last twelve months, the University of Wolverhampton has implemented a brand-new digital badge framework, coordinated by staff within Library Services. This proposed talk will explore in detail the progress of this project, offering useful insights into how other library staff can demonstrate their skill-sets through digital innovation.

The potential of digital badges to positively impact learning and teaching, across an institution will be highlighted. The opportunity to build upon the reach of library staff will also be considered.

This presentation will also make clear how we have built a formal, digital badge framework which consistently highlights their relevance to students' careers through alignment with graduate attributes.

Finally, we will discuss the challenges faced by library staff throughout this project; coordinating staff across a range of stakeholders; navigating a route of best practice for the university; responding to student engagement issues and will set out a roadmap for the further development of the digital badge framework at Wolverhampton





Fortune Telling: Achieving accuracy through integrating the LMS and Finance systems


Adam Robinson, Heather Cripps
University of Derby


Digital
Innovation

This presentation will provide an overview of an innovative integration project between the Alma Library Management System and the Oracle finance system at the University of Derby.

This pioneering work has significantly improved the efficiency and accuracy of library financial processes. By eliminating double entry, minimising reconciliation activities, and enhancing expenditure tracking, the integration has saved valuable staff time and improved reporting accuracy.

This presentation will share the challenges, solutions, and outcomes of this project, offering valuable insights for other institutions looking to optimise their library acquisition workflows.





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Abstracts


Breakout session: 2


Re-imagining Library Spaces

Kate Marshall
Nottingham Trent University

Sustainability

The session will consider the evolution of academic libraries from repository of knowledge toward library as space, considering the future of library spaces in light of changing patterns of usage post-pandemic and budget constraints. It will reflect on the opportunities presented by the contraction of print collections to develop new spaces to meet the evolving needs of users. The presentation will reflect on creating library spaces that are adaptable, which promote innovation and collaboration, and which support students to develop employability skills for a post-AI world. Universal design principles and the co-creation of inclusive library spaces to meet the diverse needs of users will be explored. This session will include a case study from Nottingham Trent University which has developed a new spaces vision and designed a variety of inclusive library spaces including a multifaith reflection space, a family study room, Glow Sensory rooms, and a Rest Nest wellbeing space.






'Collaborating with academic staff to transform Library Teaching and Learning support'

Emma Brown
Birmingham City University

Relevance &
Engagement

The session will consider the evolution of academic libraries from a repository of knowledge toward library as space, considering the future of library spaces in light of changing patterns of usage post-pandemic and budget constraints. It will reflect on the opportunities presented by the contraction of print collections to develop new spaces to meet the evolving needs of users.

The presentation will reflect on creating library spaces that are adaptable, which promote innovation and collaboration, and which support students to develop employability skills for a post-AI world. Universal design principles and the co-creation of inclusive library spaces to meet the diverse needs of users will be explored. This session will include a case study from Nottingham Trent University which has developed a new spaces vision and designed a variety of inclusive library spaces including a multifaith reflection space, a family study room, Glow Sensory rooms, and a Rest Nest wellbeing space.





Student outreach through a curator Internship initiative


Emma Hibbert and Kat Halliday
Loughborough University


Student Voice

This presentation details the process of setting up Loughborough University's first Curator Internship program, designed to add student voices to library collections and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. The talk will explore the steps taken to launch the internship. Key aspects covered include:

- Program Development
- Recruitment and Selection
- Project Execution
- Collaboration
- Final reflection and impact

The session will also reflect on the impact the program had on the library's collections and the broader academic community, offering insights into how such initiatives can help libraries engage with diverse student voices and make a lasting impact.





Truth Wars: Guardians of the Galaxy or just False Witnesses? The power of Libraries and Archives in the era of 'fake news'.


Sian Hewitt
Coventry University


Relevance &
Engagement

'Fake news' is now a common expression but propaganda - information warfare - is not new. Though, arguably, responsibilities and values of the information professional have changed. In the wake of the two world wars, advancing technology and human rights has given prominence to the democratic importance of data protection and freedom of information.

With it a good archivist is seen as a selfless devotee of the truth where one must respect des fonds. Contrasting the librarian's role, the archivist, whose focus is on unique original primary sources, faces a preservation paradox that making archives accessible can undermine their conservation.

In the digital age this juxtaposition may seem less relevant but with it are we losing a tactile sense of history - exacerbating the question of who/what can one really trust? Is the true power of archives, and libraries that support them, that they give access to trusted original material?





“About the Role” – A Spotlight on Professional Pathways

Relevance & Engagement

Jodi Heap & Kim Hepburn-Woods

Keele University & University of Nottingham Libraries

The aim of this 45-minute workshop is to provide a brief but insightful overview of various roles within library services. This will support cross-institutional understanding, professional development, and workforce planning.

Many institutions do not have the full range of roles found across the sector, which can lead to limited awareness of the scope and function of these positions. For example, some delegates may be unfamiliar with the work of a Scholarly Communications Librarian. Providing accessible descriptions and insights into these roles helps to demystify career pathways and highlight areas of expertise that can enhance collaboration, service design, and strategic planning.

Furthermore, the workshop may help library staff with similar roles to connect and collaborate, providing opportunities to share knowledge.

The workshop will begin with an ice breaker activity where delegates guess the roles of the other people in their group and complete a Bingo Card about the attributes of their group's roles.

The rest of the workshop will be a Q&A session, with a different speaker at each table. Speakers will rotate throughout the session so delegates will have the opportunity to ask questions and learn about a variety of different professional pathways.

