



### **EAHIL Cardiff Conference: “Inspiring, Involving, Informing - Improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Europe” Challenges and opportunities**

**Sue Thomas and the Local Organising Committee**

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The Local Organising Committee (LOC) first met in 2015 to explore the possibilities, and the challenges of Cardiff hosting the 16th EAHIL Conference in 2018. This would be the first time for the conference to be held in the capital city of Wales. Initial discussions had in fact started back in 2013 when the chair discussed the possibility of holding the conference with Health Libraries Group Wales. The committee thought it was a good idea and the chair went off to investigate. You certainly have to plan well in advance!

We knew from the start (and how right we were!) that this would be a huge challenge. Many of the members of the LOC were new to EAHIL, but thankfully there was a wealth of experience in leading courses and conference programmes both nationally and internationally. From the start we also knew that to meet our broad vision of improving health and wellbeing, we would have to reach out to groups not traditionally involved in health information and library work.

Holding monthly committee meetings with such a varied group provided another challenge as did document sharing. Angela Perrett who was in charge of project planning worked wonders around these challenges. We are also grateful to three organisations which provided meeting rooms, videoconferencing and refreshments for our monthly planning meetings free of charge: Cardiff University, the Royal College of Nursing Wales and Public Health Wales.

Our first challenge was to write a financial bid for approval by the EAHIL Board. Financial forecasting three years in advance is not something to be undertaken lightly. We are very grateful to all previous conference committees for sharing their budget information with us.

The support of Janet Peters, Director of University Libraries and University Librarian for Cardiff University was invaluable to us throughout the conference planning, but particularly as we developed our bid. Without Cardiff University's commitment to underwriting the conference we would not have got off the starting blocks.

Thanks also to Meg Gorman NHS Libraries Partnerships Leader and Dean's Library Adviser Cardiff University for her assistance in developing the bid and a huge thanks to the committee of the Health Libraries Group Wales who agreed to help start the conference by providing some funds.

As we started our planning, we also need to acknowledge the unstinting support of the EAHIL Past President Marshall Dozier. Marshall provided us with constant support and guidance throughout our planning. Thanks are also due to the Kathleen Cooks Fund administered by CILIP Wales which awarded us a grant in 2017.

The grant was awarded on the basis that we focus on impacts and learning outcomes, and we are now working on how we put this into practice to develop a more co-ordinated approach to health and wellbeing services across Wales.

It is also good to report that Kathryn Parry Development Officer CILIP Wales attended the conference, so that she could learn more about health and wellbeing initiatives.

To hold the conference in the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, we had to choose dates outside of the college's term dates. The LOC decided on the 9th -13th July 2018. More than 300 delegates from across Europe participated and 32 companies attended as exhibitors.

We also owe a huge thanks to the conference team at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Their support cannot be underestimated. Right from the start Janet Smith, events manager, understood our vision and what we wanted to achieve. Through discussions with Janet we made so many connections which would not otherwise have

happened, and thanks to Janet we were able to offer the Thursday morning Bike Ride.

Holding some of our meetings in the College was very special for the LOC as we began to fully appreciate the wonderful venue we had for the conference. And it's not every day that you see Sir Anthony Hopkins walking past you in the main foyer! We should have asked for his autograph there and then!

Delegate feedback on the venue has been overwhelmingly positive. People liked the natural light, access to outside areas and plenty of space. The flow of people was good and there were no bottlenecks during the breaks.

A special moment for the LOC chair was seeing Teresa Lee practising a violin she was testing out in one of the practice rooms in the College. EAHIL members are multi talented indeed!

It is impossible to list all the other ways in which Janet and her team helped us during the planning and hosting of the conference. We will certainly recommend the RWCMD as a conference venue to other organisations.

The LOC's next challenge was to develop the conference programme and to work up these and the process for the call for abstracts.

As well as the conference there were the Continuing Education Courses which would be held on the 9th and 10th July.

We were fortunate in having two members of the LOC very experienced in programme development, and in Continuing Education Courses. Lori Havard Swansea University and Mala Mann SURE Unit Cardiff University, both stepped up to the challenge of leading these critical parts of the conference planning.

Mala took a very systematic approach to developing the CEC courses. To make sure the courses met delegate needs, Mala surveyed EAHIL members about their training needs. This was done both at the Seville conference and also online. There was an excellent response to the surveys so Mala could be sure that the topics selected for the courses were those needed.

Mala had the support of colleagues from Cardiff University to plan and deliver the courses. Thanks in particular to Alison Weightman, Director of the SURE Unit, for her support not only for the CEC courses, but also in her contribution to the IPC meeting in November 2017.

A total of 14 courses were delivered over the two days – a mini programme in itself. It is good to report that nearly all of the courses were sold out, and thanks to the EAHIL Board CEC (no 3) was made available free to EAHIL members. The logistics of organising the rooms in Cardiff University not only for the CEC courses but also for the EAHIL Board meeting and the EAHIL Council meeting was handled by Angela Evans Cardiff University. Nothing was too much trouble for Angela and thanks to her hard work everything worked smoothly. The full report about the CECs will be provided to the organisers of the Basel workshop. For any further detail please contact Mala Mann at [mannmk@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:mannmk@cardiff.ac.uk)

From the start of our planning we took a broad approach not only in developing the conference themes around health and wellbeing, but also to the sessions which would take place at the conference. We wanted to make the most of the flexible space which our conference venue offered to us, so we decided that we would offer workshops, performances, as well as keynote presentations and parallel sessions. It soon became clear also that for the Innovation theme we needed a totally different approach and the Innovation Station was born!

The conference themes were developed jointly by members of the Local Organising Committee and colleagues from the International Programme Committee.

Sub groups of IPC and LOC members were set up for each of the themes and the groups worked on the themes for the abstract submission process.

There were 5 conference themes: Impact, Innovation, Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Information for patients, the public and carers, Global health.

The LOC and IPC agreed that plenary presentations were an essential part of the programme and that these would set the context for the further development of the conference themes in parallel sessions and workshops.

The keynote speaker for the opening plenary Cormac Russell Nurture Development had already been secured by the LOC chair as far back as 2016 following a two day training course.

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Cormac's approach to working with communities fitted like a glove with our overall vision of "Involving and Inspiring". So it was with some relief that Cormac replied to say the date was still in his diary.

After much deliberation invitations were sent out to all the other key note speakers, and we were delighted when we received positive responses.

We are very grateful to all of our speakers for the way in which they contributed to the success of the conference, and for the considerable effort they put into their presentations. So our thanks to Cormac Russell, Ayub Khan, Neil Macinnes, Professor Judith Hall and Professor Neil Frude.

Keynote presentations are available on the EAHIL Cardiff conference website at <https://eahilcardiff2018.wordpress.com/posters-and-presentations/>

A write up of the presentation by Ayub Khan CILIP President is also available in the September 2018 issue of Information Professional.

Lori Havard was not only the programme lead, but also took on the challenging task of the abstract submissions.

We are very grateful to all members of the IPC who worked tirelessly on marking the more than 170 abstracts submitted for the conference programme, and to those colleagues who joined us in Cardiff in November 2017 for the abstract judging meeting. This meeting is an essential part of the conference planning. It develops strong links between the LOC and the IPC, provides the foundation for the programme, and also gives IPC members the chance to see the conference venues, ask challenging questions, make helpful suggestions, and to get a feel for the city in which the conference will be taking place. It also helps if the sun shines during these days... as it always does in Cardiff! So a huge thanks to Maurella Della Seta, Lotta Haglund, Anna Belen Escriva, Bob Gann, Ivana Truccolo, Ann Ritchie, Timo Pilgram, Gerhard Bissels, Louise Farragher, Tatyana Kaygorodova, Katri Larmo, Guus van den Brekel and Aoife Lawton.

At the same time as getting to grips with the abstract submission process, we also agreed that we would have a Digital Poster exhibition, and that we would have an Innovation Station to showcase the new and exciting developments coming through in the abstracts under the Innovation theme.

Digital Posters were agreed by the LOC as one way in which we would meet our objectives of sustainability, and at the same time give us more space for the conference exhibition.

As this was the first time for Digital Posters at an EAHIL conference we knew that we would have lots to learn, and that this would be new to delegates also.

We have mixed feedback to report on these. Additional help from the company providing the totems particularly with formatting would have been a considerable help.

Delegates agreed that there should be more totems for the posters to make it easier for viewing, and that there should be a more prominent schedule of poster presentations if digital posters are used in future.

The LOC agrees with these comments, and overall we feel that we should not dismiss this different way of presenting information but that we should learn from the Cardiff experience in future events.

Implementing the idea of the Innovation Station as a hands on experience for delegates was very challenging – where would it be, how would the sessions be organised and how would they fit in with the overall conference programme.

Thanks to Jo Dundon who led the Innovation group these challenges were overcome and overwhelmingly the response from delegates was positive to this new approach.

There were 7 stations and the Innovation Stationers reported that they had lots of interest.

Overwhelmingly the stationers were enthusiastic about being part of this, and thought that this was a good way to showcase new ideas and discuss in smaller groups alongside the posters and the presentations.

Thanks to all the stationers for their hard work in making this possible and in particular to Guus van den Brekel a long standing EAHIL member for his enthusiastic support.

Future conference organisers will be pleased to know that both Guus and our other EAHIL colleague Tiina Heino are both happy to do something similar in future.

Knowing that the conference exhibition was central to making the conference viable, we started the process of "involving" companies from a very early stage in our planning.

The suggestions received from exhibitors at the conferences in Seville and Dublin helped us considerably in developing our conference packages, and thanks to all the companies who supported the Cardiff conference.

As well as the trade exhibition we featured two special exhibitions from two unique collections. The Royal College of Nursing History Box gave delegates the chance to see how nursing has changed over the years through this handling collection. The Archie Cochrane stand displayed items and photographs from the Cochrane Archive and delegates were also able to purchase copies of "One Man's Medicine". We are very grateful to Rosemary Soper librarian at Llandough Hospital for organising and staffing this stand, as well as fulfilling her many other tasks as a member of the LOC.

Three members of the LOC were dedicated to the exhibition as an essential aspect of the conference, leading on sponsorship, liaison with companies, and the exhibition logistics. Thanks to Ann Jones, Yasmin Noorani and Sarah Davies for all their hard work in putting together one of the largest exhibitions at an EAHIL Conference.

Conference exhibitors were happy with the arrangements made for them, and found it particularly helpful to have their lunch served half an hour before the delegate lunch break. Many exhibitors also participated in the gala dinner as part of their packages. The new data protection regulations made it difficult to provide the exhibitors with delegate information, and this is something that needs to be considered for future events.

We wanted to give delegates a wonderful Welsh Welcome, so Ann spent considerable time making local traders in Cardiff aware of the conference. Posters were strategically placed in a number of shops and restaurants. We managed to negotiate discounts for delegates in several eateries in Cardiff as well as in the Castle Gift shop.

During the conference the LOC worked well as a team. Detailed timetables had been prepared for each day of the conference. Thanks in particular to Rosemary Soper and Angela Perrett for all their hard work in organising these. Even with the best planning however, you cannot anticipate all the things which may occur during the event! You need to expect the unexpected!!! Knowing the strength of your team really helps when things get tricky, and it's good to report that when things cropped up everyone just got stuck in to sort them out.

Having walkie-talkies which were suggested by Janet Smith were invaluable in finding colleagues in such a large venue. So thanks again to Janet.

We were also supported by a number of volunteers who contributed far more than they perhaps anticipated to the collective effort when they signed up. So a huge thanks to Kate Perrett, Louis Davies, Phil Davies, Sally Bradford, Mark Champ and Stephen Williams for all their assistance.

No conference is successful without great marketing, social media and web presence. Thanks to Katrina Hall who from the start took charge of marketing the conference. Regular updates were published in professional journals and magazines to keep potential delegates and exhibitors up to date with our exciting conference planning.

Rachel Sully and Sarah Bruch were an amazing team for Twitter and the website. The speed at which new information was added to the web and the number of Tweets being sent out really created a buzz.

To really involve and capture the views of everyone at the conference we worked with Fran O'Hara Director of Scarlet Design to create visual representations of the event.

This was another first for an EAHIL conference but having seen Fran at work in other events the LOC knew that this would take everyone's breath away, and would really 'involve' everyone.

It is fair to say that delegates were not sure about this at the start, but once they understood what was happening there was no stopping them. We have so much to share from the Big Ideas Wall, the Visual Minutes, the Wall of Words, the Twitter Page and my favourite the Seat of Wisdom.

The Fish Bowl session which Lotta Haglund organised and Fran recorded has been transformed! We should all be "fish" jumping out of our bowls!

We have so much to share from these pictures that we will do a more detailed article on these visual minutes in the next issue of JEAHIL.

A massive thanks also to our fantastic and amazing photographer Adam Jones for all his work during the conference. Adam really fitted in well with the organising team and understood the significance of the conference vision right from the start. He was a joy to work with throughout the five days and thanks to Adam who captured so many memories of the Cardiff conference.

In planning the delegate visits on the Thursday morning, we wanted to offer a wide choice and ones which would support delegates' wellbeing.

Thanks to Delyth Morris and Kristine Chapman for all their work in organising the visits (see also the following pages of this issue).

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As part of the Arts Health and Wellbeing theme we also were delighted to have two performances at the conference. On the Wednesday the conference ended with a sing-a-long session led by the Singing for the Brain group. Singing for the Brain is part of the work of the Alzheimer's Society and is a way in which people with dementia and their carers can express themselves and socialise with others in a fun and supportive group. It was a great way to end the first day of the conference and thanks to all the colleagues from Alzheimer's Society for making this happen.

On Thursday before lunch delegates were able to attend a performance of 'Memoria' by the Re-Live Theatre Company in the Richard Burton Theatre.

'Memoria' is a performance by a remarkable group of people who came together to share their experiences of living with dementia. Their 'life story theatre' approach supports the group to reflect together on identity and memory, fear of change, fear of losing the ones we love, fear of losing ourselves.

Finally we want to thank all delegates for supporting our efforts in making the conference sustainable and also for all the donations made to the conference charity "Vision Aid Overseas".

As well as the Digital Posters, we cut down on our use of paper by having a conference programme which fitted behind the delegate badges, provided reusable water bottles to reduce the use of single use plastic, and had sustainable cloth bags.

With the fantastic "dragon" conference design thanks to Steve Haslam Greener

Graphics who also produced the banners and the conference organiser tee shirts we were able to create "Librarians Make a Spectacle" as a conference charity.

Delegates really helped with this and through our combined efforts we have donated to Vision Aid Overseas and to Cardiff Pedal Power, Cathays Cemetery, Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB Cymru) and the Temple of Peace and Health.

And a final thanks from the LOC Chair to colleagues from the Public Health Special Interest Group for their wonderful collection of photos in "Wining and Dining during the EAHIL years". These memories will last forever.



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