# Academic Libraries North Conference 2025

## Sustainable Innovation: moving forward in challenging times

*Please note: this programme may be subject to minor changes up until the date of the conference.*

Click on any session title to read the abstract.

## Day 2 - In-person at Manchester Metropolitan University, 11th July

| Time | Event | Duration | Well-being spaces |
|------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 9:30 - 10:00 | Arrival and refreshments – North Atrium? <br><br> *A 'Quiet Room' will be available – room 1.25 | 30 mins | A well-being space will be available all day in Room 1.25. Please feel free to use this space throughout the day. |
| 10:00 - 10:15 | Conference Opening <br><br> Nicola Gregory and Heather Johnston (ALN conference organising committee co-chairs) -Lecture Theatre G.36 <br><br> Rachel Beckett (Director, Library and Cultural Services, Manchester Metropolitan University) -Lecture Theatre G.36 | 15 mins | |
| 10:15 – 11:00 | Keynote <br><br> Monica Westin (Associate Director of Content and Discovery, Library and Cultural Services, Manchester Metropolitan University) -Lecture Theatre G.36) | 45 minutes | |
| 11:00 – 11:20 | Break and refreshments | 20 mins | |

| 11:20 – 11:50 | Platinum Sponsor Talk<br><br>Manchester University Press -Lecture Theatre G.36 | 30 mins | A well-being space will be available all day in Room 1.25. Please feel free to use this space throughout the morning. |
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| 12:00 - 12:50 | Session 1 (Please choose A, B or C)<br><br>**A - Workshop (room 1.22?)**<br><br>• Painting by numbers: Teesside University Library's green library growth.<br>Fred Milton (Teesside University)<br><br>**B - Workshop (room 1.23?)**<br><br>• Becoming an effective community research partner.<br>Phil Cheeseman (Lancaster University) and Elaine Sykes (Lancaster University)<br><br>**C - Short Papers (Lecture Theatre G.36 cap 250, or G.35 cap 120?)**<br><br>• Co-design in challenging times: A practical guide to student partnership for academic libraries.<br>Lynsey Blandford (Canterbury Christ Church University)<br><br>• Information and Academic Literacies Toolkit: Creativity and Innovation in Raising the Profile of Information and Academic Literacies in Curriculum Design.<br>Rebecca Beaumont (Lancaster University) and Louise Speakman (Lancaster University) | 50 mins | |

| 12:50 – 13:50 | Lunch | | |
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| 13:50 - 14:40 | **Session 2 (Please choose A, B or C)**<br><br>**A - Workshop (room 1.22?)**<br><br>• [Understanding "AI" (Large Learning Model text generation algorithms).](#) Jodika Gilworth (Manchester University Foundation Trust)<br><br>**B - Workshop (room 1.23?)**<br><br>• [Mental Health Advocacy: Good practices in supporting mental health and wellbeing.](#)<br><span style="color:red">Information to be added</span><br><br>**C - Short Papers (Lecture Theatre G.36 cap 250, or G.35 cap 120?)**<br><br>• [Guiding readers to alternative access routes to full text journal articles.](#) Fiona Ware (University of Hull) and Kirstyn Radford (University of Hull)<br><br>• ["Shared solutions: Improving digital usability through cross-institutional partnerships".](#) Kristian Scott (University of Manchester) and Jenny McNally-Bourne (University of Salford)<br><br>**D – Workshop (room 1.24?)**<br><br>• [Using educational games to engage students and develop referencing skills.](#) | 50 mins | |

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| | Donna Irving (Leeds Trinity University) and Sarah Munks (Leeds Trinity University) | | |
| 14:50-15:05 | Gold Sponsor talk<br><br>OCLC -(Lecture Theatre G.36) | 15 mins | |
| 15:05 – 15:20 | Break | 15 mins | |
| 15:20 – 16:10 | Session 3<br><br>**A- Worksop (room 1.22?)**<br><br>• [ALN SiG] Leaders network: Routes into management, a narrative approach from our panel<br>Tom Peach (York St John University)<br><br>**B- Workshop (room 1.23?)**<br><br>• [ALN SiG] Accessibility Group: reflections and plans for an uncertain future<br>Rosie Smith (Newcastle University)<br><br>**C- Short Papers (Lecture Theatre G.36 cap 250, or G.35 cap 120?)**<br><br>• Delivering Services Through Disruptive Change.<br>AJ Mackenzie (Leeds Beckett University)<br><br>• Teaching AI prompt literacy to undergraduate students.<br>Andrew Taylor (Liverpool Hope University) | 50 mins | |

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| | **D – Lightning talks and Short Paper (room 1.24?)** <br><br> • How Advance HE (HEA) Fellowships can benefit both individual staff development and your service as a whole. [Lightning Talk] <br> Helen Howard (Leeds Beckett University) <br><br> • Winter Vacation Engagement: Keeping Student Connections Alive. [Lightning Talk] <br> Charlotte Murray (Teesside University) <br><br> • "Let me handle that". Experts vs. Bots: implementing a rules-based library chatbot to enhance student support whilst maintaining the value of the 'library expert' [Short Paper] <br> Lizzie Seals (Sheffield Hallam University) | | |
| 16:20 - 16:30 | Day 2 Conference close –Lecture Theatre G.36 | 10 mins | |

## In-person Sessions, 11th July 2025

### Fred Milton (Teesside University)

**Painting by numbers: Teesside University Library's green library growth**

In 2023, Teesside University Library pledged to the CILIP Green Library Manifesto, a set of 'common values and commitments to drive transformational change for our planet and communities'. We have since delivered innovative creative and sustainable events encompassing wellbeing, student learning and community engagement, underlining the value libraries have in generating environmental impact. Attendees at our session

can 'try their hand' at one of our wellbeing activities. Whilst our principal objective was to engage students in conversations about proactive environmental work, these 'green' sessions demonstrated the merit of soft 'micro-engagements' with students through dialogue or wellbeing activities to build relationships which then provided openings for discussions of Library academic support or wider University services. Our session outlines the spectrum of Green Library activities delivered since 2023 for students and staff, demonstrating how these low-cost sessions offered wellbeing, provided networking and engagement opportunities for students, and through signposting local 'where to go' green spaces and exciting wildlife to be seen, delivered positive portrayals of our local area. Particularly popular green library events were watercolour painting of birds (which we invite session attendees to take part in whilst we talk), seed planting, pledge signing, 'natural' artwork, a photography competition, 'green pledges', and our green bookshelf. We will also reflect on activities that proved less popular; sustainability lectures, creative writing and a 'convo corner'. A green LibGuide, packed with creative environmental ideas and information of local green groups and natural spaces supports our work, whilst themed reading lists and our reading group contributed to the national Green Libraries Week of 2023 and 2024. Positive student feedback, vigorous online social media traffic and physical attendance across the events confirmed student appreciation for our work, enabling us to demonstrate commitment to the Green Manifesto, support Teesside's environmental, social, and governance factors and underpins elements of our Academic Enhancement Framework, namely socially and ethically engagement and being globally connected. One of our activities provided attendees with the opportunity to take part in watercolour painting of birds found around our campus and in the adjacent park. Our session will offer budding artists the opportunity to paint and discover the surprising variety of birdlife (including Kingfisher) found in central Middlesbrough in addition to hopefully experiencing a positive therapeutic ecotherapy experience creating their own 'green' artwork.

## Phil Cheeseman (Lancaster University) and Elaine Sykes (Lancaster University)

**Becoming an effective community research partner**

This workshop will explore the opportunities for libraries to act as research partners in community-based research projects. It addresses the sustaining services/resources, innovation/creativity and best value themes. Participants will be guided to identify projects and partnerships that build on existing services and resources, taking creative approaches to extend their value. Participants will be able to:

1. Recognise the requirements for effective community engagement and research partnership – ideas, partners, capabilities, capacity.
2. Understand how to position the library to be an effective partner – preparing to succeed, understanding partner roles, building relationships.
3. Understand the realities of partnership – effective partnerships, managing issues, maintaining commitment 4. Realise the benefits – outcomes, legacy and future opportunities.

The workshop will explore examples of projects that illustrate how libraries are uniquely positioned and skilled to engage in community research. A series of short activities will guide participants through steps that prepare them for research partnership including identifying opportunities, building community relationships, realising partnership potential, and creating successful outcomes. Participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences of effective partnership and will be provided with tools that can be used to apply learning to their specific contexts It will be relevant for those that are currently engaged in, or interested in developing research partnerships, and for those in leadership roles with oversight for this area of library activity. The workshop will draw on four case studies that describe recent and current research projects where Lancaster University Library is a named partner: Reimagining research practices, Open book futures, Humphry Davy Notebooks, and Jukebox: a teenage revolution. The projects all have strong community-focused dimensions and will be used by participants to consider the realities of being an active research partner and of authentic community engagement. This will be a fast-paced, interactive workshop. Participants will be guided through four group discussion activities and will contribute to creating a community research partnership 'tree'. Case studies, activity sheets and scenarios will support activities and provide takeaway resources to cascade learning to colleagues and apply to home contexts.

## Lynsey Blandford (Canterbury Christ Church University)

**Co-design in challenging times: A practical guide to student partnership for academic libraries**

The proposed lightning talk addresses the conference theme of 'Sustainable innovation' and the sub-themes of innovation and creativity. The Learning and Research Librarian and a Senior Lecturer in Film & TV, devised a creative and collaborative project to increase engagement with a new resource, BFI Player. The project took place against a challenging background of a university-wide redesign and a review of online resources. Attendees will learn about an engagement project created with limited resources, which benefited from creativity and collaboration between library

colleagues and an academic. The talk will be relevant to attendees who seeks to engage users and promote resources. They will discover what we did, as well as obstacles we encountered and how we overcame them. The final reflection on 'lessons learned' as well as future plans, will offer tangible ideas that delegates can develop and use in their own context. Colleagues from the library, student ambassadors and an academic collaborated on the project which aimed to increase the number of user accounts amongst students and staff, partly as evidence in support of a case for renewal. The campaign included creating an online guide and video on the library webpages and Blackboard (VLE) general course modules. The resource was also shared in information literacy workshops as part of inductions and information searching activities. Posters, leaflets, slides and social media were deployed at two promotional stands running consecutively on one day in the library and student café. Alongside a presentation of the project by the Learning and Teaching Librarian, Lynsey Blandford, there will be slides featuring images of promotional material such as posters and leaflets, links to online guides, and images of the event and its social media reel. Our project was created within an uncertain environment with changes to curriculum, early exit schemes and the threat of redundancies. Our approach will resonate with those working in academic libraries who are experiencing pressure to maintain their services while funding for staff, promotion and resources is reduced.

## Rebecca Beaumont (Lancaster University) and Louise Speakman (Lancaster University)

**Information and Academic Literacies Toolkit: Creativity and Innovation in Raising the Profile of Information and Academic Literacies in Curriculum Design**

The Information and Academic Literacies toolkit addresses innovation, creativity and demonstrates our approach in moving forward in challenging times. As part of our Curriculum Transformation Programme, we have responded to changing contexts and seized the opportunity to raise the profile and the importance of embedding/integrating information and academic literacies teaching and support into the curriculum. We were incredibly innovative and collaborative in our approach to mapping the information and academic skills, knowledge and abilities students may be encouraged to develop through levels 4-7 of their academic studies. Attendees will: Be inspired and encouraged in our approach to working collaboratively. Understand how developing an I&A literacies toolkit can promote a sustainable and effective use of time in curriculum development. Identify the importance of prioritising content and having a focused approach to I&A literacies teaching and support. Be inspired at our innovative and creative approach in mapping I&A literacies at levels 4-7 in a usable and accessible

way. Understand the potential impact of our toolkit across University programmes and curriculum design. We will provide the context of the Curriculum Transformation Programme at Lancaster University which will see a transformational re-design of our degree programmes and curriculum. This led us to identifying an opportunity for us to ensure information and academic literacies teaching and support is embedded within all programmes. We will explore our approach to working collaboratively and why this was important in the challenging times that we find ourselves. We will outline the purpose of the toolkit, how we envision it's use and how it's being used already, including case studies. We will showcase the toolkit and share our innovation and how we have been identified as 'leading the way' with our approach to mapping learning outcomes across levels 4-7.

## Jodika Gilworth (Manchester University Foundation Trust)

**Understanding "AI" (Large Learning Model text generation algorithms)**

Innovation/creativity subtheme: AI. Also 'Best Value' - the hope is that by better understanding AI people can focus on the ways of using it that actually improve productivity and avoid avenues which look tempting but in fact create more work in the long run. What the thing everyone is calling 'AI' actually is, how it works, and what that means for using it in libraries. I would aim to help attendees to properly understand what, specifically, the thing that everybody is calling "AI" actually is - hence my use of more specific terms such as 'Large Learning Model' and 'language generation'. Dispel myths – it is not the Star Trek computer. Understand its strengths and weaknesses. Via an exercise, expose the pitfalls of achieving 'efficiency' via LLM – it writes very quickly, but different and more time-consuming techniques are required for quality control. The aim is to create a deep understanding of the fundamental principles of LLM operation so that participants are not only aware of the capabilities of the programs that exist now, but able to reason about the likely capabilities of future models. We would then connect what has been learned with implementation in libraries using real-world examples from participants' work lives, in a discussion format. Initial questions via poll app will establish knowledge going in. There will be an interactive exercise around checking an AI's work (details tbc). Finally, I would like the last 1/3 of the session to consist of group and seminar-style discussions of real-world implementation dilemmas.

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**Mental Health Advocacy: Good practices in supporting mental health and wellbeing**

## Fiona Ware (University of Hull) and Kirstyn Radford (University of Hull)

**Guiding readers to alternative access routes to full text journal articles**

This paper will address the themes of Sustaining services in the longer term, and Innovation and Creativity. The Library made substantial changes to journal subscriptions, due to reductions in the Library budget, leading to cancellations and new platforms. The Library was concerned that academic staff and researchers who were familiar with accessing journals via particular websites, would not know that access was still available via alternative routes. Attendees will see the approach that the University of Hull took to overcome subscription cuts by promoting alternative routes to accessing full text articles and journals. The findings from feedback received and observations undertaken from researchers will be insightful for other institutions. This session will report on the findings of a "power of 3" group established for the purpose of guiding our users in the most efficient way of finding alternative access, with the emphasis on a change to the means of accessing the material, rather than removal of access.  A JISC online survey was created and sent to all research staff across the University Over 100 responses were received. This data was analysed and key themes identified. Additional follow-up interviews were conducted with members of staff who were given various articles to find so we could observe their workflows when searching. Their workflows were varied. While some started their search on the library website, some started on a discipline-specific A&I site, and a large number started on Google or Google Scholar. As an outcome of the project, we created a new webpage highlighting 5 top tips to help access full text journal articles that took in to account these varied starting points. We also created a video to highlight these techniques using Microsoft Clipchamp, and an additional video specifically for using Endnote Click. The support materials have been promoted through various channels (faculty meetings, Library meetings, Newsletters, University website, email lists etc) and have been positively received to date.

## Kristian Scott (University of Manchester) and Jenny McNally-Bourne (University of Salford)

**"Shared solutions: Improving digital usability through cross-institutional partnerships"**

This session will speak to multiple themes including how we can have a greater impact through collaboratively addressing shared concerns, how a principled approach to improving user experiences is needed and how partnering can bring this about more effectively and help hold our suppliers to account on their promises. Attendees will learn about the shared usability testing Manchester and Salford carried out in 2024. We will reflect on the importance of taking a pro-active approach to enhancing digital user experiences and share some of the tools, services and processes available to help with this. Most importantly, they will learn about the value of sharing knowledge, understanding, resources, costs etc. for the benefit of library audiences across multiple institutions. The session will be a shared presentation between representatives from Manchester and Salford library's and will include the following: How we co-developed the idea for a collaboration around digital inclusion that could deliver universal improvements benefiting multiple institutions. How we identified an appropriate interface common to both institutions that would be benefit from usability and accessibility testing. How we worked with multiple library teams, including digital development, digital systems, teaching collections etc. to design and deliver a user testing session at the Alliance Manchester Business School's (AMBS) behavioural lab. How we worked together to prepare, review and analyse the results from the testing session and deliver relevant feedback to the supplier. A brief overview of the results of the testing and the areas we identified for improvement in the Leganto Reading List system. A reflection on the benefits, challenges and lessons learned from running a short-term cross-institutional project. A call for ideas for similar potential collaborations involving other ALN institutions.

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## Donna Irving (Leeds Trinity University) and Sarah Munks (Leeds Trinity University)

**Using educational games to engage students and develop referencing skills.**

Supporting student wellbeing by designing full and interactive sessions that are fun and inclusive whilst fostering deeper learning and enquiry. Keeping creative in challenging times by designing simple low tech, cost-effective learning materials. In this case study we have developed a snakes and ladders game to improve referencing skills and knowledge. An opportunity to play a referencing game that can be adapted for different

learning needs. How the game works in context. A catalyst for attendees to think about developing more creative sessions. Why we created the game. The learning outcomes of the game. Attendees will play the game and explore alternative uses for it in relation to information skills teaching. Using the game to foster student discussion. Attendees will play the game.

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## Tom Peach (York St John University)

**Other information to be added**

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## Rosie Smith (Newcastle University)

**Other information to be added**

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## AJ Mackenzie (Leeds Beckett University)

**Delivering Services Through Disruptive Change**

My session will incorporate a number of the key subthemes of the conference, these are: prioritising supporting staff wellbeing whilst maintaining productivity and creativity, efficient and effect decision making, developing projects and embracing technology to meet financial challenges and need for changing working practices whilst not losing quality of service provision. Wrapping these all together with how I have achieved these in a practical way managing at Leeds Beckett. Attendees will learn or take away how the key challenges being experienced in the Higher Education sector have manifested practically, how using a model of system change theory can be used to guide a response, and how LBU have responded. I will also show how different Human Relations theories can be learnt from to protect staff wellbeing during this p Firstly, I am going to look at the current contextual landscape of Higher Education and the challenges that it is presenting institutions. This will then be framed as the key practical manifestations of these issues and their impacts, regarding the service I manage at Leeds Beckett. I will then use a system change theory model to look at how we can use four key pillars of adaptation, alignment, learning, collaboration and evidence-driven action, to address these challenges and create responses to the context. Following this, I will present a case study of the key projects that formed our responses to show

how that the thinking can be deployed in a practical way and what we hope to achieve by doing so. However, there is also the incredibly important aspect of staff wellbeing and productivity. The second half of the presentation will be devoted to how various human relations theories such as Maslow, Elton Mayo and Self-determination Theory can be used, and have helped me, to understand how best to protect the wellbeing and motivation of a team. Based in the theory and my own experience, I have then created several core values that I use to support my team process, all of which can be taken away and applied at attendees' institutions.

## Andrew Taylor (Liverpool Hope University)

**Teaching AI prompt literacy to undergraduate students**

This session meets the theme of "Best value: Developing valuable skills". Attendees will gain an understanding of how prompt literacy can be taught to undergraduate students. The session will offer attendees an understanding of prompt literacy and examine how it can be taught to undergraduate students in the context of new AI research assistant add-ons and existing tools.

## Helen Howard (Leeds Beckett University)

**How Advance HE (HEA) Fellowships can benefit both individual staff development and your service as a whole**

Advance HE Fellowships provide an opportunity for staff to reflect on their work and develop new skills and provide recognition of their expertise. At Leeds Beckett University, a wide range of library staff have become Fellows, demonstrating to the University the breadth and impact our work and leading to further partnership working across the institution. Attendees will find out about the benefits of Advance HE Fellowships to individual staff in a range of roles and to the whole library service. They will be able to consider whether Fellowships could be a cost-effective option for staff development and provide an opportunity for increased visibility and influence in their own institution. This lightning talk focuses on how gaining Advance HE Fellowship has been effective personal development for a wide range of staff at Leeds Beckett University and has provided a number of added benefits to us as a service. These include improved visibility and influence, as well as opportunities for partnership working outside the service. We have taken an inclusive approach, encouraging as wider group of staff as possible to apply (not just those who teach), and supporting staff

not in management roles to achieve Senior Fellowship. This approach has resulted in a greater awareness within our institution of the breadth and value of our service's work, helping us to demonstrate our impact. Participating in the scheme and then acting as critical friends to others has broadened our staff's understanding of the work of colleagues across Leeds Beckett and provides connections with a range of staff beyond our service. Structure of the talk: brief overview of Advance HE Fellowships and why you might apply (2 mins); how we have used the scheme for staff development and recognition, sharing views from staff who have participated (4 mins); how our involvement has benefitted the service as a whole (4 mins).

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## Charlotte Murray (Teesside University)

**Winter Vacation Engagement: Keeping Student Connections Alive**

My session will focus on the sub-theme 'Focusing on What Truly Matters.' Students are at the core of everything we do, and it is crucial that our support and engagement efforts remain consistent, even when the campus is closed. My session will focus on the sub-theme 'Focusing on What Truly Matters.' Students are at the core of everything we do, and it is crucial that our support and engagement efforts remain consistent, even when the campus is closed. During the Winter Vacation of 2024, Teesside University introduced the inaugural 'Winter Conversations' initiative, a semi-structured conversation survey. This initiative involved our Student Engagement Assistants (current TU students employed as staff) engaging with students utilising the library during the winter break. The primary aim was to connect with students who might be experiencing isolation and loneliness, while also gathering valuable feedback on desired future Library developments. This initiative was a collaborative effort, combining the expertise of our Library team, Mental Health & Wellbeing team, Senior Management Team, and volunteers from various departments. Additionally, we organised and promoted 57 activities throughout the Winter Vacation, with our SEAs and staff volunteers interacting with over 147 students. Details from our feedback report includes: positive sentiment is a consistent theme within the feedback received and indicates that activities had a positive impact on wellbeing and that students valued the opportunity to connect with each other and staff. 60% of respondents indicated that participating helped them 'feel less lonely' and 75% reported that participation helped to 'improve [their] mood or reduce stress' this is reflective of comments received including "Made me more happy and mentally energetic" and "being able to do other activities [helped] change my mindset".

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## Lizzie Seals (Sheffield Hallam University)

**"Let me handle that". Experts vs. Bots: implementing a rules-based library chatbot to enhance student support whilst maintaining the value of the 'library expert'**

Our presentation aligns to the theme of 'Sustaining services/resources in the longer term'. We are all under pressure to do more with less. At Hallam we are working hard to ensure our library experts continue to offer impactful support to students. To enable this, we introduced a library chatbot as part of the live chat service to improve student access to self-help information - enhancing the experience for both the quick and complex enquiries. Chatbots are an increasingly popular tool in university support models. This session will contribute to the understanding of practical usage of a non-AI chatbot. Our session will be useful for anyone involved in delivering library chat enquiry services and/or is considering introducing a chatbot. Attendees will learn about our approach to designing, implementing and evaluating Springhare's LibAnswers chatbot tool and how we worked with student partners to deliver this. Our short paper will cover:

- The rationale – service data showed that 15% of Library Chat enquiries could have been answered by self-help information (semester 1, 2023/24). We introduced the chatbot to improve students' access to self-help through automated routing via pre-determined topics. We also wanted to ensure that the chatbot would not become, or be perceived, as a barrier to getting help.
- Design – we worked with student partners for their input into the design of the chatbot. We gained valuable feedback ranging from the usability of the tool to revealing insights into students' understanding of library language. We will share examples of the UX and feedback activities and the changes we made as a result.
- Impact – we will share service data on how the chatbot has impacted the live Library Chat service. Did we achieve our aim to shift simpler enquiries to self-help? Have we successfully continued to demonstrate the value of the library expert on live chat?
- Evaluation – after 6 months of chatbot implementation we will discuss what has worked well and areas for improvement, including new feedback from student partners.
- Final reflections – our thoughts on the project overall and what we might do differently.