

## Academic Libraries North Conference 2025

### Sustainable Innovation: moving forward in challenging times

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

Click on any session title to read the abstract.

#### Day 1 - Online Wednesday (Teams) 18th June

Time	Event	Duration
10:00 - 10:05	Conference Opening – ALN chair	5 mins
10:05 - 10:50	Keynote <a href="#">Helen Rimmer</a> (kindness and wellbeing coach, The Kind Brave Leader)	45 mins
	Handover buffer/ break	15 mins
11:05 - 11:55	Session 1 (Please choose A or B) <b>A – Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">Behind the ALN Frontline Forum</a> Hattie Blenkinsop (University of Sunderland) and Jenny Foster (Edge Hill University)</li></ul> <b>B – Lightning talk and short paper</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">How to engage users with a new resource</a> [Lightning talk] Lynsey Blandford (Canterbury Christ Church University)</li><li><a href="#">Working WISER: using the Eisenhower matrix to evaluate library services</a> [Short paper] Katharine Davidson-Brown (Durham University)</li></ul>	50 mins

11:55 - 12:05	Handover buffer/ break	10 mins
12:05 - 13:05	<p>Session 2 (please choose from A or B)</p> <p><b>A – Short Papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Embracing technology and digital strategy. Creating a sustainable library resource for use across a university</a> Alex Wheeler (Manchester Metropolitan University) and David Matthews (Manchester Metropolitan University)</li> <li>• <a href="#">"Does it make the boat go faster?" Developing a Library's academic skills offer in a time of financial uncertainty</a> Laurence Morris (Leeds Beckett University) and Dr. Alice Stamataki (Leeds Beckett University)</li> </ul> <p><b>B – Short papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">“Necessity is the Mother of all Invention”: The need to refocus and to reshape the delivery of front-line Library services at the University of Huddersfield</a> Chris Beevers (University of Huddersfield) and Paula Clover (University of Huddersfield)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Showcasing All Collections through Awareness Months at University of Leeds Libraries</a> Kelly Almond-Beech (University of Leeds)</li> </ul>	50 mins
13:05 – 13:50	Lunch	45 mins
13:50 – 14:05	Gold Sponsor talk -	15 mins
14:05 – 15:05	Session 3 (please choose from A or B)	60 mins

	<p><b>A – Short papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Empowered Growth: Enhancing Postgraduate Professional Development with LifeComp &amp; LinkedIn Learning</a> Andy Holgate (Lancaster University)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Trailblazers: Collaborating with other libraries to develop a new initiative</a> Tom Morley (Lancaster University)</li> </ul> <p><b>B – Short papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Beyond Paywalls: Librarians Re-imagining Open Access</a> Joanne Fitzpatrick (Lancaster University)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The best teaching session: Information Literacy through engagement, empowerment, value and impact</a> Janice Fernandes (University of West London)</li> </ul>	
15:05 – 15:10	Day 1 Conference Close	

## Keynotes

Helen Rimmer (kindness and wellbeing coach, The Kind Brave Leader)

### **Kindness as a Catalyst: Sustaining Innovation and Wellbeing in Challenging Times**

When times are tough — when budgets tighten, workloads grow, and uncertainty looms — it's easy to think kindness and wellbeing are luxuries we can't afford. But what if they're exactly what we need to not only get through, but to thrive?

In this keynote, Helen Rimmer, founder of The Kind Brave Leader, invites us to rethink kindness as a powerful force for sustainable innovation in academic libraries. She'll explore how simple, genuine acts of kindness can spark a ripple effect, strengthening wellbeing, fostering creativity, and helping teams navigate even the hardest days.

Helen will share her own journey alongside research and practical ideas you can take back to your library. She'll also challenge the difficult things, like how to spot when organisations are “carewashing” (talking about wellbeing without really meaning it) and how we can create spaces where people feel safe, valued, and able to do their best work.

Expect to be part of the conversation, not just a listener. There'll be moments for reflection, some simple but powerful exercises, and plenty of chances to connect with the heart of why you do what you do. In the face of rising demands and shrinking resources, kindness can be the catalyst that sustains not just our services, but our people.

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## Monica Westin (Associate Director of Content and Discovery, Library and Cultural Services, Manchester Metropolitan University)

### **The 10,000-year librarian: Radical sustainability for enduring knowledge**

In times of upheaval, long-term thinking can feel daunting, if not impossible—yet few things matter more. Resisting reactive, short-term fixes to our current obstacles is essential to building a lasting future for knowledge. This talk proposes a new framework of “radical sustainability” for academic librarianship that challenges some of our core assumptions about our institutional work by asking how we can balance meeting our present organizational needs without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. We will explore concrete strategies for building new types of information sustainability: long term financial and operational sustainability; technological sustainability, including anticipating and planning for widespread obsolescence; and social sustainability, including facilitating intergenerational knowledge transfer and fighting for a world where students and researchers of the future can meet their information needs. To do this, we need both profoundly agile mindsets that allow us to pivot, learn, and change— as well as new tools for preventing burnout and new types of institutional support for change management.

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## List of Sessions

## Online Sessions, 18th June 2025

Hattie Blenkinsop (University of Sunderland) and Jenny Foster (Edge Hill University)

### **Behind the ALN Frontline Forum**

The Frontline Forum launched in 2024 as a virtual discussion and development space for teams working directly with students and users. It was created after the ALN staff development planning group identified low engagement with ALN activities from student facing teams, especially those in frontline enquiry or help and support roles. The pilot ran successfully during academic year 2024/25 and forums were held bi-monthly, with multiple individuals and organisations contributing to the five forums.

This session aims to map the organisation of the forum against a project lifecycle, giving participants insight into both project management approaches and the real-life challenges of delivering the initiative.

Areas which will be discussed include:

- Identifying the original need.
- Refining the concept and consulting with members.
- Logistics of delivering the pilot.
- The importance of iterative design and evaluation.
- Measuring success and impact in the short and long term.

Participants will also take part in a short workshop in the same format of the facilitated breakout rooms used during the forums.

This workshop will be an exploration of some of the challenges encountered while delivering the forum and will provide an opportunity for participants to help shape its future development.

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Lynsey Blandford (Canterbury Christ Church University)

### **How to engage users with a new resource**

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.

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## Katharine Davidson-Brown (Durham University)

### **Working WISER: using the Eisenhower matrix to evaluate library services**

The paper will focus on the following themes: Impact: focusing on what truly matters | Best value: focusing our time and energy in ways that make a difference | Best value: What to focus on, what to drop with the least impact. How teams can work together and use the Eisenhower matrix to look at the urgency and importance of tasks and assess

the value and impact of services. Deciding what to continue, pause and stop altogether.

The talk will look at how the Customer Services team assessed the ways we worked, and the services we deliver, deciding what to continue, pause and stop altogether. In late 2024 due to a number of absences and vacancies within our team, the Library Customer Services co-ordinators team started a project to look at our priorities across all the services we deliver and the tasks we undertake. Initially we looked at which services were most important, reflecting on our key stakeholders and the impact and value of our services. The initial aspiration was to use this information to ensure that our key services were covered in cases of unexpected absence and while running with temporary vacancies.

In early 2025 we found that the vacancies we had in the team were not expected to be filled, and so we changed our goal to long term service delivery planning, using the Eisenhower matrix to distinguish between urgent and important services, in addition to information we gathered through rotas and observation over the staff time and resource needed to deliver these services, to decide what to continue, pause and stop altogether for the following academic year.

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**Alex Wheeler (Manchester Metropolitan University) and David Matthews (Manchester Metropolitan University)**

**Embracing technology and digital strategy. Creating a sustainable library resource for use across a university**

The session will meet conference themes by discussing the creation and adaptation of an online resource designed to scaffold students through the literature searching aspect of a final year project. This project was prompted by the request of a faculty director of education in line with the demands of a new digital strategy. Accordingly, it will focus on embracing technology, establishing partnerships and working with others, and responding to changing contexts.

Attendees will learn about our experience creating, developing and implementing a library designed resource. We will focus on our process of designing an innovative resource with faculty backing and using that momentum to deliver a sustainable template. As such, attendees will learn about a real-world example of navigating university strategic policy whilst balancing differing faculty needs within the context of tight finance and staff time.

Within our paper, we will explore the development of the dissertation support resource. We will begin by exploring the design of a resource in line with a request of a faculty director of education and how it links to wider strategic imperatives. We will also showcase how we used our professional relationships to influence the decision to use articulate 360 rather than deliver a playlist of videos. We will cover our initial design of a resource and work with an e-learning developer to create a prototype. We will then move to the formation of a task and finish group (focusing time and energy in ways that make a difference) and the challenges and success of creating a template that is usable and sustainably editable by librarians working in all faculties. We will finish discussing the use of the resource in innovative setting such as a part of a podcast series ("projcast") and our experience promoting this design to peers in the library sector. We will cover these elements with a combination of screenshots, live demonstration, testimony and sharing feedback about the project.

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**Laurence Morris (Leeds Beckett University) and Dr. Alice Stamataki (Leeds Beckett University)**

**"Does it make the boat go faster?" Developing a Library's academic skills offer in a time of financial uncertainty**

This session aligns to the main sustainable innovation theme of the conference, suggesting ways of moving Library-led academic skills support forwards in challenging times. In particular, it focuses on high impact skills activities, sustainable service delivery and development, and building new partnerships to also extend the influence of the wider Library.

Attendees will receive a toolkit of reflective prompts and practical suggestions to help them consider how best to develop academic skills services in times of change. The session will enable reflection on core principles of service design and delivery, while also providing actual practical examples of ways ahead.

The session will begin by providing reflective prompts to inform future service design, ranging from the core purposes of Library-led academic skills provision, to how best to achieve highest impact and broader reflective prompts about how we might make our collective boats go faster (2011, Beveridge and Hunt-Davis). The session will then consider practical examples of high impact academic skills interventions to suit potentially-reduced capacity, including a focus on international student support and a breakout example of redesigning and even expanding support of PGR students. Ways of growing influence through high impact academic colleague-focused interventions will also be considered, such as supporting reduced capacity course teams on a



consultancy basis or demonstrating a Library-based team's wider influence through support of colleagues through pedagogical qualifications. Essentially, this paper considers practical ways to respond to stormy professional times by exploring capacity to influence the local institutional weather.

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Chris Beevers (University of Huddersfield) and Paula Clover (University of Huddersfield)

**“Necessity is the Mother of all Invention”: The need to refocus and to reshape the delivery of front-line Library services at the University of Huddersfield**

This session meets the 'Sustaining services in the longer-term' theme. It outlines the methods we employed in Summer 2024 to refocus and to reshape the delivery of key aspects of frontline Library services following a reduction in the staffing resource in the Customer Services Division within CLS at the University of Huddersfield.

Using our experiences as a case study, attendees will gain an insight into several practical approaches that were successfully employed to review key aspects of front-line Library service delivery which all needed to be implemented within a relatively short timescale. Attendees will also learn about the subsequent impact of these changes.

In May 2024, a decision was taken to reduce the staffing resource within Customer Services. This necessitated a “root and branch” review of the way we delivered key aspects of our front-line Library service which needed to be completed and implemented by September 2024 (the start of the Academic Session). In our session, the key services that we will focus on are:

- Library opening hours
- The Library Help Desk (staffing)
- The Shelving function
- The Inter-library Loans service

We will outline several approaches that we successfully employed to undertake this initiative. These included:

- I. Analysing existing data sets to inform our decision-making
- II. Collaborating closely with our front-line staff to both utilise their expertise and to gain a deep insight into particular operations
- III. Adopting a basic framework to assist us with identifying and prioritising:
  - What is core and what we absolutely needed to retain “As Is”

- What we needed to retain but had to be provided differently
- What we could stop doing/providing altogether

We will also outline subsequent developments that have taken place since September 2024. We will conclude with a summary of the impact that this whole initiative has had on our service delivery, our customers and our staff.

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## Kelly Almond-Beech (University of Leeds)

### **Showcasing All Collections through Awareness Months at University of Leeds Libraries**

Our themed Awareness activities showcasing print and online collections have transformed a one-off themed display into an ongoing, engaging, aspect of cross-team workflows. This presentation will highlight the considerations of staff time, expertise, and organisation that helped to make these collections activities sustainable. Curating themed collections activities allows teams across the libraries to work collaboratively and creatively and contributes to both staff and student wellbeing and satisfaction with library services.

Attendees will learn how an ongoing programme of themed collections activities has grown from a one-off project to a sustainable workflow. The presentation will focus on how multiple library teams have worked together, increasing understanding of cross-team workflows and sharing values and priorities. Attendees will come away with an understanding of the criteria we've used to assess and implement sustainable and collaborative working practices and how they might undertake a similar initiative in their institutions.

Library teams at the University of Leeds are running a monthly programme of awareness themed activities which highlight the links between our print, online and cultural collections, alongside read-alongs and Wikipedia edit-a-thons. These activities showcase our rich collections in response to Awareness months, like Disability History Month. Curating these activities allows us to increase the visibility of our resources, and the library, while supporting staff and student networks across a wide range of subjects. This initiative began with a one-off, university-led project for which the library curated a print display, reading lists, online featured collection of e-resources.

The project tapped into the enthusiasm of library staff for showcasing collections items and allowed us to meaningfully engage networks and communities across the University to help identify relevant resources. This presentation will cover how we

manage our collections activities, how we have measured their impact and how the project has grown and changed in response to interest, feedback and, increasingly, colleagues who want to be involved. We will discuss how this initiative has highlighted strengths across different teams, strengthened cross-team processes, encouraged an inclusive library environment for a wide range of communities, and invited users to contribute to collections development.

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### Andy Holgate (Lancaster University)

#### **Empowered Growth: Enhancing Postgraduate Professional Development with LifeComp & LinkedIn Learning**

This session will meet the criteria of innovation, rethinking an employability module to incorporate LinkedIn Learning, this had never been done before at Lancaster on this scale.

It's about working with academics, mapping learning content and giving students empowerment to grow as professionals. It will also show librarians an innovative way of driving engagement with a resource such as LinkedIn Learning.

How we took an existing employability module and redesigned it to use LIFECOMP and LinkedIn Learning, and in the process raising the student satisfaction with the module by 40% . We will cover how we chose the resources and mapped the LinkedIn content to each LifeComp strand. We will look at what assessment took place, and we will share the results that indicate that this is a successful and innovative approach in empowering students to grow professionally. I will also share and present our digital toolkit that will allow other institutions to duplicate this approach.

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### Tom Morley (Lancaster University)

#### **Trailblazers: Collaborating with other libraries to develop a new initiative**

This session will align closely with the conference theme of establishing partnerships and working with others, as well as keeping creative in challenging times. The session will explore how 3 Northern academic libraries worked collaboratively to develop the Trailblazers scheme.

Attendees will find out how three academic libraries collaborated closely with a university press to develop a high-profile open access publishing scheme. We hope

that attendees will gain a greater awareness of the benefits of collaborating with other institutions, and considerations when working with others.

This short paper will discuss how three academic libraries worked collaboratively with a university press to develop an open access book publishing scheme for early career researchers. It will begin by introducing the concept of open access books and the challenges this poses to libraries. It will then provide an overview of the Trailblazers initiative, an open access initiative which provides selected early career authors with the opportunity to publish a fully funded Open Access Book with Liverpool University Press. The scheme was founded and developed by the Libraries of Lancaster University, the University of Liverpool, and the University of Salford and Liverpool University Press. The talk will explore why this collaborative approach was adopted, and institutions have benefitted from working with each other.

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## Joanne Fitzpatrick (Lancaster University)

### **Beyond Paywalls: Librarians Re-imagining Open Access**

This short paper will particularly address the subtheme of innovation/creativity by presenting a way to respond to the changing context of Open Access.

The session will prompt librarians to think more broadly about Open Access to include other barriers to access that they may not have had the opportunity to think through before. They will gain an awareness of digital accessibility, diamond open access initiatives for books, and other relevant considerations.

The Open Book Futures project has a key deliverable of providing a knowledge base of guidance and best practice to enable small diamond open access publishers to produce accessible outputs. The development of this has been highly collaborative with publishers and librarians, and has included formal consultations, expert panels and requirements gathering. One activity within that programme of consultation has been the 'Beyond Paywalls: Librarians Re-imagining Open Access' event - a live survey (with asynchronous options) designed to gather the views of librarians on a range of ideas centred on expanding the concept of Open Access to go beyond just removing paywall barriers, but also those associated with accessibility, systemic power imbalances, censorship and more. This short talk will detail the content of that session, describe an overview of the responses of the librarians who engaged with the event and how this has impacted on the deliverables of the work package.

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Janice Fernandes (University of West London)

### **The best teaching**

This session is aligned to the theme of the conference “Sustainable innovation: moving forward in challenging times”. It focusses on the value and importance of subject librarianship in academic libraries. It centres on the sub-themes of showcasing the impact of information literacy teaching in Higher Education through innovative strategies in challenging times.

The author will, through a presentation, highlight various tried and tested strategies to engage with the students, along with simple approaches. By attending this session, delegates will feel more confident about using and quoting use age old laws (like Ranganathan’s 5 laws of library science) to demonstrate value and impact of the profession.

This session will be useful for participants who teach information literacy to students in Higher Education. It is seen that Higher education students especially at Level 4 are not particularly engaged with information literacy sessions, preferring to use Google and free citation generators. When they come to Level 6, this translates into not knowing how to use and reference academic sources and might lead to unintentional plagiarism. Increasing student presence and engagement is often a challenging task that directly impacts upon the value of librarianship. The presentation is particularly relevant to delegates who might be under pressure to depict the importance of subject librarianship especially when current budget cuts and job uncertainty asks for evidence through realms of documentation and graphs. The presentation will describe simple but effective techniques like observation, small group and large group teaching, worksheets, effective presentations, communication skills, personalised teaching etc. It will explain how to be interactive, confident and research oriented. Postgraduate students cheerfully proclaim that the subject librarian is the only one who can save them from Doom! (My best example is called “Every CAT tells a story!”)

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