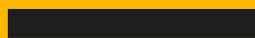


2022

YEAR IN REVIEW



ACADEMIC
LIBRARIES NORTH

CHAIR'S REFLECTIONS

Welcome to the second Academic Libraries North (ALN) Annual Review. ALN is now a well-established and successful consortia operating across the north of England. We have made many steps forward in developing the work of the group over the past 12 months.

Highlights of 2022 include adding to our roster of groups supporting activity across the consortia with Partnerships Development and Inter-Library Loans Community of Practice. We have also developed our work in the EDI arena, creating an action group to lead on bringing institutional activity together and sharing best practice. More on the work of the EDI Action Group (EDIAG) further on in the report.

Staff development has again seen delivery of a diverse range of workshops, TeachMeets and exchanges of experience with great feedback and much engagement from our ALN members. For the 2022 conference, the planning committee invested in a dedicated conference platform, Hubilo, to build on the success of 2021. Another brilliant set of papers created a programme with real energy and innovation, on the theme of active approaches to inclusivity. Read on for further feedback on the conference.

Thank you to Emma Spivey who left ALN in April 2022. She worked incredibly hard to bring ALN into being and we wish her well in her future endeavours. Welcome to Andrew Walsh who joined ALN in August 2022. He will be working with Nicky Freeman and the Steering Group to develop the work of ALN. I'd also like to thank the members of the ALN Steering Group for the lead they have taken in helping to operationalise the many strands of activity undertaken over the year.

Looking ahead the Steering Group will continue its lead in developing ALN activity and ensure its success. I look forward to reporting back on another successful year for ALN.

Best wishes,
Rosie Jones
Chair, Academic Libraries North



What is Academic Libraries North (ALN)?

ALN is a network of academic libraries in the North of England and a sub group of SCONUL. Through collaborative activities and mutual support, ALN seeks to provide opportunities for members in the exchange of knowledge and experience. It helps facilitate initiatives that respond to emerging opportunities and support members through future challenges in higher education and the library environment.

Academic Libraries North was formed by the coming together of two successful and dynamic regional consortia, the Northern Collaboration and NoWAL in May 2021.

To achieve this Academic Libraries North:

- Advocates for member libraries in the region, should Government policy decisions impact upon them, especially highlighting key roles in the contribution of libraries supporting learning and research and the strategic goals of our wider institutions
- Supports institutions to improve quality and efficiencies within their services, including measuring service quality and demonstrating impact
- Harnesses the skills and experience of staff within member institutions in developing relationships and contributing to the sharing of experience and learning from others
- Provides a positive and inclusive environment for all members and their staff
- Celebrates success through collaboration, innovation, influence and partnership

Our 2022 members are:

Bolton	Leeds Arts	Northumbria
Bradford	Leeds Beckett	Open University
British Library	Leeds Conservatoire	RNCM
Chester	Leeds Trinity	Salford
Cumbria	Liverpool	Sheffield
Durham	Liverpool Hope	Sheffield Hallam
Edge Hill	Liverpool John Moores	Sunderland
Huddersfield	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	Teesside
Hull	Manchester	UCLan
Lancaster	Manchester Metropolitan	York
Leeds	Newcastle	York St John

ALN STEERING GROUP



The Steering Group acts on behalf of the Board to guide the development of ALN and its work. It oversees all ALN activities, manages the progression of the ALN strategy and sets the agenda for Board meetings.

The Steering Group comprises from top to bottom (left to right):

Rosie Jones: Chair (Teesside University);
Kathryn Smith: Vice Chair (Northumbria University);
Phil Cheeseman: Staff Development Lead (Lancaster University);
Paul Everitt: Communication Lead (Manchester Metropolitan University);
Michael Fake: Financial Lead (University of Leeds);
Alison Lahlafi: Groups Lead (University of Bradford);
Maria Mirza: EDI Lead (Edge Hill University);
Heather Thrift: Procurement Lead (Liverpool John Moores University)

Alison Lahlafi and Heather Thrift are due to step down at the end of 2022.

. The ALN Twitter account now has 820 followers from within and outside ALN member libraries. Follow us today @acadlibsnorth



ALN GROUPS

Over 2022, all of the existing groups have continued to work hard together, creating materials for promotion around our member institutions and bringing shared issues forward for discussion and development.

NEW GROUPS

Two new Communities of Practice were created over the year, prompted by activity from within our membership:

- **Inter-Library Loans**

To provide an opportunity for Interlibrary Loans practitioners to exchange operational experiences, learn from each other, develop and share best practice, and build a sense of community which facilitates resource sharing within the Academic Libraries North Consortium.

- **Partnerships Development**

The remit of the group is to meet with other ALN library practitioners in the area of partnership and franchise provision to exchange practice experiences, learn from each other, and develop best practice, using the group to build a sense of community. This includes all aspects of supporting both UK based partners and Transnational Education provision.

We now have 9
Communities of
Practice and 6
Special Interest
Groups



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Since ALN's inception, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) has been high up on its agenda. It is important to the Steering Group and Board that the EDI activity is practical and leads to tangible outcomes.

EDI ACTION GROUP (EDIAG)

The EDIAG was established in June 2022.

Members of the group are from over half of the ALN member institutions with hopes that it will be fully representative over time.

One of its first actions was to start to collect case studies of EDI activities amongst the members which then formed the basis of the December meeting of the group.

A Teams site and a JiscMail list have been created to enable easy communication and sharing of resources.

EDI INNOVATION FUND

In the June 2022 ALN Board meeting, there was agreement to support the establishment of an ALN EDI Innovation Fund.

The chairs of the Action Group drafted a set of criteria against which to assess bids and developed an online application form.

In early September, a call for submissions was launched, looking for bids related to the following priority areas:

- Anti-racism in libraries
- Workforce diversity in libraries
- Library support for specific groups of customers – LGBTQ+, International, etc
- Library support for decolonising higher education and research

The bids should also:

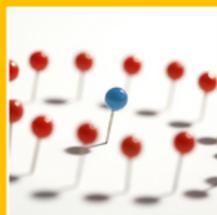
- include collaboration across 2 or more ALN members;
- demonstrate how the outputs and learning from the project will be shared across the breadth of the ALN community, e.g. a conference presentation, an online resource etc;
- outline how the project might benefit other members.

ALN proposed £500 for each project. 8 project bids were received, 6 of which were given the go ahead in the first wave, following review by a small Task & Finish Group of the Action Group. Projects were to start from January 2023.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- An ALN project team has been working together to create an advocacy resource to support library work around mental health and wellbeing. It consists of explanatory text and links to resources and contributed case studies of what ALN libraries have already done in this area.
- Members can register their details on a Microsoft Form and are then added to a SharePoint/Teams site to access the resource.
- The group formally launched the resource at an event in November 2022, with a programme of discussion and lightning talks from ALN libraries explaining about current initiatives in their libraries. The event was successful with a great turnout and feedback. As a result, further events are also planned for 2023.



Thriving in your career Part 1

- An in-person event was held in June 2022, as an opportunity for BAME colleagues and students to come together face-to-face to share and learn from each other. It followed the successful 'Talent Untapped: BAME Academic Librarians' Knowledge X' that took place at UEL in 2019 and was designed for BAME colleagues to talk about their careers, whether looking to progress into a new role or wanting to develop in a current one. Sponsored places were provided by ALN, RLUK and SCONUL whilst EBSCO sponsored lunch and refreshments throughout the day.
- It was a great event and the feedback from attendees suggested that they had benefitted from the networking and learning that the event afforded. As a result, the plan is to widen the planning group and look to repeat the event in 2023. The planning group is also looking to create a mailing list to enable people of colour across ALN institutions to stay in touch and build up their networks.



ALN FINANCES

By the end of 2022, ALN had now been operating for 18 months and financial income and expenditure had settled into more predictable patterns.

The 2022 conference generated more income than had been predicted, due to a mixture of higher-than-expected sponsorship income and more non-ALN delegates paying at the higher rate. Subscriptions and conference income covered expenditure on events, projects and operating resources, leaving a small element of reserve for future years.

The year ended with a better bottom line than was anticipated, partly due to a number of costs that were forecast to fall in 2022 being deferred to 2023. The outturn for 2022 was £51,899.64. This consists of a £32,568.91 unallocated reserve, along with £19,330.73 held as SCONUL reserves. Subscriptions for 2023 will remain as predicted in 2021 based on the transitional fee structure agreed at the formation of ALN.

The November 2022 Board meeting involved discussions on the need for a rise in 2024 subscription fees, alongside adjustments to expenditure, to allow us to balance the budget and ensure the long-term financial viability of ALN. Based on the Board discussions, and after careful review of the budget, it was proposed to include a 12% fee rise for 2024, alongside a range of cost adjustments.



ALN PROCUREMENT



In 2022, procurement activity was run through the ALN Procurement Community of Practice which was representing the interests of ALN members, alongside the work of NEYAL.

In order to have a deeper look into future procurement options, it was agreed that there was a requirement for an external consultancy to help work out ALN's best way forward. A working group made up of Rosie Jones and Heather Thrift, representing ALN, and Nick Woolley and Ben Veasey, representing NEYAL, drew up a consultation brief that was out for responses until mid-June 2022. From the responses received, Pete Dalton from Evidence Base Consultancy Services at the University of Birmingham was appointed as a consultant. His remit was to engage with the ALN and NEYAL membership to produce options for the future configuration and organisation of the work and outputs in library purchasing and procurement. The final report and options were due in December 2022, from which the next steps and recommendations would be taken forward for discussion at the Board meeting in February 2023.

During the consultation period, the ALN Procurement Community of Practice continued to meet twice a year, with steering group meetings in addition to these. through the work of the CoP, ALN is now represented on SUPC's Book and Serials contract management/tender working party groups. ALN is in an excellent position to influence the new serials contract due for renewal. In addition, ALN reps have attended national supplier meetings and regional NWUPC meetings.

ALN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Staff Development (SD) Planning Group met three times in 2022. The group recommended that most events would continue to be run online, with in-person events only taking place where the topic/subject particularly lent themselves to the format. This has worked well with the vast majority of events being delivered very successfully via Teams or Zoom.

The Group has also been working on an SD Plan as a basis for the structure of activity throughout the year. Some of the activities completed or in progress in 2022 include:

- Holding an institutional representative's development and planning meeting
- Promoting engagement with the SD programme and website through user stories
- Supporting event planning with online guidance/examples
- Extending the range of the programme to include other elements such as the pilot mentoring scheme

The statistics from the events in 2022 show a great increase in the number of people attending, which is testament to the breadth and depth of the programme.

Thanks to all those who hosted, contributed and attended an event over the past 12 months. Without your enthusiasm and interest, there wouldn't be a programme!



We ran 17 events in 2022, hosting a total of 721 people – up from 546 in 2021 – and averaging 42 attendees per event



ALN PILOT MENTORING SCHEME

Following a suggestion from James Stephens, Head of Library Services and University Librarian, University of Cumbria, it was agreed to pilot an ALN Mentoring Scheme in academic year 2022/23.

A Mentoring Oversight Group was established:

- Ali Craig (Hull) - Chair
- James Stephens (Cumbria)
- Michelle O'Connell (Edge Hill)
- Phil Cheeseman (Lancaster)
- Suze Musson (British Library)
- Thomas Kistell (Sheffield Hallam)

Karen Hickman from Yorkshire Accord and the Training Bug was a consultant to the group.

The Mentoring Oversight Group established a timeline for the setting up of the pilot scheme:

1. The first wave of the scheme to be shared in October 2022
2. Closing date for mentor applications to be early December 2022
3. Mentees to be sought from December 2022
4. Training for mentors from Karen Hickman to take place over two half days in January 2023
5. Matching up of mentors and mentees in February 2023 with the process starting from March
6. The second wave of scheme to begin in June 2023
7. Second wave training for mentors to take place in July so that first meetings can be planned before the summer vacation



ALN CONFERENCE

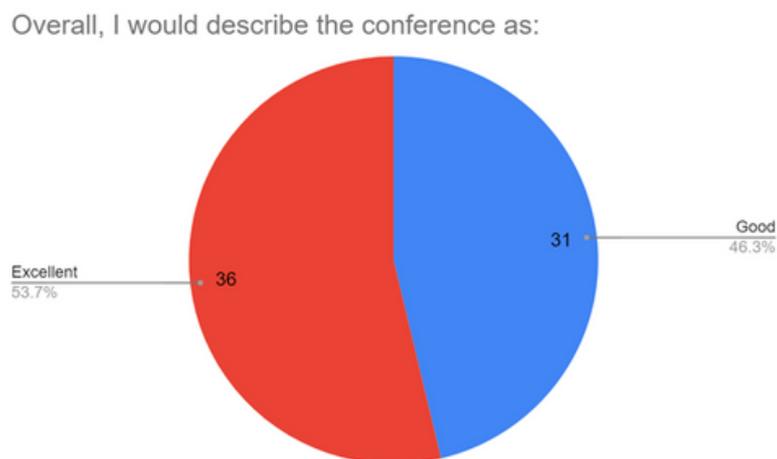
For #ALN22, the call for papers resulted in 27 submissions:

- 19 Individual institutions
- 16 ALN
- 3 Non ALN

The Programme was made up of 5 Lightning Talks, 9 Short papers and 2 Workshops

62% of delegates and speakers were from ALN institutions with almost one-sixth from non-ALN institutions. It is exciting to see our conference reaching beyond institutions in the north of England. One delegate came from outside the UK: Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. We offered 10 sponsored places to the conference this year, and awarded 7. We opened up applications to anyone who may otherwise have experienced barriers to attending.

100% of respondents described the conference overall as excellent or good (up from 94.3% last year) - plus there was a 10% increase in the response rate compared to 2021.



HUBILO CONFERENCE PLATFORM

After comparisons of several dedicated conference platforms, the conference planning committee recommended the purchase of Hubilo. The team felt it offered:

- Value for money and a transparent pricing structure
- A slick & professional sponsor offer with individual 'booths' and a means of promotion across the platform (such as clear logo banners)
- A better delegate experience than Teams, with easy navigation & built-in opportunities to network
- Built in accessibility functions

88% of delegates stated they were very satisfied or satisfied with Hubilo. Although overall the feedback regarding the platform was very positive, there were some suggestions for improvement in the feedback from delegates and presenters, such as helping people to use lounges beforehand which may have increased engagement.

CONFERENCE INCOME & EXPENDITURE

The conference was a financial success - more external delegates attended than anticipated, paying a higher fee than ALN delegates. We also brought in more sponsorship than we had expected which boosted our overall income and helped to even out costs associated with the Hubilo platform.



SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship income was slightly down on 2021, but still higher than anticipated, with £5,500 in revenue raised from 1 gold sponsor (Kortext), 2 silver (Adam Matthew and AnyBook) and 4 bronze (Content Online, EBSCO, IGI Global and OCLC).

2021 feedback from sponsors suggested there was a clear desire for a platform which would provide virtual booths and promote easier engagement with delegates - their feedback was one of the key drivers behind the decision to purchase Hubilo. The sponsor offer was enhanced by Hubilo with the use of booths and logos all over the platform, and a better structured programme.



Conference Feedback

We got lots of positive feedback which confirms that we had pitched the conference at the right level, in terms of both content and format. When asked what delegates had liked best about the conference, we received the following responses:

"Practical suggestions for ways we can create change, as well as looking at the bigger picture of the challenges the sector faces"

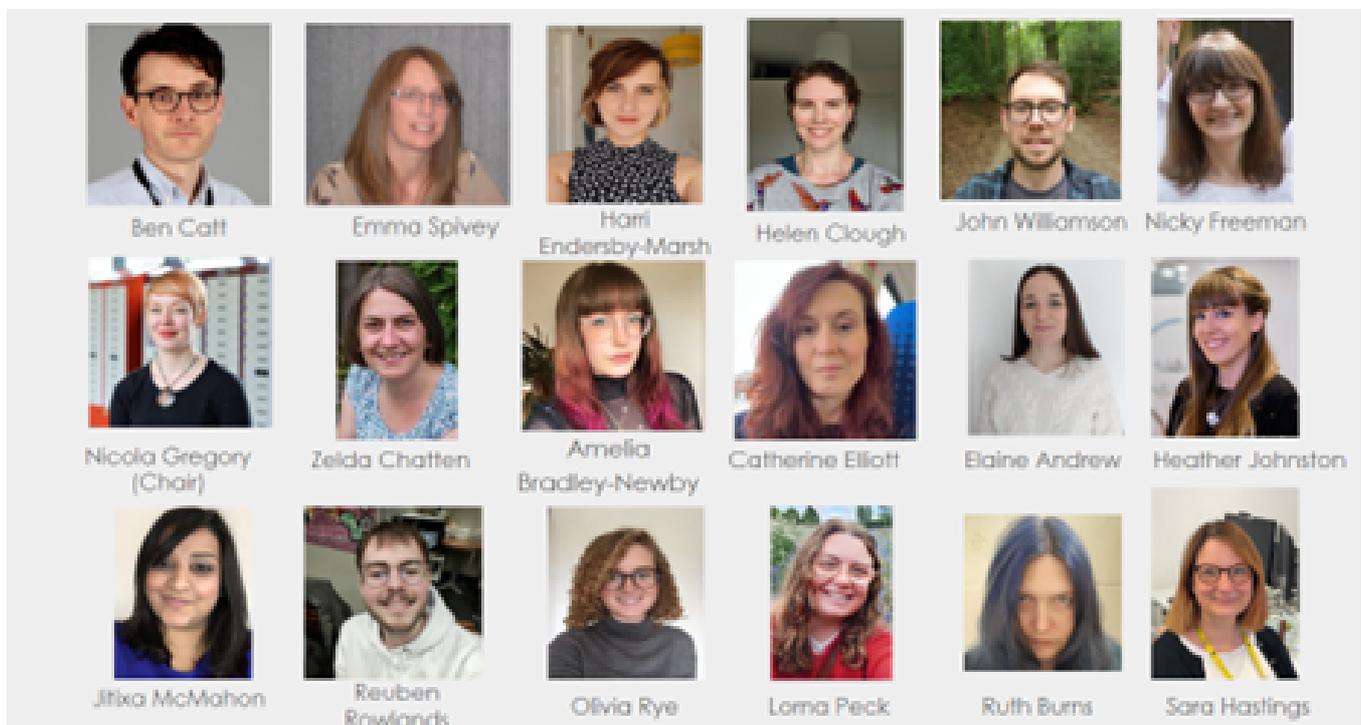
"The theme itself was perfect - love that ALN chose to take a critical approach and this came across in the sessions and keynotes too"

"Kit Heyam and Josh Sendall's keynotes were absolutely fantastic: definitely my highlight both days"

"I loved the way the sessions both challenged and supported me, and always provided me with practical hints and tips for actions"

"Hearing from different voices because it felt like progress towards an more diverse conference."

The 2022 conference planning team:



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023



Conference

Planning has begun for #ALN23, on the theme of constructive disruption of the status quo in libraries. It's been agreed that the format will change for 2023 and include an online day and a small in-person day, possibly in Leeds, to allow more interactive sessions and networking. It's proposed to hold the conference in June 2023.

EDI

ALN's commitment to developing its work in the EDI arena will continue in 2023, with the reporting back of the Innovation Fund projects and a possible second wave, a second 'Thriving in your career' event, more case studies being added to the ALN EDI webpage and further events to share best practice across the membership.

Mentoring

A second wave of mentoring will begin in late Spring, early Summer 2023, allowing a larger group of staff to get involved. It is hoped that future waves of mentors will eventually be trained by existing mentors, to allow the scheme to become completely self-sufficient.

Procurement

There will be more work to develop ALN's procurement activities, working alongside NEYAL and UPCs. There is an ambition to bring wider procurement (such as reading list software) into the ALN strategic procurement group which will be investigated more fully in 2023.

Staff Development

ALN is planning another full programme of events for 2023, looking at a broad spectrum of topics and areas of interest and expertise across the member institutions. The decision was taken to run the majority of the events online again, as attendees overwhelmingly found the format suited their day job and fitted in much more easily than travelling. There will be some in-person events, predominantly where the topic lends itself to more networking opportunities.