I attended the NoWAL conference 2019 at the Foresight Centre at the University of Liverpool on the 28th June, having secured one of 4 sponsored places, being allocated the place for newly qualified library and information science professionals. As I am about to graduate with an MSc in Information Science from Northumbria University, this was an ideal learning opportunity for me focusing on an incredibly important topic for library and information professionals, as well as a chance to build some contacts. I attended with my workplace Lancaster University as my affiliation, where I work as a Citations Development Officer on the research services team.

The programme was quite large and varied and it was difficult to choose between them, but below is a summary of the sessions I attended along with some photographs of the most important messages. All were high quality and served as inspiration for what might be achieved through the service I deliver as a library professional.

Keynote: Dr Jason Arday, University of Warwick
The Persistence of Racism in Higher Education: Decentering and Decolonising Knowledge and Curricula in Higher Education

The conference opened with the keynote speech from Dr Jason Arday, who presented some statistics that showed the extent of race representation in HE institutions. Most shocking for me was that the attainment gap between White and Black students qualifying with a 2:1 or above in 16/17 was 24%, which Dr Arday explained was actually in increased gap from previous years. He went on to explain that BAME students are contributing to library spaces financially through course fees yet do not feel they can use that space, citing evidence that showed they are less likely to use library spaces, and more likely to be treated unfavourably by staff, for example, by being asked to be quiet in silent areas more often than white students.
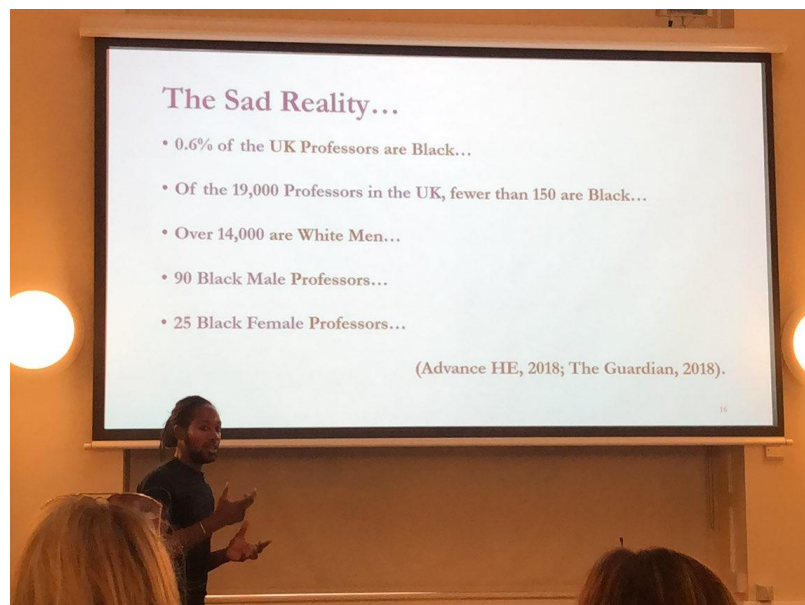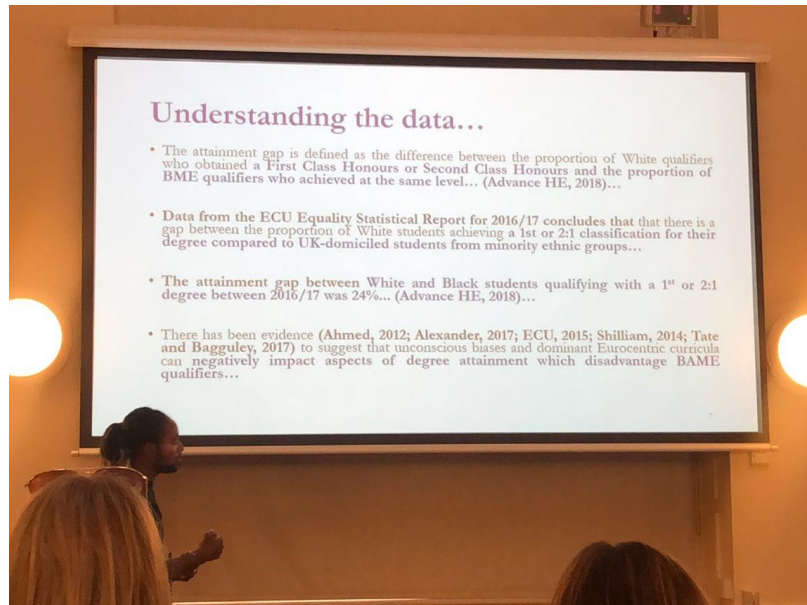
1
Nothing About Us Without Us: the benefits of employing disabled staff in libraries
Elaine Chapman and Sarah Anne Kennedy
Technological University, Dublin

Making recruiting disabled staff a priority allows library staff to better reflect the student cohort and improves accessibility by drawing on the lived experiences of staff. Students need to see themselves represented, and this could include staff members, but also design and communication that might include representative images, hashtags, document design etc.

Supporting a cohort of marginalized mature students to find their academic voice at a Russell Group University
Christine Bradford and Lauren Elmore, University of Warwick

Students who come to HE for the first time later in life can face a unique set of challenges, and Christine and Lauren explained the intervention they had designed for this cohort at the University of Warwick. It included creating alternative pathways into HE, quick tips such as allowing children to attend the library with their student parents and again using representative images.

2
Bounce back: teaching students how to develop their academic resilience
Viv Bell, University of Salford

This was a workshop demonstrating the academic resilience programme devised at the University of Salford, which merged learning support with wellbeing support. Viv highlighted that those who have overcome significant barriers to access HE, such as care leavers, are already resilient and so she found the programme was relevant to everybody.

Panel: What can libraries do to be more inclusive? How can they attract a more representative workforce and encourage more diverse communities to use their services?
Jason Arday (keynote speaker: University of Warwick), Lorraine Beard (University of Manchester), Marilyn Clarke (Goldsmiths College), Imogen Christie, Elaine Chapman (Technological University Dublin)

The panel discussed a range of questions and themselves represented a range of diversities. They shared highly personal experiences alongside their thoughts on what libraries can do to address the inequalities currently present. A key message I took away from this was, that as xenophobia and hate crimes are increasing, we need to protect the library as an inclusive space, and also that libraries are not neutral spaces, they take positive action to allow inclusivity and diversity to happen.

3
Striving for and sustaining an inclusive workplace culture and team within Collection Care at the University of Manchester
Jim Duff and Riza Hussaini, University of Manchester

Jim presented the inclusive working policies of his institution, called 'the 5 ways of working' and spoke about how he had implemented them with his team, and Riza spoke about how this had attracted her to apply and supported her to gain her current post. She stated that diversity and inclusion is not a spectator sport, the important thing is behavioural change.

Building resilient communities at the University of York
**Ruth Elder and Alice Bennett, University of York**

Ruth and Alice both spoke about their understanding of mental health issues, and Ruth described the process of becoming a mental health first aider and what this role involves. One concept they shared was the use of staff only 'quiet spaces' where a member of staff experiencing a mental health issue can be with a mental health first aider, and how this would support a member of staff with mental health conditions. Alice shared details of a related MOOC they had developed.

4
Allyship and BAME under-representation in the LIS profession: I don't know what I can do – Help!
Shirley Yearwood-Jackman, University of Liverpool

Shirley spoke honestly about what white people can do to address the issues the LIS profession faces today. She explained concepts such as privilege and micro-aggressions, and referenced other marginalised groups such as women and older people in her advice. The key message was one of awareness – both self awareness of unearned benefits and awareness of the experiences of people who don't have those benefits, and of actually acting on inequalities that this process uncovers, rather than leaving it to the marginalised group to act upon. She spoke about establishing CILIP's BAME network and how you can sign up as an ally.
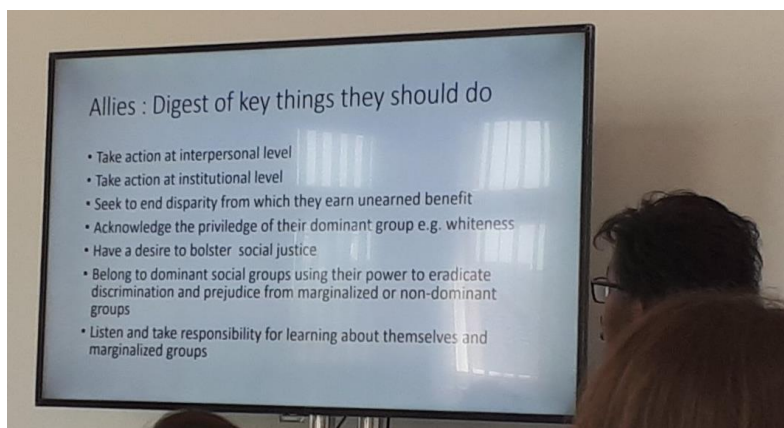
Overall, the conference was very enlightening and I came away with many ideas as to what I could do differently to address the problems presented. Many of the delegates felt empowered enough to share personal experiences outside of sessions as to how they had been treated at work. The main lessons I learned from the day were:
*   My own diversity is valued and is an asset.
*   Representation is very important, to all marginalised groups.
*   It is the social 'norm' that it is the responsibility of marginalised groups to speak up in the workplace, and this is something that could easily be changed by all of us taking that responsibility.
*   People want to learn in detail, particularly about terminology such as 'micro-aggression' or 'person of colour', what respectful inclusive behaviour looks like in practice, and what the lived experience of marginalised groups is.
*   There was a concern that the subject of the conference represents a 'trend' and that momentum and therefore progress won't be maintained.

Together, as a sector, let's take these lessons forward and make sure that momentum is sustained in the long term, and we get the equality that we want and need within the academic library sector.