

Academic Libraries North Conference 2025 Programme

Sustainable Innovation: moving forward in challenging times

Please note there will be a routine fire alarm test at 10:00 on the day of the conference and you do not need to evacuate the building.

Elaine Sykes

Our colleague Elaine Sykes, Head of Open Research at Lancaster University, sadly died in June. Elaine was admired by all who knew and worked with her and will be hugely missed. An [online book of condolence](#) has been opened for members of the community to share their own memories and tributes for Elaine. If you would like to make a donation in her memory, you can do so by following these links:

Toxteth Tabernacle Baptist Church	Libraries Without Borders
This Liverpool-based church family is where Elaine grew up, and gave so much of her energy and life to. Their loving commitment to those often found on the margins of society was Elaine's heart, particularly young people and those from other nations.	This international non-profit brings accessible information and learning to those that most need it, to under-resourced communities in more than 50 countries. Their work seeks to create meaningful change that Elaine was so passionate about.
justgiving.com/crowdfunding/elaine-sykes	
	
toxtethtab.org.uk	librarieswithoutborders.org

- <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/elaine-sykes>
- <https://www.librarieswithoutborders.org/>

Session format key:

- Lightning talk (10 minutes, with extra time for questions at the end of the slot)
- Short paper (25 minutes including questions)
- Workshop (50 minutes including questions)

Click on any session title to read the abstract. Please note the programme may be subject to change up until the day of the conference.

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 *A 'Quiet Room' will be available – room 1.25	30 mins	A 'Quiet Room' 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 - Lecture Theatre G.36 Nicola Gregory and Heather Johnston (ALN conference organising committee co-chairs) Rachel Beckett (Director, Library and Cultural Services, Manchester Metropolitan University)	15 mins	
10:15 – 11:00	Keynote - Lecture Theatre G.36 The 10,000 year librarian: Radical sustainability for enduring knowledge Monica Westin (Associate Director of Content and Discovery, Library and Cultural Services, Manchester Metropolitan University)	45 minutes	
11:00 – 11:20	Break and refreshments	20 mins	

11:20 – 11:50	Platinum Sponsor Talk – Manchester University Press -Lecture Theatre G.36	30 mins	
12:00 - 12:50	<p>Session 1 (Please choose A, B, C or D)</p> <p>A - Workshop (room 1.22)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting by numbers: Teesside University Library's green library growth. Fred Milton (Teesside University) <p>B - Workshop (room 1.23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming an effective community research partner. Phil Cheeseman (Lancaster University), Tom Morley (Lancaster University) <p>C - Short Papers (Lecture Theatre G.36 cap 250)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design in challenging times: A practical guide to student partnership for academic libraries. Dr Kirsty Hemsworth (Sheffield Hallam University) and Dr Megan Oliver (Sheffield Hallam University) • Information and Academic Literacies Toolkit: Creativity and Innovation in Raising the Profile of Information and Academic Literacies in Curriculum Design. Rebecca Beaumont (Lancaster University) and Louise Speakman (Lancaster University) <p>D- Manchester Poetry Library Tour (Business School Entrance)</p>	50 mins	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manchester Poetry Library home page Manchester Metropolitan University <p>Meet at the main entrance to the Business School at 12:00</p> <p>Maximum 20 people, first come, first serve</p> <p>Finish 12:45</p>		
12:50 – 13:50	Lunch		

13:50 - 14:40	<p>Session 2 (Please choose A, B or C)</p> <p>A - Workshop (room 1.22)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using educational games to engage students and develop referencing skills. <p>Donna Irving (Leeds Trinity University) and Sarah Munks (Leeds Trinity University)</p> <p>B - Workshop (room 1.23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Advocacy: Good practices in supporting mental health and wellbeing. <p>Andrew Cox (Sheffield University) and Nicola Wylie (Lancaster University)</p> <p>C - Short Papers (Lecture Theatre G.36 cap 250)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding readers to alternative access routes to full text journal articles. <p>Fiona Ware (University of Hull) and Kirstyn Radford (University of Hull)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Shared solutions: Improving digital usability through cross-institutional partnerships”. <p>Kristian Scott (University of Manchester), Dean Brown (University of Salford), and Liam Sullivan (University of Manchester).</p> <p>D – Workshop (room 1.24)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [ALN SiG] Leaders Network: Pathways to Leadership: Stories and Advice from the Academic Libraries North Leaders’ Network <p>Tom Peach (York St John University)</p>	50 mins	
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14:50-15:05	<p>Gold Sponsor talk – OCLC</p> <p>-Lecture Theatre G.36</p>	15 mins	
15:05 – 15:30	Break	25 mins	
15:30 – 16:20	<p>Session 3</p> <p>A- Workshop (room 1.22)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding "AI". Jodika Gilworth (Manchester University Foundation Trust) <p>B- Workshop (room 1.23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [ALN SiG] Accessibility Group: reflections and plans for an uncertain future Rosie Smith (Newcastle University) <p>C- Short Papers (Lecture Theatre G.36 cap 250)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Services Through Disruptive Change. AJ Mackenzie (Leeds Beckett University) • Teaching AI literacy to undergraduate students: a pragmatic approach. Andrew Taylor (Liverpool Hope University) <p>D – Lightning talks and Short Paper (room 1.24)</p>	50 mins	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Advance HE (HEA) Fellowships can benefit both individual staff development and your service as a whole. [Lightning Talk] Helen Howard (Leeds Beckett University) • Winter Vacation Engagement: Keeping Student Connections Alive. [Lightning Talk] Charlotte Murray (Teesside 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’ [Short Paper] Lizzie Seals (Sheffield Hallam University), Carl Lomax (Sheffield Hallam University) 		
16:30 -16:40	<u>Day 2 Conference close – Lecture Theatre G.36</u>	10 mins	

Abstracts

Keynotes

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

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.

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Phil Cheeseman (Lancaster University), Tom Morley (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.

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Dr Kirsty Hemsworth (Sheffield Hallam University) and Dr Megan Oliver (Sheffield Hallam University)

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

“focusing our time and energy in ways that make a difference” - We focused our time and energy on student partnership projects despite a challenging restructuring process that has increased workload pressures on staff. They provide a rewarding development opportunity to students and staff, and we utilise our connection with students to enhance services by addressing and challenging barriers and promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

We will share an overview of our student partnership projects and reflect on our experience of creating and managing them. Attendees will gain practical advice on how to launch similar co-design initiatives to build reciprocal connections with students in their own libraries, as well as an opportunity to join a knowledge exchange network. In this presentation, we will explore how student partnership initiatives can serve as a sustainable, creative approach to enhancing library services, student engagement, and staff motivation during challenging times. At Sheffield Hallam University, we have developed two key student partnership initiatives: the Skills Partner team, supporting academic skills and co-design projects across the Library, and the online Library Student Panel, a consultative group of students who evaluate our services, learning materials, and policies with a deliberate focus on improving inclusivity and accessibility. Both teams actively challenge assumptions, identify barriers, and ensure that library resources and support structures meet the diverse needs of all students.

We will share practical strategies for establishing and managing student partnership projects against the backdrop of financial and workload pressures in the sector. We will also discuss how partnership work can benefit staff by providing a rewarding and engaging way to connect with students and enhance services, while reflecting honestly on the challenges we have faced along the way. Attendees will leave with actionable insights on launching co-design initiatives in their own libraries. We also invite colleagues to continue the discussion after the conference and explore opportunities for knowledge exchange on student partnership work.

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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.

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Jodika Gilworth (Manchester University Foundation Trust)

Understanding "AI"

Do you find yourself struggling to evaluate marketing claims about AI? Do the conflicting reports of AI's capabilities and the urgency with which it's talked about leave you stressed out and confused? This workshop is for you.

Here we seek to unpack what is actually meant nowadays by the term “AI”, and help attendees develop an understanding of what these various programs actually are, how they work, and what that means for using them in libraries. We aim to cover:

- The different sorts of program that get grouped under the term “AI”
- Separating myths from facts, and evidence from marketing copy
- Strengths and weaknesses of AI products
- Where AI can improve efficiency, and why some uses which seem tempting may cost more time and money in the long run

FORMAT: A short presentation with plenty of time for questions, followed by an interactive discussion about real-world implementation in your workplaces. Download the presentation for lots of links to further reading.

THE AIM: to sidestep both alarmism and the rush to implementation, and create the capacity for long-term thinking about AI.

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Andrew Cox (Sheffield University) and Nicola Wylie (Lancaster University)

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

The session is led by organisers of the *ALN Mental Health & Wellbeing Advocacy Resource* which contains guidance and case studies of how ALN libraries support student and staff mental health.

The session will be an opportunity to share experiences of how libraries support mental health and wellbeing, and to discuss key issues such as: what works to engage students, senior management support, evidencing good practice.

After an introduction describing the resource, the session will focus on sharing participant experiences and what works. This session is quite flexible and asks for audience participation in discussion following a short presentation(s). The audience will benefit from hearing live reflections, challenges, good practice and leave feeling supported and with new ideas to take back to their institutions.

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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.

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Kristian Scott (University of Manchester), Dean Brown (University of Salford), and Liam Sullivan (University of Manchester)

“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 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.

Leeds Trinity University Liaison Librarians are keen to support student wellbeing and encourage student engagement by designing interactive sessions that are fun and inclusive whilst fostering deeper learning and enquiry. We created an interactive, low-tech snakes and ladders game to improve referencing skills and knowledge. Attendees will play the game and find out why we developed it, what learning outcomes were met and will spend time considering other aspects of information literacy skills it could be adapted for.

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Tom Peach (York St John University)

Pathways to Leadership: Stories and Advice from the Academic Libraries North Leaders' Network

What does it really take to become a leader in academic libraries? In this engaging panel discussion, members of the Academic Libraries North Leaders' Network share the personal stories behind their journeys into leadership. With honesty and practical insight, they'll reflect on the challenges, turning points, and lessons learned along the way.

This session is especially valuable for aspiring and future leaders, offering advice on how to develop leadership skills and experience before holding a formal management role. From leading projects to finding your voice and influence in everyday work, panellists will highlight creative ways to grow as a leader—wherever you are in your career.

Expect inspiration, real talk, and plenty of actionable tips. Join us for an honest conversation about leadership, growth, and finding your own path forward amidst challenging times.

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Rosie Smith (Newcastle University)

Accessibility Group: annual reflections and plans for an uncertain future

This session will be delivered by Rosie Smith, the chair of the ALN Accessibility group. It will take a look back on the work of the ALN Accessibility group for this year, reflect on Rosies first term as chair and provide case studies and the future plans of the group.

The focus of the session will be on how we can continue to prioritise accessibility in a landscape where many staff are managing accessibility alongside many other responsibilities. How do we continue to engage and attract group members when colleagues are pushed for time, how do we continue to deliver accessible library services on tight budgets.

Attendees will find out information about the ALN about accessibility group, as well as how to get involved. I would like to emphasise that anyone who is involved with accessibility in their organisation can get involved (not just dedicated leads).

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AJ Mackenzie (Leeds Beckett University)

Delivering Services Through Disruptive Change

Firstly, in this presentation, we will start with the current contextual landscape of Higher Education and the challenges that it is presenting institutions. This will primarily surround how to maintain quality in the face of capacity and financial constraints, as well as maximise benefits from rapidly advancing technology and meet the needs of a changing student population. I will then show how the key practical manifestations of these issues have impacted the service I manage at Leeds Beckett.

Following this, I will 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.

After this investigation, a case study of the key projects that formed our responses to these issues will show how that the thinking can be deployed in a practical way and what we hope to achieve by doing so. Examples of the projects we have deployed surround areas such as streamlining our technological offerings to maximise benefits, upskilling staff and creating new strategic partnerships.

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.

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Andrew Taylor (Liverpool Hope University)

Teaching AI literacy to undergraduate students: a pragmatic approach

The rapidly evolving AI landscape means that incorporating AI literacy into an existing library information literacy program is a tricky prospect. The wide range of available AI tools – general (e.g. ChatGPT, Perplexity AI, Gemini), scholarly (e.g. Elicit, Scholar GPT, ScholarAI), and add-ons to existing library resources (e.g. Primo Research Assistant, Ebook Central Research Assistant, Science Direct AI) – means that librarians must be selective about which they promote to students.

Librarians need to consider student perceptions of AI: some students might see AI as crucial to their studies, while others might object to it on environmental or ethical grounds. Librarians must also navigate the lack of clarity around where AI gets its information and whether its search is exhaustive, not to mention the problems posed by the same search yielding different results at different times of day or AI hallucinations.

This presentation will showcase the pragmatic approach being taken by an Academic Services Librarian at Liverpool Hope University. The presentation will share methods for teaching AI literacy to undergraduate students based on the university's published guidance on Generative AI that strikes a balance between providing students with those skills that are most likely to remain relevant as the AI landscape changes – constructing prompts, identifying misinformation and hallucinations, avoiding plagiarism and academic misconduct, distinguishing between AI tools and what they offer – and communicating limitations and potential pitfalls to students. Attendees will take away a

pragmatic approach and methods for teaching AI to undergraduate students that they can incorporate into their own information literacy programs.

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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), Carl Lomax (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.

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