

Leeds United: Getting Together at the BIALL Conference 2024

Abstract: This year’s BIALL Annual Conference, held in Leeds in June, was a great success, with excellent speakers, cutting edge tech on display and even a murder – which was quickly solved – during the big dinner on the Thursday night.

Keywords: BIALL; education and training

One of the big talking points of this year’s Conference, held at the Queens Hotel in Leeds in June, was the murder of the famous explorer Sir Cumference Sirkle and the solving of the dastardly deed on the very same night, his killer named as his secretary Miss Avaline Tusaye.

All this took place during the BIALL Annual Dinner, but remarkably it did not put people off their meals, and certainly not their wine, while – in between giggling at the non-stop innuendo from the detective, Inspector Bauls – there was plenty to talk about from the conference itself.

This year’s theme was ‘Full steam ahead: from Industrial to Knowledge Revolution’, and with a record number of delegates attending what was a sell-out event, it has to be seen as nothing less than a great success.

Many of the papers from the Conference will be written up as articles for our Winter edition, such as

former LIM editor and Librarian at Squire Law Library, University of Cambridge, David Wills’ informative and entertaining Willi Steiner Memorial Lecture entitled ‘Law Librarianship: Past, Present ... and an Artificial Future?’, which reminded so many of just how very different information management and research used to be – so look out for that in the next issue.

BALCONY OF HOPE

Dr Masud Khokar’s keynote speech, ‘Developing an Innovation Culture through Positive Disruption and Radical Collaboration’, was another highlight of the Conference. In this talk Dr Khokar, of the University of Leeds, discussed the role of leadership and how we, as information professionals, can build resilience to overcome the challenges of the future. Dr Khokar led us through a journey from “the basement of despair to the



The Queens Hotel in Leeds provided a suitably grand venue for the 2024 Conference

balcony of hope”, to help ensure that we don’t get left behind in this fast-moving world.

We also heard from John Sheridan of The National Archives, who talked us through the history of the organisation, and outlined some of the future projects TNA has in the pipeline, while Dan Hoadley at vLex talked about large language models – one of the many sessions to focus on generative AI.

There was also a witty and engaging presentation from Matthew Leopold using AI generated images, which included a task requiring audience participation.

Elsewhere, there were plenty of parallel sessions covering topics as diverse as Canadian Aboriginal law, tips for engaging students, using data to understand database usage trends, and taxonomies. So, pretty much something for everyone, then.



Vendors had a very stylish exhibition space in which to do business



It’s simply not Conference if there’s not a generous selection of freebies on offer

Meanwhile, the vibrant exhibition hall made the most of the art deco surroundings within the conference venue – with the usual free chocolate to keep delegates going – while a number of product showcases also proved popular, especially those focussing on getting to grips with AI Technology. The prompt jams with vLex and Lexis+ were particularly valuable.

It's not all about demonstrations, presentations and papers, though, and there was plenty of fun to be had at this year's Conference, including drinks and a buffet at The Dry Dock – which some thought might be on a canal, or river, or somewhere suitably wet, but was actually a pub shaped like a boat on the top of a hill. This was actually great fun and the walk there ensured that

delegates saw at least a bit of the city beyond the Queens Hotel.

Then, of course, there was the 'murder' mentioned at the start of this piece. It wasn't just the detective who was involved in the sleuthing, but also each table, and perhaps it should be of no great surprise that it was actually a group of top-notch investigative BIALL attendees who actually cracked the case. After all, researchers make the best detectives.

If you did miss this year's extravaganza, then be sure to sign up for the 2025 Conference, which is to be held in Birmingham – in the city this time, not the NEC – from Wednesday 11 to Friday 13 of June 2025. Early indications suggest that it is certain to be just as informative, stimulating and fun as this year's event.



Save
the Date

BIALL
BRITISH & IRISH ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIANS

55th Annual Conference & Exhibition
Wednesday 11th - Friday 13th June 2025
The Eastside Rooms, Birmingham