

## Conference Reports

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### Reflections from the 2019 ASIS&T Annual Meeting in Melbourne, Australia

Anna J. Rutkowska<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Outreach Librarian for Humanities, Creative Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales Library, Australia*

<sup>b</sup>*Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, Australia*  
E-mail: a.rutkowska@unsw.edu.au

In October 2019, I attended the Annual Meeting of the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), held in Melbourne, Australia. It was ASIS&T's third venture outside of the United States and my first time attending their Annual Meeting.

As a first-time attendee and very new to ASIS&T I wasn't sure what to expect. I wear the hats of an academic librarian and a doctoral researcher. On top of that, I get easily fascinated by many things at once, so it was quite a challenge for me to choose what sessions to attend. Having attended larger, international conferences before (such as IFLA and IAML), I also knew that what I highlighted in the program would not exactly be what I would attend in the end. The before-conference choice is always very ambitious. I filled my schedule in Melbourne with sessions, panels, and events from morning till evening, every day of the conference. As predicted, I didn't attend exactly what I set for myself. The conference experience was more organic than just following the pre-planned schedule – which sessions I attended was often a result of a conversation with someone I just met at coffee break. I suppose it's always good to have a plan – just so you can change it.

On the second day I could see the effects of this organic process. That day, I attended the Doctoral Colloquium. The Colloquium was facilitated by Dr Pnina Fichman and Dr Howard Rosenbaum (both from the Indiana University). It was an incredible opportunity, and I thank the organisers for it from the bottom of my heart. The Colloquium was a half-day session where I met other students, heard mentors answer questions from facilitators and students, and, most importantly, received a 1:1 session with a mentor. I was matched with Professor Sandy Hirsh, a person with a wealth of experience and personal warmth. We talked about my research proposal, my struggles with focus (both in a research sense – having changed my topic several times, and in a personal sense – living with the joys of ADHD). As we talked about my research proposal, new angles started emerging. Some aspects that I found curious before now became so fascinating to me that I immediately got swept into this new stream. More precisely, the aspect of librarians' education. This became a theme for me throughout the whole ASIS&T meeting.

I never thought much about librarians' education. I completed a Library and Information Science degree at the University of Wrocław, Poland, and when I moved to Australia, I followed the formal process of degree recognition, after which I was eligible to work as a librarian in the country. For a long time, I actually thought that all I knew as a librarian I learnt 'on the job' and the degree didn't really matter that much. A recent interaction with another librarian highlighted for me that there were quite big differences in what we were taught during our degrees. The subjects I was taught at university were not standard here. Among typical librarian subjects, I also studied Logic, History of Philosophy, History of Book Culture, or Science of Science. I started wondering how much of that experience actually influenced my professional identity.

The ASIS&T meeting was a great place to explore that topic. My interest in librarians' education was cultivated at a panel *Information science education and library and information studies education: Transnational conversations*. In particular, my attention was focused on Clara M. Chu's presentation of key findings from a white paper prepared by IFLA BSLISE group: *Building strong LIS education: A call to global and local action*. The paper reiterated for me that there are significant differences in LIS education around the world. I can't wait to see further results of the group's work – in particular 'an international resource that identifies local structures'. Such resource will provide an insight into the LIS environment in different countries – especially interesting to me in the light of my newly found interest in education influences on professional identity of librarians.

I had further opportunity to fuel that interest at a panel facilitated by the Special Interest Group for History and Foundations of Information Science (SIG-HFIS). The panel discussion, led by Elliott Hauser, included Tim Gorichanaz, Yazdan Mansourian, Joseph T. Tennis and Hilary Yerbury. The session, titled mildly provocatively (considering the group facilitating it), *Does information science need history and foundations?*, started with the panellists sharing their thoughts on what having History and Foundations means to information science. In light of my own readings on what it means to be a librarian – a professional – Yazdan Mansourian's comments on Foundations giving the profession authority were particularly interesting. At the end of the session, Elliott Hauser presented an online portal: *Paper Wishlist*, 'a place to discuss, ask for, and point colleagues to great papers'. I encourage everyone to engage with the portal (ASIS&T membership is not required). Attending conferences has taught me that the best projects are results of serendipitous social interactions – and Paper Wishlist could be an extension of these events.

As I mentioned, I didn't know what to expect at ASIS&T. Very early on, I noted that the meeting has largely an academic focus; practitioners were in minority. For a brief moment, I felt out of place. This changed at the Doctoral Colloquium. I have found my feet, my niche, and I have found my tribe. I finished my ASIS&T Melbourne experience on a high note. The next meeting is in *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. I don't know yet if I can be there in person, but I will definitely keep an eye on what's happening there in October 2020.