Rails 5 Conference

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RAILS 5 CONFERENCE
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The fifth Research Applications in Information and Library Studies Conference (RAILS 5) was held at the University of Technology, Sydney on 23 January. With ten full papers and nine short presentations on topics as diverse as children's web searching on Google, the development of a database of traditional clan knowledge for an Aboriginal community, and sense-making behaviours of recreational drug users, RAILS 5 could justifiably claim to be the biggest and the best yet!

RAILS 5 had a decidedly international flavour, with two full papers and a short presentation by overseas presenters. Dr Fredrik Åström, a visiting scholar with UTS from the University of Lund in Sweden, delivered a paper entitled '*Scholarly publishing: one practice between the two systems of communication and academic meriting*', critically examining the disparate and often contradictory ways in which scholarly publishing is constructed by researchers and policy makers. Don Wicks, an Associate Professor at Ohio's Kent State University, presented a paper he had co-written with his colleague, Daniel Roland: a case study using a conversational model to examine the sense-making of members of the clergy. A thought-provoking short presentation was given by expat, Janine Schmidt, Director of Libraries at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, entitled '*Research in practice: replacing faith with a few facts*'.

UTS, the host university, was well represented. The day's first paper came from newly-appointed Professor Gobinda Chowdhury, and outlined a proposed collaborative research project, '*SKILLS - Structuring Knowledge and Information for Learning and Living of Students: Call for a collaborative research project in Australia*'. For my own part, as if being conference convenor didn't keep me busy enough, I presented a paper deconstructing some of the assumptions underlying the influential user-centred paradigm and using my own research to illustrate some alternative approaches to information research.

Other universities were also well represented. Professor Amada Spink of Queensland University of Technology (QUT) presented the preliminary findings of a study she is undertaking with collaborators Susan Danby, Kerry Mallan, & Carly Butler, which examined children's web searching on the Google search engine. Lisa Soon of Charles Sturt University (CSU) presented '*Towards a Corporate Library: Weaving Information and Knowledge Together*'. The long history of outstanding bibliometric research at University of New South Wales (UNSW) continued with two short presentations by Concepción S. Wilson, Patricia Willard, Mary Anne Kennan, and Sebastian K. Boell examining the past and current publishing practices of Australian LIS academics.

In keeping with RAILS aim of fostering new research, a number of students and early career practitioners presented papers or made short presentations. New UTS PhD student, Jessie Lymn co-authored with John Stevens of the State Library of Victoria a paper on an emergent area of professional practice: '*Zine collections: An Australian perspective*'. Another new UTS PhD student, Natalya

Godbold, presenting a paper based on her recently completed UTS Masters project, '*User-centred design vs. "good" database design principles: a case study, creating knowledge repositories for indigenous Australians*', described the challenges of working with an indigenous community to develop a database to store the traditional knowledge of Aboriginal clans.

Natalya was also the first beneficiary of a new initiative, the ALIA RAILS scholarship, receiving a $1500 scholarship for the best full paper by an early career researcher or practitioner. The scholarship was sponsored by the Australian Library and Information Association, and the recipient chosen by the ALIA Research Committee. Natalya was presented with the award by ALIA President, Derek Whitehead. It has been a busy few weeks for Natalya, who interrupted her honeymoon to return to Sydney for the day to present her paper!

Other student presenters at RAILS included Alycia Bailey, and Jason Amman & Josette Barbara (UTS), Hilary Hughes (QUT), and Helena Heizmann (Macquarie). It is hoped that the new ALIA scholarship will encourage even more early career researchers and practitioners to contribute at future RAILS conferences.

RAILS, however, is not entirely about the academy, and the conference included fascinating papers and presentations by practitioners. Ellen Forsyth, Mylee Joseph, and Leanne Perry from the NSW State Library presented a timely paper on '*Learning about learning 2.0: evaluating the The New South Wales public library learning 2.0 program*', while Pertina Collingwood from RMIT ably filled in for her sick colleague Cathy Costa to present '*Use of online information resources by RMIT University Economics, Finance and Marketing students participating in a co-operative education program*'. Much interest and lunch-time discussion was generated by knowledge management consultant, Matt Moore's presentation, entitled '*Do you want to change the world? The challenge for KM practitioners & academics*'.

Overall, RAILS 5 succeeded in providing a collaborative space for academics, students, and practitioners to share ideas – and hopefully learn something from one another! I would like to thank my UTS colleagues, and above all thank my merry black-clad band of student volunteers for their efforts in ensuring that the conference ran so smoothly. Despite a packed program, we stayed on time all day! I wish the convenor of RAILS 6 well, although I am glad it's not me...

Papers from the conference will be published in this and upcoming issues of *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*. The abstracts for both the full papers and the short presentations are available on the UTS website at **http://www.communication.uts.edu.au/conferences/rails/abstracts.htm**

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