

Reflections on i³ 2015 by Jennifer Ford, recipient of the sponsored place award for 2015

I was lucky enough to be the recipient of a bursary allowing me to attend the i³ conference in June this year. As a part-time PhD student, who is also working full time, I find I have little opportunity to interact with other researchers with interests in information behaviour. Attending the i³ conference therefore gave me a valuable opportunity for this interaction, and it was great to meet so many other PhD students and hear about their research. I've so far spent my professional life working in practice settings rather than in research settings, and all of the library conferences and events that I have attended previously have been practitioner orientated. As a practitioner who is also regularly involved in research, I was very keen to attend a conference which had a research focus. i³ certainly did not disappoint, and I saw a number of fascinating presentations, which gave me plenty of ideas for future research projects and methods.

As my work and field of study both relate to health information, and particularly public health, it was great to see a number of presentations on research into information behaviour in health related situations. In particular Ágústa Pálsdóttir's presentation on the information needs of informal caregivers of individuals suffering from dementia struck me as a hugely important area for further research, given the predicted rise in cases of dementia in the UK alone to over 2 million by 2051¹.

As I, and several of my colleagues at the organisation I work for, are interested in how social media is used to share and disseminate information, the presentations on use of tools such as Twitter were also illuminating. These included Graeme Baxter's presentation on the use of Twitter for local constituency information dissemination by MSPs, Simon Burnett's presentation on use of linked content in Twitter during the Scottish Referendum debates and Frances Ryan's presentation on reputation management online. The variety of sessions using social media as a source of data for research is a sign of the increase in validity of social media as a research tool. I was particularly pleased to be able to see these presentations as they provided learning on research methods for social media. I think this will be a key impact for myself and my organisation as I have been able to take knowledge of these methods back to my colleagues.

I left Aberdeen and i³ feeling inspired, with a renewed enthusiasm to tackle my own PhD research into information use, and with fresh ideas for other areas and methods of research. I couldn't have hoped for anything better from attending my first i³ conference.

¹ http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=412