



ICLG at CiG

Alison Thorne, ICLG committee member, attended the City Information Group's AGM Event 2005 last month. Here is how she spent her day...

The CiG AGM was held at the St Bride Institute, in an historic little corner between Fleet Street New Bridge Street. The programme was imaginatively constructed, offering something for everyone in its three sessions, linked by two sets of Product Reviews, then the AGM, a drinks reception & dinner.

In the Product Review sessions vendors had 4 minutes in which to brief the audience about a single aspect of a service or feature. In addition to the presentations vendors brought supporting materials - and of course their freebies – we all like a good freebie!! Among the companies present were:

- Alacra
- EBSCO Information Services (who also sponsored the pre-dinner drinks reception)
- Economist Intelligence Unit
- LexisNexis Butterworths
- Swets Information Services
- Wall Street Journal Europe

To see these presentations on the CiG website go to:

<http://www.cityinformation.org.uk/Events/AGM2005/AGM05ProductReviews.htm>

The three main sessions

I went specifically for sessions 1 & 2, and found them both interesting and challenging. The first:

Transferable skills of the information professional: tales from the shop floor

was by a panel consisting of

Jackie Marfleet British Library

Gwenda Sippings HM Revenue & Customs,

John Keeble Aon Limited, chaired by

Lesley Robinson [Lesley Robinson Consultancy Services Ltd]

The panel members outlined their professional careers to date. All had come into information from very different backgrounds. Discussion covered the skills and mindset needed – by tapping in to their own experiences – to move on, develop your career, and taking challenges head on when they arise.

Jackie Marfleet rose through the ranks from qualifying to KPMG, to JP Morgan, then on into the British Library, left me reeling: where did she find the time to fit in all those jobs? I think most people were pretty overwhelmed by her energy!

Gwenda Sippings feels that she followed a more traditional route, working up from public libraries in Bedford, to BT Prestel, Aslib, Clifford Chance, and then on into the role of Director of KAI Knowledge Resources.

John Keeble is not an information professional *per se*: his background is in languages. But he grabbed an opportunity to work in IT and develop an LMS when it came up, and quickly realised he had to be thinking not just IT but from the users' viewpoint: thus into Knowledge Management.

Here are some of the top tips and ideas about transferable skills the panellists offered:

- Network
- Keep telling people you exist
- Make a noise
- Don't be defensive – take some risks
- Be aware – keep your CV up to date
- Get skills building
- Build an external profile
- Be aware of external influences
- Have a sponsor in the organisation
- Get management training
- Interpersonal skills
- Adaptability
- Problem solving
 - use your resources
 - use your networks
- Facilitation
- Demystification – talk/write in the users language
- Budgeting/managing finances
- Negotiating skills
- People management
- Managing change
- Be a 'Deliverer', not a talker
- Listen and be able to sell

The second presentation:

Proving the value of your information department using metrics

was given by Dr Frank Ryan, Head of Library and Information Services, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) His enthusiasm does rub off on you.

Frank Ryan has developed a metric system with which he can put a value on the information and services his departments use. He has in effect developed a way of accurately charging his users, which in turn has added kudos and value to his Business Information Centre (BIC).

“Time” he said, “has a financial value” and in a climate of having continually to justify service costings, it is essential to know how much everything costs.

Quarterly reports go to the budget holders, showing a breakdown of the services provided, e.g.:

- Cost of value reports
- Numbers of persons who have used the service
- Service Use
 - Research
 - Database use
 - Use of credit rating services
 - Current Awareness
- BIC staff time
 - Total time saved by BIC staff dealing with enquiries

These reports are very comprehensive, and in the banking world where figures and stats are part of everyday language, very acceptable to the budget holders.

Frank also spoke on the logistics of running an information service. The BIC was moved to a number of locations around the building, but they have finally settled in between the Coffee Shop and the Executive restaurant – a prime location. They have a policy that anyone can come in and use the facilities, the internet points, use the meeting room, even eat your lunch there – it's so user friendly. The BIC is more than just an information point/service; it has become a centre for information exchange and relaxation.

Always looking to build up the profile of the BIC, he already has **BIG** plans for 2006.

The third presentation was

Getting the best out of vendor relationships

This timely talk was given by **Martin Ainsworth**, an Independent Consultant and an experienced information professional, with many years experience of negotiating with information vendors. He gave the audience a number of useful tips on developing good relationships, and nurturing your (good) account managers.

The AGM was brief and to the point. Both the Chairman and the Secretary gave their reports, and there was a brief discussion about the financial statements, with the members being reassured about the financial health of CiG. Annabel Colley, fresh from FreePint, the BBC, babies and other career highlights, was introduced as CiG's new Business Manager, succeeding Lesley Robinson who has done the job for many years.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend either the knees-up (drinks reception) sponsored by EBSCO Information Services (excellent from all reports filtering through to me) nor the dinner, to hear Melanie Goody's after dinner speech, but I gather a good time was had by all and the event lived up to its reputation as one of the best-ever annual networking happenings - maybe next year I'll go for the whole of it!

Alison Thorne