

Review: Health Libraries Inc. Conference 23rd October, 2015 – keynote presentation: Associate Professor Peter Morley – Me & my librarian

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This keynote was presented at the 12th Health Libraries Inc. Conference, October 23rd, 2015.

The 12th Health Libraries Inc. conference started with clinical keynote presenter Associate Professor Peter Morley from the Royal Melbourne Hospital. This was a fabulous way to begin the conference as it helped to reinforce and focus the audience on 'why we do what we do'. Health libraries, though similar to other libraries in many aspects, are unique and special in their own way. Daily, those of us who work in libraries such as ones found in hospitals are ensuring that the services we provide are targeted, and the best available resources and evidence are available to clinicians to use seamlessly at the point of care.

Associate Professor Morley spoke about ways in which he uses health libraries (and naturally he is an advocate), but more importantly he emphasised how we as librarians can tailor the skill-sets we have to reach a greater number of clinicians, and to tap into them in ways we may not have previously thought about. For example, he spoke a great deal about understanding personality types (such as the Myers-Briggs types) and that if you understand personality types, you, in turn, can help your clients more effectively. If you know your clients, you can then tailor your services to meet their needs and the needs of their position. Knowing an individual means you can give clear and simple instructions when needed or more complex information if the situation requires it. This helped me reflect on what I do as a librarian and though I feel I do this to an extent, I can't say I have ever compared it to something like the Myers-Briggs types. For me, this is something I'll ponder a little more over summer.

Peter also spoke about the need for the library staff to 'get out there'. We need to be seen throughout organisations so that people know who we are, and so that questions can be answered on the spot. This may be in meetings, for example: try listening to what else goes on around the organisation and seeing how the library can help. Listen to gripes – maybe we can offer aid or fix an issue – or maybe we know someone who can help? Go to ward rounds – give quick answers at the point of need and evidence on the run. Are we familiar within an organisation? In some places I know my library is – in others we still need to work on it!

As Associate Professor Morley wears many hats within his professional career, he also emphasised that at times he knows what he's doing (from a library perspective) for certain roles. But at other times, or with other roles, he is completely lost. This made me reflect on how often we see a competent library-user and think 'they are fine – they know what they're doing', when in fact they could be struggling to keep their head afloat in a particular role. This draws back into what Associate Professor Morley said early in his talk: that knowing personality types (and body language etc.) will help me recognise more easily when people need help. So we need to walk that 'fine line' of offering help (even if it may not be needed) and reading the cues for help so clients don't flounder. He also discussed the need to create a strong learning environment in the library, where people can easily drop in for help. The library needs to be approachable so that clients can ask what may seem a 'silly question' and know that the library will help them in a professional and efficient manner.

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So for 2016 I plan to learn a little more about personality types and how I might adjust the services I offer to individuals based on this, I promise to be out and about more and 'be seen' within my organisation, and I plan to grab opportunities that arise with both hands and give it a go!