



Who are you, where are you based and what do you do?

Verity Allison – I am the journals and e-resources librarian at St George’s, University of London. St George’s specialise in medicine and healthcare sciences courses, sharing a site with St George’s Hospital (where the Channel 4 television series *24 hours in A&E* is filmed) we also provide library services to the Trust. I am also mum to two small people, so I have had one of the home-schooling/home-working flavours of lockdown in recent months.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

I think probably the problem-solving aspect of the job - it keeps life interesting! There can be a lot of troubleshooting to do around e-resource access relating to authentication, our link resolver and our discovery tool – unpicking these different parts of the puzzle and finding solutions is a satisfying feeling – particularly when you can get the user to ‘the’ article, the one that is at that moment essential for any number of reasons. There is the opportunity in this to work with a wide range of people across our institution and from external suppliers, and encountering the knowledge and dedication of others is always inspiring. I also enjoy the collection development aspect of my role. This involves analysing how the collection is performing and using this to inform decision-making discussions with colleagues around possible changes to the collection so that we can best accommodate our users’ needs going forward. It is in a way another problem-solving exercise as meeting our users’ needs/expectations within the budget is an eternal challenge in this area. I think one of the benefits of working at a smaller institution is that my role spans both these aspects – the detailed day to day technical and administrative tasks, and the bigger picture planning and development activities too.

What motivates you in your work?

I enjoy helping our users and seeing the difference that our services can make. Sometimes relatively simple interventions can make a big difference and by keeping our users at the forefront of what we do we are always learning and finding ways to improve or adapt to changing circumstances. My colleagues in the library and across the institution are unwavering in their professionalism and dedication to serving others – be they students, colleagues or patients – and I find being a part of these efforts very motivating. While the recent months have been phenomenally challenging on a number of levels, the importance

of education and research in the fields we are working in at St George's has maybe never been clearer, and also the timely access to the outcomes of this work. So, this too is another driver to keep going, even when the speed and scale of the changes we are having to make can seem overwhelming at times.

How has/can the M25 Consortium support you in your career?

The M25 Consortium has been the source of some great opportunities in my career so far. In particular the M25 Staff Development Awards supported me to attend the UKSG conference for the first time a couple of years ago. The UKSG Conference is an important event in the area I work in (journals, e-resources and scholarly communications), and attending it was a great opportunity to engage in conversations with colleagues from other institutions and suppliers. A lot of support for attending conferences tends to be focused towards Early Career Professionals, however when I qualified and entered this role my family circumstances meant that I didn't feel able to attend conferences that required that level of travel and time commitment (3-4 days away). So, it was wonderful to find a source of support, the M25 Staff Development Awards, which enabled me to gain this important experience but at a slightly later point in my career. Recently, during the current circumstances of the pandemic, I have also benefited from some fantastic tips passed on by colleagues who had joined the Working From Home webinar organised by cpd25. There are many other examples I could give, but I think these two highlight a couple of the things I really value about the support from the M25 Consortium and cpd25 – that they have provided support across all stages of my career, and that they respond to the ever-changing parameters of the services we deliver and sectors we operate in so the events and training are always timely and relevant.

What would it surprise people to know about you?

Non-librarians are often surprised that even though I work in a medical and healthcare sciences library I have an arts background – but for many librarians this will be no surprise at all I think!

Complete the sentence: If I wasn't working in a library, I would be ... an eternal student

because ... HE seems to be my natural environment, I tried life outside it but it didn't suit me and happily I found my way back...

Verity Allison, St George's, University of London
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