

# cpd25 Bursary Report 2020/21

In February 2020 I was frantically attending interviews for Graduate Library Trainee positions. At the end of a stressful two weeks, my final interview was at the Institute of Historical Research library at the University of London. By the end of the week I had been offered the position at the IHR and was already planning the year ahead. I would move to London, start work at the library, go to conferences, listen to lectures, visit other libraries, talk with other professionals, and fully immerse myself in the profession. That was the plan anyway. Unfortunately, that's not exactly how things transpired.

By March 2020, the country (and much of the world) was under lockdown. As the months wore on, we began to realise that the Covid pandemic wasn't going anywhere fast. Fortunately, my job offer at the IHR remained and I started as the new Graduate Library Trainee in September. It wasn't the conventional start to a job. My first couple of weeks were completely remote, and my induction was via Zoom. As things transpired, there were many colleagues who I'd end up never meeting via a screen. When I did go into the library, our services were reduced, and our readers limited. As things worsen again into the winter months, the university closed and the library remained open only to staff.

I was lucky that during the whole of my time there, I wasn't furloughed and was never without work to do. Although there were no on-site readers for much of the year, we were inundated with requests for scans, references, e-journals, and inter-library loans, all of which kept us busy. In addition, my colleagues encouraged me to undertake CPD during this time. It was in November that I applied for the cpd25 bursary and was delighted to receive it. The bursary entitled me to 10 hours of cpd25 events organised by the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries. With so many usual events suspended over lockdown, being able to attend these online seminars, workshops and talks was a really important way for me to learn more about the profession, develop my skills and meet other professionals from across the sector.

My first two events were both really useful for me as a new professional. The first event I attended was about library school – something which I had yet to embark upon. Hearing experiences from past students was extremely useful and helped to clear up a lot of confusion. There are lots of factors to consider with a library degree: should I do the diploma, or the masters? Should I go full-time, or part-time? In-person, or distance-learning? And which university should I apply to? All these areas were covered by the talk and it helped to make the process of applying much easier. The second event I attended was on GLAM institutions can learn from each other. As someone new to the profession, this session served as a perfect introduction to difference aspects of GLAM institutions, and helped me figure out what kind areas I wanted to potentially explore in my career.

Over the course of the year I attended numerous other events on various subjects. With Ned Potter, I both learned the basics of library marketing and presentation skills. These were both subjects I had never encountered about before, and yet have already proven to be useful in my daily work. Library marketing and communication was especially important while we were in lockdown and we were trying to keep in touch with our readers via social media and our site. The sessions were instructive, and Ned gave us exercises that we could do to practice what we had learned. Despite being remote, these workshops really helped me develop some practical skills which I will use throughout my whole career.

Receiving the cpd25 bursary not only helped me acquire new skills, it also helped me meet new people and get involved in initiatives which I wouldn't have been aware of before. It was through a cpd25 event that I got involved with the CILIP London regional group, after attending a session which was run by one of its committee members. It was also via cpd25 events that I learned about other LIS related groups, events and mailing lists that could help me get more involved in the profession. Attending these sessions really helped me to gain a better understanding of librarianship and where I wanted to go with my own career. It was a great way to reflect upon my own skills and identify areas where I needed to improve and develop. I was introduced to new ideas and new ways of working which informed how I went about my job at the time. Attending the cpd25 events enhanced my trainee year and set me up well to apply for jobs after my 12-month contract came to an end.

After my year at the IHR, I managed to get a job in the printed heritage collections at the British Library, where I work now. I have also got involved in a number of groups, including the CILIP London group, of which I am now the Students and New Professionals Officer. I started my MA in Library and Information Services Management at Sheffield, and will hopefully be graduating next year. To look back over the last year, it seems like a lot has changed. Due to the pandemic, the start of my career in libraries did not go quite as expected. Despite that, receiving the cpd25 bursary really helped to overcome some of the barriers that were created by the Covid pandemic, and allowed me to engage with my work in a more meaningful and reflective way. I am grateful to the M25 Consortium for making the bursary available, and I would strongly recommend that anyone who is interested in attending CPD events should consider applying for the next one!