

Talks and Transformation: An introduction to the FIP 2023 Conference

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Abstract

This introduction to the 2023 Forum for Information Professionals (FIP) Conference Extended Abstracts discusses this year's theme of climate change and the LIS field in the context of the changes and transitions the academic, student-organized conference continues to take.

Keywords: climate change, student life, academic conference

The 2023 Forum for Information Professionals (FIP) Conference on February 17th once again brought together students, faculty, and professionals in the LIS field. Our theme this year was “LIS and the Climate Crisis: Transforming Talk into Action.” Climate change is a relevant and timely topic, particularly in the LIS field. We wanted to approach the theme by not only presenting the issue and its complexities, but also offering practical applications towards taking action. After all, when it comes to issues of social justice, action is needed to effect real change. Hearing our keynote speaker and numerous MLIS students speak about climate change from solutions-oriented perspectives was encouraging and inspiring.

FIP has gone through a number of transformations over the past few years. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the conference to move online. In some ways, having an online conference is fitting with this year's theme with regard to its impact on the conference's carbon footprint. Speakers don't have to be flown in. Attendees can

tune in wherever they are, without having to physically get to the university campus. There is no physical space requiring power or clean-up. Our organizational meetings are held online as well.

However, internet use has an environmental impact. According to a study conducted by a team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Purdue University, and Yale University, streaming and videoconferencing does indeed have an impact on environmental footprints of carbon dioxide, land, and water (Travers, 2021). Not surprisingly, the more video used, the bigger the footprint. For example, depending on the streaming or videoconferencing service, emissions can be between 150 and 1,000 grams of carbon dioxide per hour. While that is much less than the approximately 8,887 grams of CO₂ produced from a car after it burns just one gallon of gasoline, it can add up over time. After all, how many hours do we spend on Zoom, or streaming our favourite television programs, movies, and video games? As well, that one hour of streaming could consume between two and 12 litres of water and a small patch of land comparable to the dimensions of an iPad mini (Travers, 2021).

In other words, moving online, while it has its benefits, doesn't give FIP (or anyone) a free pass when it comes to climate change. We need to keep the discussion going. What this means is that in both our personal and professional lives, we should always be aware about our choices and their consequences - and take the appropriate actions, once we determine what those are.

That said, moving online has proven to be an important and successful transformation in the history of FIP. Taking into consideration issues of both physical accessibility and the large number of online MLIS students at the University of Alberta's School of Library and Information Studies, the conference organizers made the decision last year to keep the conference permanently online. This would allow online students to have active roles as organizers and presenters, as well as making the conference more convenient for people not located in Edmonton to attend. Judging by the attendance numbers, we made the right call.

But there is another, more recent transformation to report. This year, FIP dissolved as a student group and became a committee of the Library and Information Studies Students' Association (LISSA). This will help make the conference more

sustainable for the future by avoiding the strict student group requirements, and lessen the load on organizers.

As Chair of the 2023 Organizing Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who made FIP 2023 a success. First of all, thank you to everyone who attended FIP 2023 for taking time out of your schedules to be there. Thanks go out to Dr. Denise Larsen, Associate Dean (Research with the Faculty of Education) and Dr. Kenneth Gariepy (Director, School of Library and Information Studies) for their opening remarks, and Dr. Lois M. Evans for her keynote talk: “Climate Action: Taking Personal and Professional Responsibility for Living Life in a Climate Emergency.” Of course, thank you to our student presenters: Olesya Komarnytska and Maia Trotter (“Climate Change Considerations in Public Library Collection Development”), Michaela Morrow and Danielle Deschamps (“Climate in Collections: The Role of Special Collections in Climate Change and Environmental Movements”), Anneliese Eber (“Preserving Non-Traditional Information in Digital Libraries”), and Dan Hackborn (“A Young Librarian’s Primer for Climate Action”).

I must also thank my fellow FIP committee members for their contributions in organizing this year’s conference: Courtenay Adams, Alycia Bockus-Vanin, and Christian Brown. Thank you to LISSA for helping with the transition of FIP to a student committee. Finally, but certainly not least, thank you to Shane Klein of Technologies in Education (TechinEd) at the University of Alberta, for the technical support that kept the Zoom room operating, the conference recorded, and the presentations edited for posting at the University of Alberta’s Aviary repository.

My wish is for a long and successful future for the FIP Conference, where crucial issues will continue to be raised, and the fruits of these discussions will be transformed into action.

Works Cited

Travers, K. (2021, March 4). How to reduce the environmental impact of your next virtual meeting. *MIT News*. <https://news.mit.edu/2021/how-to-reduce-environmental-impact-next-virtual-meeting-0304>.