

Museum Association Conference 2021

'Brave New World: How can Museums Change Lives in a Post-pandemic World and Help Society Respond to the Many Challenges it Faces', was a fitting theme for the first face to face MA Conference since the pandemic. The conference embraced a hybrid program, with in person and online events held in Liverpool. The anticipation and energy of those attending in person was perfectly representative of the mood of museums around the country. They were keen to restart all those projects put on hold during Covid and explore the new landscape of visitor experience, new ways of interacting with buildings, collections and museums, and workforce well-being.

The keynote speakers were particularly inspiring, discussing decolonisation, restitutions and Liverpool's history with slavery and the slave trade. Kehinde Andrews; Professor of Black Studies; discussed decolonisation and anti-racism in museums from an academic perspective, and Malik Al Nasir; an author, performance poet and film maker from Liverpool gave a harrowing personal account of his own exploration into his ancestral links to the slave plantations and personal links to Liverpool's own economic history built on the back of the slave trade. This forced those in attendance to really think about the way in which we look at, discuss and display the history of our own collections and historic buildings and the effect of the narratives we tell on the people who visit the spaces that we care for, as museum professionals.

Personally, I found the emphasis on workforce well-being and mental health reassuring and I was pleased to see multiple events through the three day program, with a high number of attendees at all of these events. The impact of the pandemic on all aspects of life cannot be underestimated and hearing about others' experiences and sharing different perspectives was comforting and inspiring. It allowed those of us in attendance to start thinking about the role museums play in a post-pandemic world. Professionally, this was a fantastic opportunity to network and I particularly valued the speed mentoring session on the second day of the conference. Run by Women Leaders in Museums, this allowed an in person opportunity for me to ask and discuss specific topics related to my own career and ambitions. I stayed in touch with, and recently met up with the mentor I was paired up with at this event and have found it to be very helpful in discussing ideas and keeping up with what is happening within other museums within my region.

Thank you Museum Development Yorkshire for the opportunity to attend this conference!

Martha Morley