



SLA Central and East Berkshire Branch Unconference Report 2020

The third Unconference was held on Saturday 14 March and was hosted by Emma Keeler at LVS Ascot. As previously, an Eventbrite page was created whereby people could “book” tickets and it was promoted via local branch members, other SLA branches (Surrey, Oxford and London), on SLN as well as Facebook and Twitter.

Originally 41 people signed up but, due to concerns around the coronavirus, some of these cancelled or did not turn up so we had 31 attendees on the day. The majority of these were from Berkshire Schools (a mix of state and independent, prep and secondary) but we also had librarians from Wiltshire, London, Surrey, and Hertfordshire

The day followed the structure of last year’s Unconference. We opened with “Speed Dating with a Book” always very popular and a great ice-breaker. Unfortunately, Caroline Roche was unable to attend so I updated everyone with regards to the Great School Libraries Campaign. Attendees had been asked to write any issues they wanted to discuss on post-it notes; these were grouped into four categories which were covered in two breakout sessions (each running two groups) during the day.

The first two breakout sessions encompassed:

1. Reading for pleasure including how to engage boys and older readers
2. Raising the profile of the profession including departmental collaboration, SLT engagement and CPD/courses

The second two breakout sessions included:

1. Keeping research skills current including going beyond Google
2. The library as a physical space including equipment and library lessons

We also ran a workshop that looked at “Digital in the Library” and one where a range of useful organisations, Twitter people, etc. were recommended.

The evaluation forms indicated that the majority of the attendees rated the event organisation, venue and all the sessions as very good (4) with only a few marking some of the sessions as good (3). The library spaces session as well as digital in the library received the only scores marked with a 2 with the comments that the library space was more of a chat about people’s libraries and that the digital session felt a bit rushed.

Most of the feedback was very positive with many people noting that they found networking very useful, speed dating fun and that it was good to talk about every day issues.

Additional comments included that more activities to promote reading for pleasure would have been useful, more information about free subscriptions, and more time to talk about books!

Overall a very successful day with several attendees emailing afterwards to say how much they enjoyed it.

Barbara Band

Chair SLA Central & East Berkshire Branch