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Preview: 2025 BIALL Conference

Abstract: This year's BIALL Annual Conference is in Birmingham, and with a packed schedule of fascinating presentations, insights into cutting edge products, fun social events and a very underrated city to explore, it certainly looks like being a good one. Here the LIM co-editors guide you through all the things to look out for in Brum come June the 11th.
Keywords: BIALL; education and training

The 55th Annual Conference is to be held in Birmingham in mid-June (11th to 13th), and has been given the title of 'Playing a Blinder: Moving Forward in the City of a Thousand Trades', which is a nod to the rich industrial and commercial heritage of the UK's second city – there's an argument that this title really should go to Manchester, by the way, but we'll address that in the preview next time the Conference goes there!

This year's venue is The Eastside Rooms, the city's newest conference centre located in the up-and-coming Knowledge Quarter, an innovation cluster in the heart of the city centre, so not far at all from some of Birmingham's most interesting sights.

But why should you go to Birmingham? Well, there's certainly plenty to see and do in the city itself – which we will get to a little later – but the main event for BIALL members is most definitely the Conference, and this year it looks like it's going to be very interesting indeed. We've included the full programme below, but some things that leapt out for us are the keynote lecture by Christina Blacklaws on the intersection of AI and bias; CILIP CEO Louis Coiffait-Gunn's plenary session on the ethical issues that legal information professionals should be considering in relation to AI; and also the presentation by Anne Coles and Helena Marshall on the changing legal qualification landscape and the impact on research skills training in law firms. Also, don't miss LexisNexis' Matthew Leopold in what is billed as a 'high energy session' exploring the hidden mechanics of trust. On top of all this there are also plenty of parallel sessions offering practical tips on researching obscure topics or improving your soft skills, not to mention the plethora of product showcase sessions.

THE SOCIAL NETWORK

Another good reason to attend Conference is the opportunities for networking it offers. In an age where face-to-face communication is rare and even telephone conversations are often avoided in favour of bouncing emails back and forth, the chance to meet people working in the same sector should not be missed.

And the BIALL Conference is all about meeting people. Whether it's at a formal event or gathering, or in the bar, or over a cup of tea, the Conference is simply the best networking opportunity there is for people working in the field of legal information in Britain and Ireland. But it doesn't stop there, because one of the lovely things about Conference is that a number of representatives from sister organisations also attend – and going on the interviews we've conducted for LIM they seem to love it.

But whether it's someone from another country or just from another area of law librarianship that you talk to you will be able to share information, swap experiences and, above all, learn from your fellow information professionals. You will also have a great laugh, too, and maybe even strike up a relationship which could turn into a friendship. It happens more often than you might think.

Conference is also a wonderful place to pick up new ideas – take a notebook, you'll need it! Taking yourself out of your usual frame of reference gives you a fresh perspective on things, while speaking to people in the same line of work can – and often does – change the way you approach an aspect of your day-to-day activities when you're back in the office.

CHOCOLATE AND PENS

The BIALL Conference is also, possibly, the very best place there is to interact with vendors. The exhibition space always has a real buzz about it, with suppliers from across Britain and Ireland and further afield manning their smart stands. It's a great opportunity to see what's out there in terms of goods and services, then, and to learn about the new developments that a vendor has come up with, or those products you're perhaps not so familiar with. There will also often be a chance to see some of these products in action, as vendors will usually take the opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of their wares.

But it's not just about the hardware and the software, Conference also gives you the chance to meet your account representatives in a more informal setting, and maybe even face to face for the first time, which can

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For some Conference is all about the lolly, for others it's the pens

improve your relationship and make those meetings just a little easier when it comes to renegotiating a contract.

Oh, and one last thing about the exhibition space: it's a great place to stock up on free pens, thumb drives and water bottles and – whisper it – there's usually one or two vendors giving out free chocolate, too.

ICE AND SLICE

Conference is not all about presentations and pressing the flesh, though, there is also the social side of things. This year the BIALL Social Event on the Wednesday evening, which includes pizza and drinks – always a winning combination – is at The Distillery, which started life as the city's first gin producer but is now a trendy bar and event space amidst the picturesque and evocative old canals.

While the Wednesday night is always informal, Thursday night, of course, is all about the President's Reception, followed by the BIALL Annual Dinner, where each year we celebrate the accomplishments of our members and the standout suppliers with the presentation of the BIALL and LexisNexis Awards. It's a chance to put on your glad rags and enjoy fine food and wine, and it is always great fun.

EVEN MORE CHOCOLATE AND PENS

While there's certainly enough to do at the Conference, it's also worth taking a little time to explore the city a little, as it has loads to offer, including nearby Cadbury World at Bournville – just in case you couldn't get a big enough choccy fix from the vendors – and shopping in The Bullring mall. There are also some marvellous museums, including the Thinktank Science Museum and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, a must for fans of the Pre-Raphaelites. The Pen Museum is also said to be very interesting, with its "exhibition and demonstrations of pen-making, writing equipment, accessories and calligraphy".



Birmingham boasts an interesting mix of architectural styles that showcase both its history and its place in the world today

Birmingham was once, of course, at the very hub of the industrial world, and while most of the 'dark satanic mills' are no longer pumping sooty smoke into the air, there are still many reminders of this past, whether its repurposed Victorian factories, now-quaint canals or the impressive buildings that were the fruits of the grinding labour, such as the neoclassical Town Hall and the time-warp Moor Street Station.

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Other architectural delights include the wacky spaceship façade of Selfridges, which comprises 15,000 anodised aluminium discs mounted on a blue background. It cost £60m to build in 2003; but it is very shiny.

readers most is probably 800,000, as that's how many books are stored within it, including those in its Shakespeare Memorial Room, which houses the UK's most important collection of works by The Bard.



The Library of Birmingham is a stunning building and isn't it great that nearly £190m was spent on what we love best?

The building that will almost certainly be of most interest to information professionals, though, is the stunning Library of Birmingham, which looks like it should be situated in some oil-rich Middle Eastern state rather than the middle of a city in the English Midlands. It's a truly remarkable structure which opened in 2013 and cost £188.8m to build. But the number that will interest LIM

Birmingham also has more than its fair share of lovely pubs, including The Woodman, and The Wellington, the latter with its vast selection of real ales. These old boozers are very atmospheric and just the sort of place you could imagine bumping into Tommy Shelby, which brings us back to the title of this year's Conference. 'Playing a Blinder'; now that really does reach a punning 'Peak'.



Birmingham has some wonderful old pubs – The Woodman is one of the best

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BIALL
BRITISH & IRISH ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIANS

55th Annual Conference & Exhibition

Wednesday 11th - Friday 13th June 2025
The Eastside Rooms, Birmingham



PROGRAMME

Wednesday 11th June 2025

From 10:30	**Registration**		
11:45 – 12:00	**Formal Opening of Conference** **Claire Mazer**, BIALL President		
12:00 – 13:00	Plenary Session 1 *Chair: TBC* **Strategic Projects to wow your board! – How Information Services and Knowledge Management teams can work together to make an impact** **Jenni Tellyn**, 3Kites Consulting Limited		
13:00 – 13:15	Product Showcase **HeinOnline Highlights: Explore exciting new & upcoming databases, features and tool releases** **Roxanne Marmion**		HEINONLINE
13:15 – 14:15	**Lunch & Formal Opening of Exhibition**		
14:15 – 15:15	Plenary Session 2 *Chair: TBC* **Research Skills Training in The Changing Legal Qualification Landscape** Presenters: **Anne Coles,** Mishcon de Reya LLP **Helena Marshall,** Watson Farley & Williams LLP Co author: **Wendy Johnson,** Charles Russell Speechlys LLP		
15:15 – 15:30	Product Showcase **Taking control of your online resources** **Bob Kalyan**		Onelog
15:30 – 16:00	**Refreshments, Exhibition & Networking**		
16:00 – 16:45	**Parallel Sessions 1**		
	1A: **Navigating the Future: Practical Approaches to Horizon Scanning** **Julie Ferris & Diane Stitt** A&O Shearman	**1B:** **A Practical Lexicon to Spark End-User Engagement with KM Tools** **Claire Brown Bilobrk**	

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	Kendall Hannon Vable *Chair: TBC*	Bailey Solutions *Chair: TBC*	
17:00 – 17:45	**Parallel Sessions 2**		
	2A: **Leveraging genAI for Competitor Intelligence Research: Five Real-World Use Cases and Lessons Learnt** **Lisa Paul & Susan Lamond** Ashurst LLP *Chair: TBC*	**2B:** **Positive action recruitment at IALS: perspectives from both sides of the interview** **David Percik & Laura Albuquerque** Institute of Advanced Legal Studies *Chair: TBC*	**2C:** **The British Virgin Islands – the gateway to Commonwealth Caribbean case law and legislation** **James Rowles & Tracey Dennis** The Inner Temple Library *Chair: TBC*
17:50 – 18:20	**Special Interest Groups**		
	Group 1: Academic Group	**Group 2:** Knowledge Management Group	
19:15	Coaches to The Distillery		
– late	**BIALL Social Event - The Distillery** *Including pizza and drinks*		

Thursday 12th June 2025

09:00 – 16:30	**Registration & Exhibition**	
09:30 – 09:45	**Opening of Conference** **Claire Mazer**, BIALL President	
09:45 – 10:15	Lightning Talks 1	
	*Chair: TBC* **Transforming Everyday Enquiries: Leveraging Data for Strategic Insights** **Rosie Ashbourne,** Withers LLP **Exploring legal research skills in practice** **Gordon Connell,** University of Reading	
10:15 – 10:30	Product Showcase **LLMC: New Database and Content Review** **Joseph P Hinger,** LLMC	LLMC
10:30 – 11:30	Plenary Session 3 - Keynote Lecture	
	Chair: TBC **AI & Bias: Ensuring Fairness in a Technological Age** **Christina Blacklaws,** Blacklaws Consulting Ltd	

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11:30 – 11:45	Product Showcase **Oxford Law Pro: human intelligence, AI efficiency** **Mirkka Jokelainen,** Product Portfolio Manager **Kevin Trevor,** Sales Manager	OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
11:45 – 12:30	**Refreshments, Exhibition & Networking**	
12:30 – 13:30	**BIALL Annual General Meeting** incorporating **Have Your Say** *Hear from our Committees and International Colleagues*	
13:30 – 14:30	**Lunch, Exhibition & Networking**	
14:30 – 15:30	Plenary Session 4 *Chair: TBC* **Now you see it, now you don't: The truth about trust and the law** **Matthew Leopold,** LexisNexis	
15:30 – 15:45	Product Showcase **Lexis+ AI: The next evolution** **Karen Waldron,** Director of Product Development	LexisNexis
15:45 – 16:15	**Refreshments, Exhibition & Networking**	
16:15 – 17:00	**Parallel Sessions 3**	
	3A: **Embracing Innovation: Strategies for assessing and integrating Generative AI tools** **Alex Robinson** Addleshaw Goddard LLP *Chair: TBC*	**3B:** **Irish Law uncovered – essential resources for law librarians** **Ann O'Sullivan** A&L Goodbody LLP **Ruth McMahon** Arthur Cox LLP, Dublin *Chair: TBC*
17:15 – 18:00	**Parallel Sessions 4**	
	4A: **Legal Database Renewal in the AI Era: Insights from Eversheds Sutherland's AI Strategy** **Andrew Thatcher** Eversheds Sutherland LLP *Chair: TBC*	**4B:** **Ditch the doubt: The importance of self-advocacy** **Ciara Murray** Lancaster University *Chair: TBC*
18:05 – 18:35	**Special Interest Groups**	
	Group 3: Irish Group	
19:30 – late	**President's Reception followed by BIALL Annual Dinner** *including presentation of the BIALL and LexisNexis Awards*	Sponsored by LexisNexis

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Friday 13th June 2025

09:00 – 14:00	**Registration & Exhibition**	
09:30 – 10:00	**Lightning Talks 2**	
	*Chair: TBC* **Words Matter: How language influences your research** **Holly Mottram,** TLT LLP **Finding corporate and legal information in other jurisdictions e.g. Ireland, Jersey, BVI, Cayman Islands, etc** **Sam Lloyd,** CRO Info™	
10:00 – 10:15	Product Showcase **Empowering Legal Excellence with CoCounsel – Your AI Partner in Precision and Efficiency** **Tim Coles,** Legal Knowledge and Development Adviser **Haley O'Brien,** Strategic Client Director	Thomson Reuters™
10:15 – 10:30	Product Showcase *Details to be announced*	Soutron GLOBAL
10:30 – 11:00	**Refreshments, Exhibition & Networking**	
11:00 - 11:45	**Parallel Sessions 6**	
	6A: **How to start a legal tech company** **Gavin Sheriden** Vizlegal *Chair: TBC*	**6B:** **Regulation by A Thousand Entities: Navigating the US Business Law Research Landscape** **Janet Kearney** New York University Law School Library **Alison Shea** University of St. Thomas School of Law Library *Chair: TBC*
12:00 - 12:45	**Parallel Sessions 5**	
	5A: **'Never in a rain of pigs pudding': Ethical use of generative AI in legal research** **Margaret Watson** Bodleian Law Library, University of Oxford *Chair: TBC*	**5B:** **Leaving the [Companies] House: Researching Corporate Entities in ex-UK registers** **Dr Jillian Saucier** Morrison Foerster *Chair: TBC*
12:45 – 13:45	**Lunch & Exhibition raffle draws**	
13:45 – 14:45	**Plenary Session 5** *Chair: TBC* **Sins or wonders? 7 issues for legal info pros to consider about current AI business models** **Louis Coiffait-Gunn**, CILIP – the library & information association	
14:45 – 15:45	Plenary Session 6 *Chair: TBC* **Could law librarianship go the way of Birmingham's thousand trades? And what can**	

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	we do to preserve the profession? **Greg Bennett,** BPP University
15:45 – 16:00	**Formal close of Conference**

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