

M25 SpeedMeet

February 2025



Questions

- **Who are you, where are you based and what do you do?**

My name is Ian Clark, I am currently the Academic Services Manager at the University of East London managing the Academic Services team. Our role is to liaise with the Schools across the university, providing support for students in everything from using the library to supporting the development of their information literacy skills. In my role, I provide strategic direction, working with my team to develop the service, to help develop and support the overall strategic direction of the Library Service more generally and to work with partners across the institution to ensure we provide the support that our students need.

At present, our main focus is on the impact of artificial intelligence in education, particularly in terms of educating staff and students on the issues around its use and development. Ensuring students are equipped to understand the issues around the use of AI, as well as ensuring colleagues are well informed, will be critical in navigating the research landscape in the years

ahead and in ensuring the library is central to discussions around these issues across the institution.

- **What do you most enjoy about your job?**

One of the key fundamental things I've always enjoyed in my roles is the ability to be creative in my working, to find my own path, my own solutions to the problems and challenges we face. I've always been empowered to take a creative approach, whether that be in terms of creating video content to support students during the lockdown period of the pandemic or being the first in the institution to develop resources for students on generative AI. This freedom to be creative is something that is very important to me in terms of my work, and it is something I encourage in my team, ensuring they feel they can develop ideas and explore their own approaches to addressing the challenges we face.

- **What motivates you in your work?**

It's difficult to answer this question without resorting to cliches. I don't think I'm going to avoid them, unfortunately! I'm a great believer in trying to bring about small changes for the better. Working in education, there's obviously an important role we can play in helping to educate and inform, but also in levelling the playing field so that we address societal inequalities. Approaching my work on the basis of applying a social justice approach and seeing the difference it can make, even in small, limited ways, motivates me to do more and to explore ways of bringing change within the context of an academic library.

- **How can/has the M25 Consortium supported you in your career?**

The M25 Consortium has played an important role in my career, providing opportunity, experience and networks that would otherwise have been inaccessible to me when I shifted from public libraries to academic libraries. Through the events hosted by CPD25, it gave me opportunities to share my knowledge and experience with colleagues across the sector. Being involved in the CPD25 task groups has also significantly widened my network, enabling me to develop relationships and contacts right across the sector, which has played an important role in my career. As with my work at UEL, it has also supported me in terms of being open to engagement and seeking ways to develop the consortium. Acknowledging areas for development and working with me to address them (for example, the development of the [M25's Statement on Values and Inclusion](#)) has given me the confidence to push for change in all aspects of my career.

- **What would it surprise people to know about you?**

I don't know if it's a surprise, but outside of academic libraries I do a bit of photography, selling prints and zines of my own work. My work has been featured on [a well known photography YouTube channel](#), so that's been pretty cool.

- **Complete the sentence: If I wasn't working in a library I would be..... because**

If I wasn't working in a library I would probably still be working in retail trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life. I only got into librarianship due to meeting a partner with a much higher salary than myself. She supported me in getting onto a librarianship course and completing the course. Without the capital to invest in the course, I would very likely still be in a succession of low-paid jobs. It is for this reason I tend to see a career in librarianship through the lens of privilege. Not everyone has the social, cultural or economic capital to make this a career, and it's important not to lose sight of that.