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Exploring threats to openness in the digital world

International speakers gathered at Northumbria University, Newcastle, recently for a high-profile conference exploring access to information in the digital age.

The two-day conference, entitled Threats to Openness in the Digital World, was organised by Northumbria academics to help explore the growing threat to accessing public archives in the information age. Aimed at academics, students, professionals and anyone with an interest in accessing archived material, the sessions provided a unique opportunity to listen to and engage

with leading UK and international figures at the most senior levels of government, academia and the profession. These included Sir Alex Allan, who has recently advised the UK government on digital records, and Professor Mary Daly, President of the Royal Irish Academy. Arthur Lucas also spoke about the role of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Council in determining questions of openness, with other sessions covering topics such as digital context and the nature of the record, the legal perspective, trust and consent.

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Northumbria's [Professor Julie McLeod](#) was one of the conference's lead organisers alongside colleagues, Dr David Thomas, [Professor Michael Moss](#) and PhD researchers Genevieve Silvanus and Nisa Mutalib.

Julie, who is Professor in Records Management in the [Department of Mathematics and Information Sciences](#), said: "Will the rapid growth of digital records mean more material will become available to researchers? Or will the growing emphasis on privacy, the right to be forgotten and increasing demands of national security mean that fewer records will be released? These were just some of the questions discussed at the conference.

"The quality of the discussions during the conference was excellent. Speakers and delegates explored a wide range of very challenging issues which continued during the breaks with great engagement via Twitter.

"The final session identified a set of important actions - some practical, others needing research, technology development, political action or

lobbying. We're analysing them to feed into an action agenda.

“Feedback from delegates and speakers was extremely positive - they found the event stimulating, informative, inspiring and exciting. One participant described it as a great opportunity for reflection as well as learning about some new perspectives on both openness and threats. We have lots of suggestions for another conference in this space.”

The conference was sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and IT as a Utility (ITaaU) www.itutility.ac.uk For more information go to the Threats to Openness blog at <https://threats2openness.wordpress.com/> and you can follow the conference on Twitter at: @threat2openness and using the hashtag #T2Op

Northumbria offers a range of courses in Information Sciences. In the Research Excellence Framework 2014, the University showed excellent impact in Information Sciences with 90% of its research impact judged to show ‘very considerable reach and significance’. For more Information Sciences at Northumbria sign up to one of the University’s upcoming Open Days or go to: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/academic-departments/mathematics-and-information-sciences/>

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

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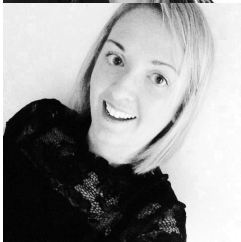


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