

Alison Tobin, Cardiff University,

I was both nervous and excited about the URMA conference. I'd travelled over 4000 miles to get to Atlanta, and I was really hoping it would be worth the long trip. I wasn't disappointed.

From the first session to the last, the conference was creative, informative and inspiring.

Maryn McKenna's session on storytelling emphasised the need to get out of the office, capture the sensory details and look behind the science. All these elements will help to engage the reader and take a story from 'common to compelling.'

From my own point of view it was great to meet Maryn, antibiotic resistance is the cover story of the current issue of Challenge Cardiff, and she'd previously covered the work of the Professor involved.

Hearing about the redesign of Georgia Tech's Research Horizons was really interesting. Although Challenge Cardiff is only two issues old, there is plenty we can learn from the process Georgia Tech went through. Of particular relevance was how the print, digital editions and website all work together, as this is something I am grappling with at the moment!

The final talk of the first day from Dan Winters was totally inspiring. His images were so powerful and captivating. It has really made me think about how we use photography not just in the magazine, but also for the research section of the website. I've already sent our design agency, photographer and digital communications team the link to his website.

The second day was just as packed and informative. I went on the Energy Research tour and was very impressed with the building and the research going on there. The afternoon's sessions on humor in science, communicating ebola, and the use of drones were all very different but equally informative and educational. I really liked the fire hose sessions and found all of them really useful.

The third day focussed on social media. As a communicator I use and manage social media regularly, but I'm also aware that I could be doing more, especially to support the magazine. Steven Norris' comment that "social media should be less about marketing and more about storytelling" is definitely something as research communicators we should all be striving for.

The conference was fantastic value for money. I was made to feel very welcome and it was great to be in the company of such a friendly, creative, and enthusiastic group of people. I came away with lots of ideas not just for Challenge Cardiff, but for how we communicate research in general. It has to be one of the best conferences I've been to. It was definitely worth two nine-hour flights and the jet lag!