

Welcome Letter

I am very pleased to welcome you to NOTA's Annual International Conference in the lovely city of Belfast. I'm sure that coming here will give you the opportunity to learn, to question, to feel validated in the important work you do and to relax and meet with colleagues and friends.

This year we have a number of innovations to the organisation and structure of conference which we hope you will appreciate. We will be evaluating how these changes have worked in the coming months so please do let us have feedback.

The first change you will have discovered on booking is that our conference venue is not a university but this year is the Europa Hotel, with a range of accommodation available to enable you to make a choice that suits your preference and your budget. We hope that this will work like a virtual 'conference village' with most of the accommodation options within easy walking distance of the Europa.

The other change is that this year all the plenary sessions are in the morning and workshops in the afternoon. Over the years the format of conference has changed and evolved and we are keen to hear from you whether this arrangement works better.

Once again, our programme provides a uniquely rich and varied series of keynote addresses, workshops and seminars delivered by key figures both local and from around the world. Having heard a number of them speak before I am sure we are looking forward to a stimulating and challenging three days.

You will see from the programme that we have also made time at the start of conference to pay tribute to NOTA's founding Chair, Tony Morrison, whose tragic death in February is still a cause of great sadness to many. How best to commemorate someone who had such an impact on so many lives, and careers, has been a challenge for NOTA and we felt that Conference was one place where we would want to mark what an important figure he was for NOTA.



On the day before Conference begins, pre-conference seminars offer the opportunity to spend a full day with recognised experts in the field and once again there is an exciting range of presenters and subjects, all with clear research into practice focus.

In addition we had a very high level of submissions for workshops and seminars, and overall the programme addresses a comprehensive range of training and knowledge needs. I'm sure you will agree that once again NOTA conference provides an unparalleled opportunity for developing our knowledge and understanding in this challenging and important area of work. I hope you find your time here thought provoking and enjoyable, and that you will let us know about your experience via the evaluation forms.

Alongside this, amidst the array of intellectual stimulation, I hope you can take some time to renew old acquaintances and make new ones and recharge your batteries. This year we are grateful to the Ireland Branches for arranging an evening of 'locally themed' entertainment on Thursday and do hope that as many conference attendees as possible will join us. I hope you can also take the opportunity to explore the lovely city of Belfast. Last but not least, if you are a member then please come to the NOTA AGM and members' lunch where you will have the opportunity to hear about NOTA's work over the last year and our plans for the future.

I would like to say particular thanks to Conference Committee Chair Roger Kennington, conference organiser, Lindsey Stark and Wendy McPherson, conference administrators, NOTA General Manager Malcolm Muskett, other conference committee members and the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Branches for the many hours of work they have put into making this event the success that I am sure it will be.

I look forward to meeting many of you during the conference and to a stimulating three days.

Marcus Erooga - Chair, NOTA