Inspiring careers with Fingal Libraries’ STEMcon

Inspiring the next generation was the theme of Fingal Libraries’ STEMcon on Wednesday last, October 10, and the event did just that, as almost 300 people - including students from eight local secondary schools, representatives from home-schooling groups, and Fingal County Council Chief Executive Paul Reid - attended the conference at the Castleknock Hotel.

Organised in association with Science Foundation Ireland, Creative Ireland, Europe Direct, and the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown (ITB), the event was introduced by Senior Executive Librarian Lilian Whelan, County Librarian, Betty Boardman, and formally launched by Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Anthony Lavin.
In his address, Mayor Lavin spoke about the importance of studying STEM-based subjects, and the reasons why a STEM-based career is a good move, before praising Fingal Libraries’ endeavours to promote these subjects across the county.

“Fingal Libraries are leading the charge when it comes to fostering interest in STEM,” he told the rapt audience. “The library is a place where you can access a wealth of information about a wide range of STEM topics.

“Libraries have always been a place where visitors could access new and emerging technology. Twenty years ago, library users could access the internet before it had become widely available in homes. Today, you can access new technology such as 3D printing at several Fingal Library Branches.”

Dr Mary Meaney, former President of ITB, and the first women appointed to lead an Institute of Technology in Ireland, was an excellent Moderator for the event. Now the Programme Leader on the ‘Technological University for Dublin’ project, Dr Meaney introduced the fascinating programme of speakers in turn, who each offered an eye-opening, educational, and, at times, hilarious insight, into their science-based careers.

The morning began with the Executive Fire Prevention Officer of Dublin Fire Brigade, Ruth Walsh and Fingal County Council’s Community Archaeologist, Christine Baker; who was asked by one excited audience member whether she had ever found a dinosaur bone.

We were also delighted to hear from Site Reliability Engineer in Google Dublin, Eimear Crotty and IT Director with Liberty Information Technology (LIT), Felim O’Donnell before Deputy State Pathologist, Dr. Linda Mulligan spoke, declaring her delight at addressing a “live” audience!

We heard how to ‘Earn as you learn with an Aviation Apprenticeship’ from Apprentice Aircraft Engineer, Patrick Grogan, before the final speaker, Eimear Ni Bhroin, Language Officer with the European Commission Representation in Ireland, asked the crucial question ‘Can languages unlock a career?’

A lively, and extremely interactive, question and answers session followed, as the attendees got a chance to quiz the panel on their careers.
“Fingal Libraries were delighted to welcome so many young people to this STEM careers event,” said Senior Executive Librarian, Lilian Whelan. “We heard some really varied and interesting presentations about a variety of STEM careers, which were enjoyed by all.

“STEMcon is another example of the important role played by Fingal Libraries in encouraging young people to study STEM-based subjects and pursue STEM careers,” Lilian added.

If any proof was needed of this fact, it came at the end of the event when, by show of hands, at least 75% of the audience expressed an interest in pursuing a career in this field.

For more information, please contact Barry O’Carroll on 01 890 5560, or email barry.ocarroll@fingal.ie

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NOTE TO EDITOR: Photo caption: "STEMCON L to R: Eimear Crotty, Ruth Walsh, Paul Reid, Mary Meaney, Betty Boardman, Patrick Grogan, Cllr Anthony Lavin, Carl O'Brien and Eimear Ní -Bhroin"