

## ECA 25 Nottingham – Post-Conference Report

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### Highlight Key Aspects of the Conference

This conference was filled with numerous highlights that directly align with both my professional work and personal aspirations. What resonated with me most was how refreshing it was to see innovative, progressive research and projects being led by early career anatomists. One of the biggest challenges in this stage of a career is gaining visibility among established leaders in the field. Anatomy can often feel dominated by seasoned professionals, and it's rare for early career voices to take center stage. This conference disrupted that dynamic in a positive way.

I'll be strongly encouraging my students to engage with this community and take advantage of the opportunity to practice their public speaking and presentation skills in a supportive environment.

One of the standout moments for me was Cat Irving's talk, "Things in Jars." She shed light on the complexities and ethical responsibilities involved in preservation work. As a technician, I deeply connected with her emphasis on honouring the donor and upholding their dignity; a fundamental principle in our daily practice.

The workshop that had the greatest impact on me was Alex's "Speaking of Bodies – Broad Language Beyond Anatomy." They highlighted how exclusive or biased language is often embedded in our field, sometimes unconsciously. This session prompted real reflection: I've already begun reviewing the textbooks in our lab with a more critical eye and am now considering revisions to the title of my PhD to ensure it utilizes more inclusive language.

From a career development perspective, this conference was an excellent networking platform. I had the opportunity to meet and connect with inspiring pioneers in anatomy, and I gained insight into new techniques for teaching, as well as emerging technologies like AI, VR, and AR. These connections and takeaways will undoubtedly inform and enhance my work at my home institution.

Overall, the conference was a vibrant, collaborative space that celebrated the collective contributions of everyone working to uphold the standards and evolving culture of anatomical research and education.

## Impact of the ECA Fund

Conferences are undeniably valuable for professional development, exposure to new ideas, and career progression. However, attending them is often out of reach, especially for technical staff, due to the lack of accessible funding. While there are many conferences available, it's rare that technicians are supported to attend, let alone given a platform to present their work. Training opportunities for technical staff are limited, and when funding is available, it often requires extensive justification and evidence of direct departmental benefit.

The bursary I received was more than just financial support, it was an endorsement of the value of technical voices in anatomy. It gave me the rare and irreplaceable opportunity to speak on a subject that is deeply meaningful to me: the vital and often overlooked role of anatomical technicians. The fact that the committee chose to fund a technician-led talk on technical work represents a refreshing and much-needed shift in the culture of our field. It was validating, empowering, and long overdue.

Thanks to this support, I was not only able to attend but to actively contribute to the conference. It allowed me to raise awareness of the contributions technicians make and to advocate for greater visibility and recognition of our work in the wider anatomical sciences community.

## Personal Reflections

My personal reflections following this conference are centred on the power of advocacy; of speaking up, being compassionate, and showing genuine interest in the work of others. This experience reminded me just how impactful it can be to step forward, share your perspective, and actively support your peers. I was inspired by how much the ECA committee has achieved in such a short time, and I'm excited at the prospect of becoming more involved myself. I'm even considering applying to serve as a Technician Officer Representative.

It was incredibly refreshing to see so many people passionately exploring new approaches to teaching, challenging outdated norms, and striving to create more inclusive and engaging learning environments. Equally rewarding was watching students gain confidence and experience as they presented their posters and talks; a clear sign that this conference is nurturing the next generation of anatomists.

The event has also sparked a number of new ideas for both my department and my own research. I've come away with fresh approaches to curriculum design, particularly around

inclusive language and accessibility, and I'm eager to explore how we might incorporate more interactive technologies like AR and VR into our teaching practices. I've also started rethinking aspects of my PhD focus to ensure it better reflects current conversations in anatomical ethics, representation, and pedagogy.

In addition, I see great potential for collaborative projects with others I met at the conference, projects that could enrich student engagement, strengthen technician visibility, and foster cross-institutional sharing of best practices. I plan to bring these ideas to my team and Head of Department, with the hope of piloting some new initiatives that could have meaningful, long-term impact.

