


THE POSTGRADUATE TIMES

July 2013



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THE FIRST WORD



As the new Director of Graduate Studies, I am pleased to welcome you to the summer issue of *The Postgraduate Times*. This July we bring you another selection of some of the cutting-edge research currently being undertaken by academics and postgraduate researchers at Birmingham.

The summer months are a busy time for our postgraduate researchers, who are showcasing their work to postgraduate researcher and academic colleagues at events and conferences both at home and abroad. As promised in the last issue, the University Graduate School Images of Research exhibition features heavily here; the cover image demonstrates the work on climate change currently being undertaken by Grace Garner, a doctoral researcher in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences. You'll find the winners and a selection of the best shots on pages 8–13. Adam Bibbey, from the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, was also named the winner of the University Graduate School's annual Research Poster Conference with his entry, 'How stressed do you get?', a study of how negative feelings are associated with higher levels of worry but lower blood pressure and heart rate in stressful situations.

We're also celebrating the successes of our postgraduate researchers and early-career academics in the Humanities, and are pleased to announce that Islam Issa, a doctoral researcher in English, was recently awarded the Michael K O'Rourke PhD Best Publication prize at the annual University Graduate School

Awards Event. You can find out more about his research on the Islamic reception of John Milton on page 16; and early-career lecturer Berny Sèbe shares his experience of becoming an academic and his interest in postcolonialism and North Africa. There's also an update on the continued transformation of our campus and housing tips for those of you starting new postgraduate courses in September, as well as an introduction to the new Institute of Advanced Studies and an update on some of the major international research projects led by our staff.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome those of you who will be joining us in September. Coming to the University of Birmingham, you will be joining one of the UK's largest and most vibrant postgraduate communities. Birmingham's University Graduate School team and I are committed to making sure that you have a fantastic experience and we wish you the very best of luck with your studies.

Best wishes,

Gavin Schaffer,
Director of Graduate Studies

Physicist takes on lead role at CERN

Professor Dave Charlton, of the School of Physics and Astronomy, took up the position of Spokesperson, the overall scientific lead, for the ATLAS project at the Large Hadron Collider, CERN, in March 2013.

ATLAS is a large-scale international collaboration of approximately 3,000 scientists. Since 2009 it has been one of the world's two largest operating particle physics experiments, alongside its sister experiment CMS, at the Large Hadron Collider. Together, ATLAS

and CMS recently discovered the elusive particle, the Higgs boson, a key building block of the Standard Model of Physics.

Professor Charlton said '*it is a great honour to have been selected to act as Spokesperson for the next two years by my colleagues on ATLAS. The major step forward in discovering the Higgs boson is a result of the dedication and drive of so many colleagues from all around the world over the years, and it is a great privilege to represent them.*'



Exploring out-of-body experiences

Out-of-body experiences – the extraordinary feeling of floating outside your own body and experiencing the world from another vantage point in space – have baffled scientists for centuries, yet they are widely documented as affecting around 20 per cent of the population at some point during their lives.

Having recently won new funding, Dr Jason Braithwaite, of the School of Psychology, has launched an appeal for volunteers who have had these types of experiences to take part in a pioneering new study. This seeks to identify the scientific causes behind these bizarre phenomena by assessing the complex neuro-cognitive processes connected to out-of-body experiences in non-clinical cases.

With the help of the local media, Dr Braithwaite has identified over 200 volunteers from the local community to take part in a few simple laboratory-based experiments as part of the study. These include measuring brain-driven physiological reactions to visual patterns and the rubber hand illusion where, after a short period of time, observers can become absolutely convinced that a fake rubber hand is their own and belongs to their body.

Dr Braithwaite said: '*For some people, and under certain circumstances, "normal" brain processes become dysfunctional and can result in quite strange and bizarre situations like the out-of-body experience. We are exploring the neuroscience that may predispose some people to have these striking experiences and make them more vulnerable to such occurrences.*'



Professor David Gillborn, Symon Sentain (Chair, Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust), Dr Nicola Rollock, Doreen Lawrence OBE, Professor James Arthur (Head of the School of Education, University of Birmingham) at the launch of CRRE.

University opens Centre for Research in Race and Education

Twenty years after the death of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, his mother, Doreen Lawrence OBE, recently helped launch a new Centre for Research in Race and Education at the University.

The Centre aims to pursue race equality and social justice by working to close gaps in educational achievement and improve the career prospects of black and minority ethnic people. It is the only dedicated research centre of its kind in England and will play a leading role in the field internationally.

Professor David Gillborn, Director of the new centre, said '*there is a widespread assumption that racism is no longer an issue in education but across the board in experiences and outcomes in primary, secondary and higher education, there remain significant race inequalities. The Centre aims to work with a wide range of people – from parents and pressure groups to policy-makers and teachers – with the aim of better understanding and combating racism in education.*'

To find out more about the centre visit birmingham.ac.uk/crre

The IAS is an important initiative for the University as academics strive to explore and develop solutions for many societal challenges, which require the type of interdisciplinary solutions that are facilitated and encouraged by the IAS'.

Professor John Bryson, Birmingham Business School

Birmingham

Chicago

Institute of Advanced Studies

Collaboration in *action*

Sue Gilligan, Deputy Director of the recently launched Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), tells *The Postgraduate Times* more about the Institute's inaugural themes.

We are also pleased to welcome our first IAS Honorary Fellow. Dr Keith Magee is Honorary Fellow in Race, Religion and Poverty and will be making a series of visits to the University in the coming months.

Keith is Executive Director of The National Public Housing Museum and Center for the Study of Housing and Society in Chicago. He took the appointment after serving as a senior advisor, for religious affairs, with the Obama Campaign and as a senior director at the Museum of African American History in Boston and Nantucket.

His areas of study include psychology, economics and religion, and Keith is passionate about providing humanitarian aid to children and families, especially in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, and Soweto and Johannesburg in South Africa. As part of this aid plan, Peter Drobac M.D., of Partners in Health, commissioned Keith to build an interfaith Chapel and chaplaincy programme for their hospital in rural Rwanda.

Keith will be based in Social Policy and has already begun to build many academic contacts across the University. We will be contacting colleagues to take part in an IAS workshop with Keith in the near future but do contact Sue Gilligan at s.gilligan@bham.ac.uk if you'd like to get in touch with Keith or learn more about opportunities for workshops.

The Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) supports and promotes interdisciplinary research by combining expertise from across the University to address major cross-cutting themes that are important, socially relevant and timely. Birmingham is already among the globe's leading universities and we are determined to help secure and enhance this position.

What's distinctive and exciting about our Institute of Advanced Studies is its breadth. We're not just an IAS that's centred around social sciences and humanities, we cover the full range of activities at the University; very few universities can boast such a strong connected group of academics.

IAS grew from an idea that in order to fully explore this strength and breadth there was a need for more effective collaboration across the University.

Under the directorship of Professor Malcolm Press, IAS's mission is to facilitate research collaboration that is driven by ideas from our academic community. To achieve this requires a shared theme, resources and effective relationships.

Colleagues from every school as well as academics from other universities from Europe, North and South America and external stakeholders have attended the 45 IAS workshops that have been held here on campus since last May. From those idea generating

events IAS received 11 proposals for the inaugural themes.

The two IAS Inaugural Themes' – Regeneration Economies and Saving Humans – were launched on 10 April in the Bramall Elgar Concert Hall and perfectly encapsulate this interdisciplinary approach to research.

Regeneration Economies: *Transforming People, Place and Production*

This theme is led by a cross-college team: Professor John Bryson, of the Birmingham Business School; Dr Lauren Andres, of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences; Professor Kamel Hawwash, of the School of Civil Engineering; and Professor Duc Pham of the School of Mechanical Engineering.

The ambition of Regeneration Economies is to develop a distinctive interdisciplinary Birmingham and Chicago school approach to understanding regional economies. Sister cities Birmingham and Chicago have experienced waves of restructuring that have stripped out manufacturing employment and led to significant economic challenges.

The existing approaches to understanding regional problems are no longer useful for understanding cities that are experiencing an on-going process of economic regeneration.

This theme will develop new ways of conceptualising regional economies by making a comparative analysis of two city regions – Birmingham and Chicago.

US partners working with the Birmingham team are Professor Jennifer Clark, Associate Professor of Public Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Professor Geoff Hewings, Professor of Geography and Economics, at the University of Illinois.

The team are very excited to be working together on this transatlantic holistic approach to understanding regional economies. The theme is truly interdisciplinary and includes input from colleagues from Social Sciences, Engineering, Education, Arts, and Law.

How are Colleges getting involved?

Capturing the IAS goal of combining expertise from across the University, colleagues from all five Colleges are getting involved with Regeneration Economies.

- The theme fits well with ongoing research in the **College of Social Sciences** on understanding local economic development
- **The College of Engineering and Physical Sciences** is leading on the University's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educational activities
- **The College of Life and Environmental Sciences** has recently invested in an initiative focusing on understanding the resilience of urban areas
- **The College of Arts and Law** has stressed the importance of regional engagement through the development of the Heritage and Cultural Learning Hub

- **The College of Medical and Dental Sciences** consider health as one of the key dimensions of regeneration economies

Saving Humans: *Risk, Intervention, Survival*

The intention to save and make secure human lives might seem to be an obvious aim – and one which is wholly commendable – however it is not that simple. How to 'save humans' and what it involves raises complex ethical, political, and practical questions. Questions such as who is responsible for the 'saving', what it involves, and who should finance it, are not simple to answer, nor are questions of responsibility about intervention and its consequences. 'Saving Humans' considers these questions in many contexts and across a broad spectrum of threats to human survival as, despite the great variety of threats, similar questions face those attempting to intervene and act to save and improve human lives.

The Saving Humans theme will bring together researchers from across the University and beyond to investigate these and other pertinent questions. It will consider a number of possible threats:

- **Health**, for instance, from infectious disease and pandemics, from failure to protect current health public goods (such as antibiotic resistance) or from technological development
- **Environmental**, for instance, from climate change, from resource scarcity, from earthquakes and floods and from manmade environmental threats, such as industrial pollution and desertification
- **Security**, for instance, from war, conflict and terrorism, including weapons of mass destruction (from nuclear to chemical to biological) and of all scales of conflict,

as well as its consequences, including increased numbers of refugees and displaced persons, migration and trafficking, and increased risks to individual security, which make rape, violence and other forms of exploitation more likely

Saving Humans will consider such threats and how life can be protected and 'flourishing' promoted. In particular it will consider intervention by:

- states
- international community of states
- international organisations and/or non-governmental organisations
- individuals

Birmingham is exceptionally well placed to take this forward as it has international experts working across these themes and the success of the initial IAS workshop in June 2012 clearly showed University-wide and external interest in this theme. Work will commence in September 2013 with a team led by Professors Paul Jackson, Heather Widdows and Nick Wheeler. The cross-cutting goals of Saving Humans will enable the IAS to bring together a diverse and multidisciplinary community of researchers and visiting Fellows under a coherent and intellectually exciting programme.

How can you get involved?

We are currently planning 18 months of activity for IAS themes and there will be opportunities for colleagues from across the University to collaborate with teams. We are particularly keen to hear from postgraduate students, so if you are starting a research degree in 2013 and would like to be involved, or have a good idea for an IAS workshop, please contact Sue Gilligan at s.gilligan@bham.ac.uk.

Teaching benefits of social networks

Tarsem Singh Cooner, Associate Director at the Centre of Excellence in Interdisciplinary Mental Health, tells *The Postgraduate Times* about some of the innovative ways that Facebook can be used as a teaching tool.

Social networking is becoming an integral part of many students' everyday experiences; in a recent poll of Birmingham students, 96% reported having an active Facebook account. As a Social Work lecturer and trainer in enquiry-based blended learning, I am very interested in looking at how these social networking sites (SNS) can be used within teaching. Using social media as a learning environment can help to mirror students' real-life practices, and increase intake for a module, and its relevance for workplace application. For example, what better way to examine online behaviour and confidentiality issues surrounding social work than via the SNS that many students use in their personal lives? I tested this theory by integrating Facebook into a recent Think Family and Whole Systems module examining whether SNS are an appropriate medium to engage in social work activity.

Prior to redesign, there was no room within a congested curriculum to exclusively explore the implications of SNS on professional practice. A creative rethink changed the teaching approach from one based primarily on didactic lectures to one that integrated enquiry-based blended learning and closed Facebook groups. The redesign provided students with opportunities to critically reflect on their everyday Facebook use, whilst retaining the original objectives of the module – to explore the limits between personal and public 'space' within SNS.

The module had to ensure students did not perceive the use of Facebook as a 'bolt on', but as an important part of the learning process. A complex family case study was used as a test; online lectures and guided reading exposed students to the basic knowledge required to understand the case study. At the end of each lecture, students had to pass an online quiz and apply their learning in closed Facebook groups. Six MA and eight BA groups were created for each team. A hardcopy workbook provided a roadmap and milestones as well as enabling students to record their learning.

Exercises encouraged students to reflect on the type of information publically available about them. Students considered a number of key boundary questions, such as would it be possible for case study members to find you on Facebook, and what type of image does your Facebook profile convey?

Results

The module increased student confidence in articulating issues of personal privacy; outlining ethical issues of using Facebook for social work practice; and explaining potential positive and negative aspects of using social networks in professional practice.

Engagement with Facebook triggered critical thought and discussion based on experiences of being in a life-like situation. This allowed students to explore how they could use Facebook to share information and maintain

confidentiality. When things went wrong, they were able to use Facebook Group Docs to record, reflect and discuss these experiences collectively and analyse broader potential consequences for professionals and service users.

Feedback also suggested that using Facebook made the learning experiences personally meaningful for the majority of students. Two major points they took from the module centred on their practice of accepting friends and reviewing privacy settings on Facebook posts. As exercises progressed, ethical issues particularly in relation to ownership of information, the ease with which information could be copied and shared without consent, data protection, and confidentiality, were examined in greater detail. It was only by engaging in the exercises that they began to realise the practical, ethical and legal complexities of the issues involved.

An on-going evaluation is planned to assess the impact of the module's learning on students' use of SNS in their first year of assessed practice. For further details contact Tarsem at t.s.cooner@bham.ac.uk

A video outlining the learning design and student feedback can be accessed at storify.com/Akali65/combining-facebook-and-enquiry-based-blended-learning Extracts taken from article originally published in the British Journal of Social Work also available via the above link.



WEAVING the tapestry of life

Professor Ian Henderson introduces some of the leading research and people behind the recently formed Institute of Microbiology and Infection.

HISTORY OF MICROBIOLOGY AT BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham has been at the forefront of Microbiology research for many decades. At the formation of the University, Dr Edwin Rickards, a local physician and member of the University council, donated £1,000 to the establishment of the first bacteriology laboratories. He saw this 'as of the utmost importance both to the medical faculty and the health of the city'. At the same time the School of Brewing and Fermentation was founded to meet the needs of regional breweries. This School, through various restructuring would eventually give rise to the School of Biosciences.

In the 1960s the University recruited Harry Smith to the Chair of Microbiology and Peter Wildy to the Chair of Virology and Bacteriology. Both became world renowned for their work on viruses and bacteria; among their achievements were Harry's identification of the anthrax toxin and Peter's establishment of the international system for viral nomenclature. Later, Alasdair Geddes, one of the founding fathers of clinical studies on antibiotics, was appointed to the Chair in Infectious Diseases which he held until he retired in 2004.

Microbiology is, in simple terms, the study of viruses, parasites, fungi and bacteria. Many people associate this with the study of organisms that cause disease, and investigations into methods to diagnose, prevent and treat those diseases. We are often faced with 'doomsday scenarios' related to microbial disease, one only has to examine recent media coverage to see the range of stories on dangers of antibiotic resistant bacteria and the possibility of life threatening coronaviruses spreading across the globe.

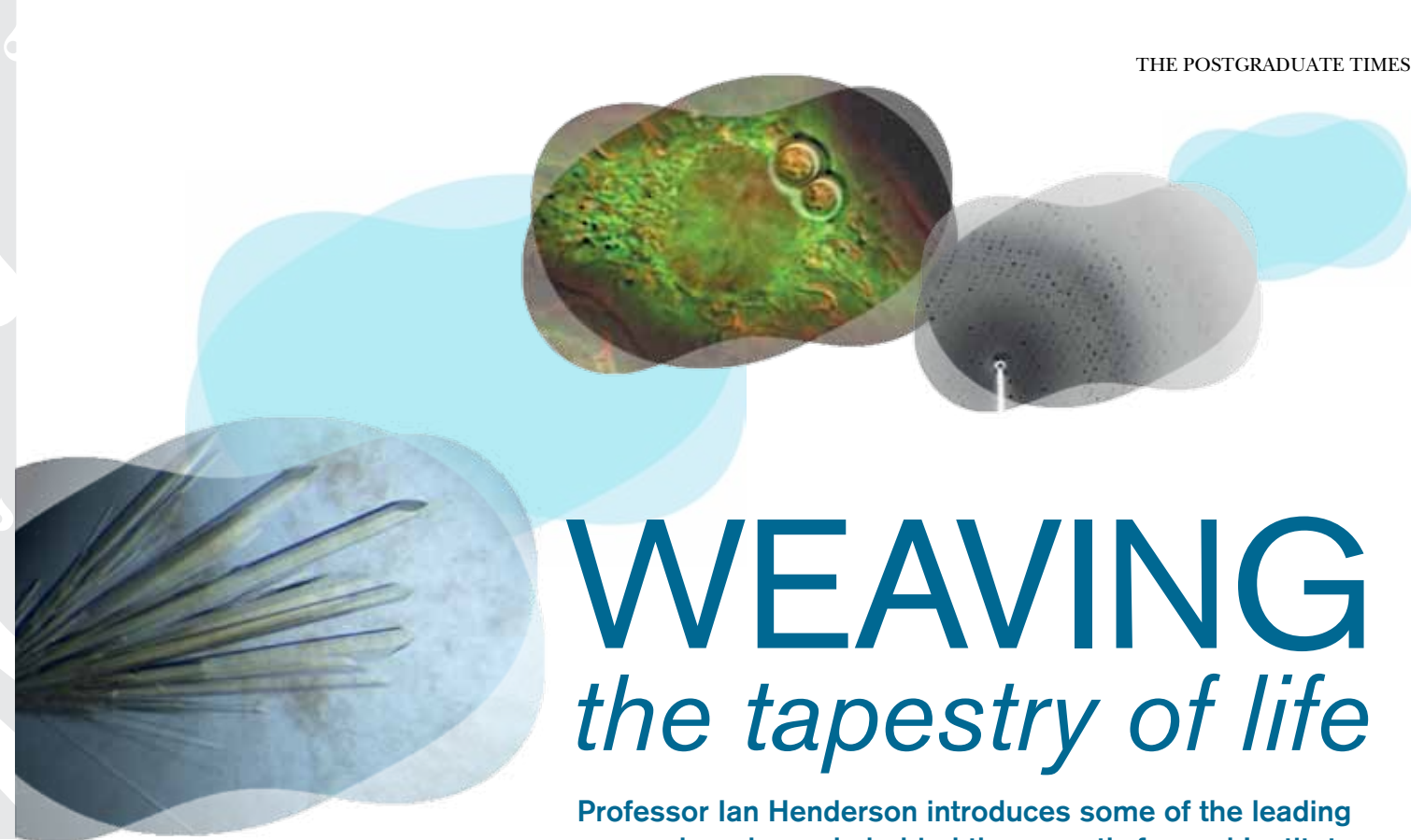
Whilst these are real threats to modern medicine and human longevity which should not be underestimated, microbes also play a myriad of other beneficial roles. These important organisms are central to biogeochemical cycles, the manufacture of food and drinks, the production of revolutionary treatments for cancer and diabetes, and in providing fundamental insights into biological processes. In short, microbes are the fabric upon which the tapestry of life is woven.

The importance of microbiology to humanity, and the strength of our research base, was recently recognised by the University through the formation of the Institute of microbiology and Infection, co-locating microbiologists from across the Colleges of Medical and Dental Sciences and Life and Environmental Sciences. The Institute places them together at the heart of the campus to create one of the largest bacteriology research centres in the UK. The University launched the Institute with a successful inaugural symposium in December 2012 which brought together over 250 microbiology researchers from across the globe.

We have a vision for the Institute; to create a community of individuals with complementary expertise who can support each other through collaboration, with a sense of purpose and shared goals. We will build on our research strengths in combating tuberculosis, understanding antimicrobial resistance, developing vaccines and elucidating fundamental mechanisms of microbial processes. We will seek to use this knowledge purposefully, to translate this research into national prosperity.

We do not want knowledge created in the Institute to stay in the Institute; we want it to have an impact, a tangible benefit to society. We will create not only a place for world-class research but a scientific home for our postdoctoral fellows and students. We will seek to grow and nurture their talents and to support creative people who want to make a difference. We want our students and post-docs to be ambassadors for Microbiology at Birmingham; when they leave we want them to leave with a positive experience and the conviction that Birmingham is the best place to do Microbiology.

For further details on how you can get involved contact Professor Henderson, Director of the Institute, at i.r.henderson@bham.ac.uk



Postgraduate research showcase: Images of Research

The Images of Research Exhibition 2013 was the third event of its kind hosted by the University Graduate School. The exhibition asks postgraduates to represent their research in a single image and is a great opportunity for staff, students and members of the local community to find out more about the wide range of research across the University. From war memorials to new antibiotics, the exhibition included images from every college. As promised, over the next six pages we bring you some of the best images.



WINNER

Business never sleeps

Enrico Vanino, PhD,
College of Social Sciences

Panyu district, Guangzhou, south of China. The 'open door' of the Middle Kingdom. A worker tries to have a rest lying in the middle of packed goods ready to be shipped to Ouzhou, Europe. China is more than a rising economic power, it is a leading and changing country. As the world's largest exporter and second largest economy, China has become increasingly aware of its economic and political power, and it is already clear that China's integration into the world economy will not be painless. In this globalised world Europe has a profound interest in seeing a stable, prosperous and open China, instead of fighting it. My PhD research will ask important questions arising from the changing economic and political landscape between China and Europe. What is the impact of Chinese exports on domestic European firms? To what extent does an increased competition impact on domestic wages, employment and productivity? How do the bilateral trade flows influence employment, welfare and more generally the society within these different partners? Europe should be strongly committed to working with China, to achieve a long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship for the next future: not only for us, but also for this worker in Guangzhou.

Postgraduate research showcase:

Images of Research



RUNNER-UP

Empty Net and a Smile

**Giovanni Occhiali, PhD,
College of Social Sciences**

The picture is taken in Ganvié, southern Benin, West Africa. It shows a fisherman and his daughter trying to catch (without any particular luck) some fish for subsistence consumption. Even if Benin is one of the safest and less volatile countries in Africa, it suffers from a serious infrastructure underdevelopment, with less than a quarter of the population having access to electricity or improved sanitation. The aim of my research is exploring different scenarios for investments in hydropower generation in Sub-Saharan Africa, which might play a vital role in increasing electricity access in different parts of the continent, while at the same time furnishing adaptation strategies to increased drought and flood risks (due to climate change) via improved water management practices.

Postgraduate research showcase:
Images of Research

COVER IMAGE

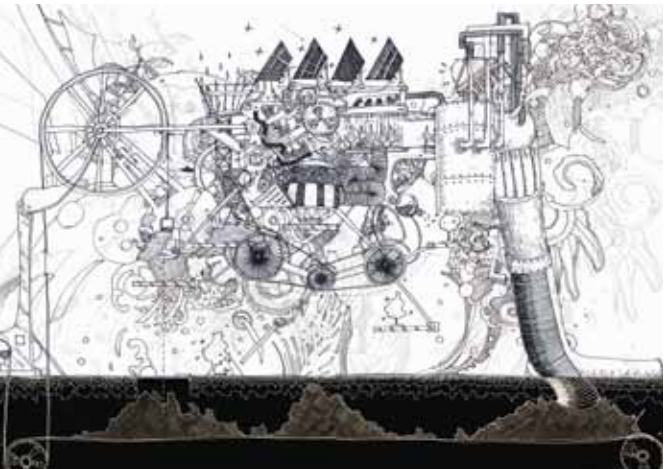


Looking up: fish-eye lens photography to parameterise stream temperature models

Grace Garner, PhD, College of Life and Environmental Sciences
This image looks upwards through a fish-eye lens from the surface of a headwater stream in the Scottish Cairngorms towards the trunks and crowns of deciduous woodland. The trees line the bank of the stream allowing you to follow its path through the photograph. My research investigates the effects of a changing climate on UK stream temperatures and also measures which may mitigate the profound potential impacts of a warmer climate on freshwater ecosystems. I use images such as this one in conjunction with solar radiation measured at a site with a 'clear sky-view' to model solar radiation received at the stream surface as the sun moves across the image on each day of the year. Solar radiation is the main driver of variability in stream temperature and is well known to be reduced under forest canopies. Thus, planting bank-side vegetation presents a potential methodology to mitigate the effects of a changing climate on water temperature. I am producing predictive models of the effects of forestry on stream temperature under various climate-change scenarios. Such information is needed urgently by environment managers in order to quantify the amount of forestry required to provide suitable habitats for thermally sensitive species.

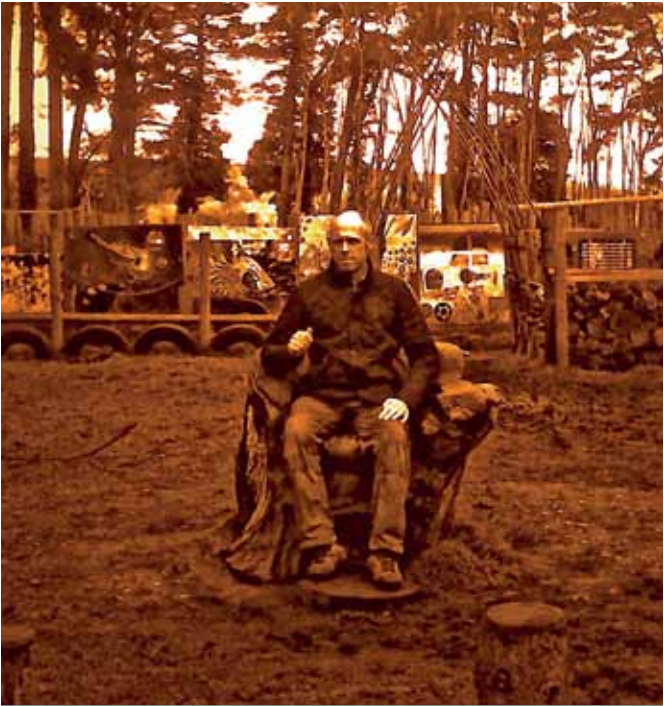
Scaffolding of a barley pollen grain

Carlos Flores-Ortiz, College of Life and Environmental Sciences
This picture shows part of a vital scaffold that is present in all cells. This structure is called cytoskeleton and is constituted of a highly complex network of protein. In this case the thinnest filaments of the cytoskeleton, made of a protein called actin, were stained with a dye that allows us to visualise them. In general, every time that a plant is pollinated, the pollen grain must elongate all along the flower until it reaches the ovule to carry out the fertilisation. The cytoskeleton has a major role in this process mainly because it can generate force by elongation/shrinkage, allowing the actual pollen tube growth. We are interested in controlling the barley reproductive process; to visualise and monitor a key structure as the cytoskeleton represents a powerful tool which can give us valuable information about the pollination process.



Paradoxical circulation to ecosystem

Kiseong Jeong, PhD, College of Life and Environmental Sciences
This image is a diagram representing the effect of human behaviour on the ecosystem and ecology. Although humans try to restore damaged natural environments and preserve ecosystems through recycling, cleaning up and utilising green and sustainable architecture, we are at the same time creating energy sources that continue to destroy natural materials and make pollution. In addition, negative human activity often outweighs the positive influence on ecosystems, returning the burden of ecological problems to the human race. This symbolic approach to the effects of humans on ecosystems is helpful for me to understand the process of sustainable urban design, which is one of the main perspectives of my PhD.



Stopping smoking in the 21st century

Carol J Sanders, College of Medical and Dental Sciences
This photograph depicts a man pondering whether or not to smoke the e-cigarette in his hand. The setting is Cannock Wood, Staffordshire 2013. The maze behind the man has been created as part of an art project to promote health, and was chosen as a metaphor to illustrate the complexity of stopping smoking. We've known for 50 years that smoking has adverse health effects; however, many people continue to smoke. Giving up smoking should be easier than ever before. In reality most smokers try to stop repeatedly, but they also fail repeatedly; explained mostly by the extremely unpleasant nature of nicotine withdrawal. My mixed methods research aims to provide a deeper understanding of adherence behaviours with smoking cessation medications. Knowledge generated will be able to contribute to the development of interventions to increase adherence with smoking cessation medications.



Ad-DRESS-ing the winds of change in the lives of Amish women

Fran Handrick, College of Arts and Law
These are dresses worn by Amish women in Ohio, drying in the wind after washing day. My research investigates the changes in the lives of Amish women in the last 30 years. Changes have taken place in the areas of technology, relationships with the non-Amish world and in daily life. In the area of technology, these dresses are made from man-made materials, easy to wash and easy to dry. Previously they were dark coloured, woollen, and washed by hand. Many more Amish people now interact with non-Amish communities in their daily lives, and many more Amish families work in micro-enterprises which bring them into contact with customers and suppliers. Many women are no longer 'farmer's wives' but increasingly are the wives of Amish businessmen working in a wide range of non-traditional occupations in the Amish community.

The Anatomy of a Scientific Gossip

Antonio Lima, College of Engineering and Physical Sciences
In July 2012 the discovery of a Higgs boson-like particle at CERN was announced. We analysed the complete set of tweets that were sent during the week of the event and developed a model able to reproduce the global behaviour of about 500,000 users with remarkable accuracy. This picture shows the geographic network of re-tweets related to the Higgs boson discovery during the week of the announcement. Every arc changes colour, from yellow at the origin of the re-tweet to red towards the destination. The goal of my PhD work is to investigate models and measures that are able to characterise interactions and information dissemination happening on large-scale spatial social networks. A deeper understanding of the mechanisms that drive these phenomena can lead to potential interesting applications in diverse areas, including marketing and system design.

You can view all images from the exhibition on Flickr at [flic.kr/s/aHsjEoa46T](https://www.flickr.com/photos/aHsjEoa46T/)

Transforming our campus

The transformational campus development plans are now underway. **Samantha Williams** tells *The Postgraduate Times* about the exciting changes still to come.



Investing £175 million over five years, the University plans to transform the famous Edgbaston campus with new facilities that will be for the benefit of students, staff and visitors. Following extensive public consultation, the estate development will deliver the city's first 50-metre swimming pool, create an outstanding academic library with a cultural hub, open a dedicated student services hub in the Aston Webb Building and open up a striking green park in the heart of campus.



The exciting development plans underpin the University's strategy to become a leading global university, reinterpreting founder Joseph Chamberlain's vision for the estate to provide 21st century educational, research and sports facilities and be an asset for the city.

Supported by the University's £160 million Circles of Influence fundraising campaign, now in its second phase, the generosity of alumni and supporters continues to make a difference by helping to provide state-of-the-art facilities to enhance the student experience.

Some of the highlights of the plans are detailed here.

'The University is committed to investing in world class facilities provision that will attract and retain the best students and staff and bolster the University's reputation as a leading global institution.'

'While the completion of the Bramall Music Building closed one chapter, it also marked the opening of a new one. It was finished last year and at that point we thought about the next stage and all of the buildings that are very outdated and functioning quite poorly. This fits into an evolving masterplan.'

Ian Barker, Director of Estates



Sports centre

The sports centre will include Birmingham's first 50-metre swimming pool as well as a large gym, sports hall and activity and dance studios to meet the needs of students, staff, the local community and community clubs. Housing one of the largest gyms in Europe, the centre will cater for wide ranging fitness needs from rehabilitation through to competitive players and elite performers. The centre will also include a purpose-designed Performance centre and Performance gym providing specialist expertise and support to talented sportsmen and women in the University, city and region, and help to produce Britain's future Olympians.

Library and cultural gateway

The new library will focus on providing inspiring, multifunctional, flexible study and research space and immediate access to printed and digital materials. The building will also include a 'Cultural Gateway': an exhibition space and café featuring a programme of exhibitions and displays providing new opportunities to engage visitors in the research of the University, transforming the traditional idea of what a library, and more specifically a university library, can offer.

'The [Cultural] Gateway will be a very active space where people can come after work or weekends and really see what the University does and what is going on. The idea is that you could go to an exhibition, have something to eat and see a concert here so our cultural offer would be expanded.'

Clare Mullet, Deputy University Curator



**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM**

New University School

Scheduled to open its doors in September 2015 to the first cohort, the University of Birmingham School will provide an excellent academic education for Birmingham's young people and serve as a centre of teacher education in the region. Located in Selly Oak, the comprehensive, co-educational 11-16 school and sixth form will take 150 students per year into Year 7 and up to 200 per year into the sixth form. One of the first 'University Training Schools' in the country, the school and sixth form will have particularly strong ties to the University's School of Education, which was recently rated 'outstanding' in all areas by Ofsted. A public consultation on the plans for the School, including the draft admissions policy, proposed curriculum and the building and site, was launched on 9 June.

For more information, please visit
www.birmingham.ac.uk/community



Postgraduate research in action

Using literature to deepen our understanding between the Islamic and Western worlds
Islam Issa, PhD, Department of English.

This research aims to contribute to knowledge of the history, development and ways in which non-Islamic writings are read and understood by Muslims. The research breaks new ground as the first full-length study examining the response of Arab-Muslim readers to John Milton's (1608–1674) Biblically based epic poem *Paradise Lost* which, due to its vivid portrayal of God, Adam and Jesus, is regarded as a blasphemous and taboo text in the Islamic world.

Paradise Lost holds an important, if often misunderstood, place in Arab-Islamic culture; this research aims to map the consequences of the text being prohibited, distorted in translation and truncated in publication, and to ask whether the poem could actually be edifying for Arab-Muslim readers.

Through primary research carried out in Egypt, analyses of the Arabic translations of *Paradise Lost*, and comparisons between the poem's content and Islamic belief, this research presents a rich picture of the attitudes and responses of contemporary Muslims to certain concepts in the poem, such as God, Satan, Heaven and Hell.

As recent world events have pushed relations between Islamic and non-Islamic cultures

Islam, who is writing his doctorate on the modern Islamic reception of *Paradise Lost*, has been chosen as the College of Arts and Law winner of the Michael K O'Rourke PhD Best Publication Award 2013.

His award-winning article is: 'Fragmentation, Censorship and an Islamic Journal: A History of the Translation of Milton into Arabic', *Milton Quarterly*, 46.4 (Dec 2012): 219-32.

to the top of today's global political agenda, it has become important to look beyond the English-speaking world to evaluate the full extent of the cultural reach and influence of English literature. This research is therefore a case study which can potentially deepen intercultural and interfaith understanding, and build bridges between the Islamic and Western worlds. It can also lead to more culturally specific methods of teaching literature.



The average PhD thesis would take nine hours to present. You have... three minutes

Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) is a research communication competition developed by the University of Queensland in 2008, in which doctoral researchers have just three minutes to deliver an engaging presentation on their thesis topic, its originality and its significance. With universities across the world now holding their own 3MT competitions, we are delighted to be running a University of Birmingham 3MT and to invite our own doctoral researchers to participate in such a highly regarded competition.

If you are starting a course in 2013, why not come along to the Great Hall on 27 September to see what current researchers are working on.

Find out more at intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/3MT



3MT

[

Birmingham Three Minute Thesis competition

]

Your doctoral thesis could win you a £1,000 research bursary as the world-renowned contest comes to Birmingham

Living in Birmingham

Starting a postgraduate course in September? Need somewhere to live? The University of Birmingham's letting agency (SHAC) can help you.

SHAC provides quality student houses for University of Birmingham students in the local area. SHAC is a lettings agency run by the Guild of Students and is committed to ensuring that students find quality houses owned by accredited landlords. Their office is conveniently located in the Guild of Students building on the main University campus; students can register their details on our website www.guildshac.co.uk and receive email alerts of all new properties that match their requirements. SHAC understand the financial burdens that students face and so, unlike many lettings agencies, we do not charge any fees.

Students can come to SHAC for advise on private-sector housing. Contact SHAC via: Shac@guild.bham.ac.uk or 0121 251 2510.

You can also find lots of useful advice on University and private accommodation on our website: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/accommodation/pg-accommodation.aspx

Student experience
Lisa Kranzer, a doctoral researcher in Medieval Studies

'I live in a University-owned house that is reserved solely for postgraduate students, which means that the people I share with have roughly the same work commitments and pressures as I do. If you are new to the University then this type of accommodation is an excellent means by which to meet fellow students and make friends. The house is in Selly Oak village, which is very close to the University.

'I found my accommodation through www.birminghamstudentpad.co.uk Both University-owned and private sector accommodation is advertised on this website. It is a great resource because all landlords have been checked for their reliability and quality of accommodation. So you won't be scared of ending up with an awful landlord or sub-standard room. I definitely recommend using this website to all students who are new to the city.'

We also have a number of services dedicated to helping students find the best housing for them:

- Student Housing Services – 0121 414 8000
- Guild of Students Birmingham – 0121 251 2300
- Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) – 0121 251 2400



Student Letting Agency



PUTTING THE 'HOW' INTO HOUSING

DO IT RIGHT,
DO IT WITH SHAC

 guildshac.co.uk

 SHAC (Guild of Students)

 GuildSHAC

Programme developments in Social Sciences



MSc Global Cooperation and Security

The Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security is pleased to announce a new Masters degree, MSc Global Cooperation and Security.

The Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security (ICCS) comprises a number of leading scholars in the field of conflict, cooperation and security who regularly produce cutting-edge, internationally renowned research.

Who is the programme for?

The MSc Global Cooperation and Security is for anyone looking to study and work in the fields of international cooperation and the management and transformation of conflicts. Our programme is designed to equip students with the necessary training and tools to work in academic or policy-related contexts in these broad fields.

What career paths will this help me to develop?

Students on this programme will be well-placed to take advantage of career opportunities with a range of organisations including government agencies, international organisations, the armed forces, non-governmental organisations, think-tanks, the media and multinational corporations.

Learn more

For further information about this programme, including entry requirements and how to apply, please visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/iccs or contact David Norman, Programme Manager at d.j.norman@bham.ac.uk



NHS Leadership Academy programmes

NHS Leadership Academy programmes are the first in a new set of national NHS professional development programmes to combine successful leadership strategies from international healthcare, private sector organisations and academic expert content.

The Health Services Management Centre (HSMC) and Birmingham Business School at the University of Birmingham have been selected to support the NHS to deliver two (aimed at mid- and senior-level managers known as the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Nye Bevan Programmes) of the three professional development programmes available to over 25,000 staff including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, healthcare scientists and HR and finance staff.

Who are the programmes for?

With a programme for each level of leadership responsibility, the NHS Leadership Academy is providing targeted development for people from all backgrounds, experience and levels who have what it takes to create a more capable and compassionate healthcare system. If you are looking to develop the knowledge, skills, expertise, attitudes and behaviours to support the next steps in your personal leadership journey, then one of these programmes will be for you.

Learn more

For further information on the NHS Leadership Academy programmes and how to apply, please visit: www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/programmes or visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/hsmc

Creative Minds AT BIRMINGHAM



The College of Arts and Law's School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies (EDACS) is launching an exclusive new series of talks this autumn, entitled 'Creative Minds at Birmingham'.

The School of EDACS Writers & Artists Distinguished Speaker Series will see an exciting variety of renowned writers, poets and theatre leaders visit the University of Birmingham to give a public talk or reading, showcasing their latest works.

'Creative Minds at Birmingham' will launch on 24 October when award-winning poet Jamie McKendrick will join us in the Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, where he will read and discuss his work.

McKendrick has previously been named as one of the Poetry Society's 'New Generation' poets. He is the author of numerous collections of poetry: *The Sirocco Room*

(1991); *The Kiosk on the Brink* (1993); *The Marble Fly* (1997), winner of the Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year) and a Poetry Book Society Choice; *Ink Stone* (2003), shortlisted for the 2003 T. S. Eliot Prize and the 2003 Whitbread Poetry Award; and *Crocodiles and Obelisks* (2007), shortlisted for the 2008 Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year). His most recent collection is *Out There* (Faber, 2012).

Each event in the series will give literature and theatre enthusiasts the opportunity to hear from a modern-day great, pose questions to the speakers, and meet them afterwards during book signing sessions. Future speakers include Bernard MacLaverty, Michael Longley and Kathleen Jamie.

The series is open to all to attend. For further information on booking please visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/creativeminds

The University Graduate School Writing Summer School

The University Graduate School held its first Writing Summer School for postgraduate researchers during 15–17 July. This three-day event consisted of presentations and workshops from experienced and expert writers, editors and publishers from both inside and outside of the University. Each day had a different focus: 'Writing the thesis', 'Getting published' and 'Writing for different and diverse audiences',

with an aim to reflect on the many different aspects of writing that postgraduate researchers may need to master. The event was free for all postgraduate researchers to attend and proved to be incredibly popular, with nearly all workshops booked to capacity. One postgraduate researcher described the event as 'an essential and thought provoking summer school to develop necessary skills.'

Writing development is a key area of University Graduate School activity. Resources, slides and handouts from the event will shortly be available online. New writing workshops are planned for the Autumn 2013 term. In the meantime check our online resources for writers: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/student-services/graduateschool/skills/writingresource.aspx>

NEWS AND EVENTS

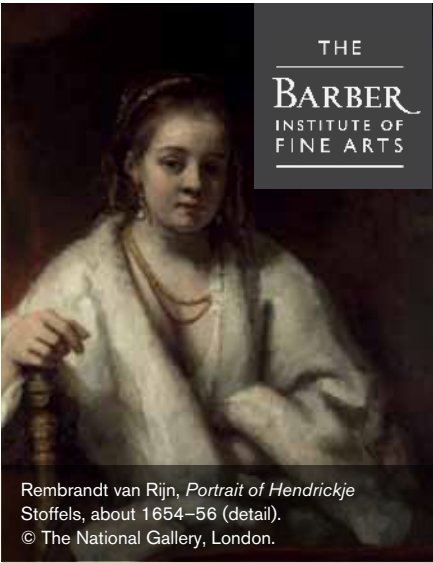
These are some highlights of the events coming up across the University. To find out more visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/oncampus

Upcoming events

If you want to find out more about studying at Birmingham you can visit us in person or chat to us online:

- MBA virtual chat (26 July 2013)
- Life and Environmental Sciences postgraduate virtual chat (30 July 2013)
- Postgraduate Research in Medicine virtual chat (2 August 2013)
- Postgraduate Open Day (27 November 2013)

Find out about these events and more at: www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgevents



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels*, about 1654–56 (detail). © The National Gallery, London.

ABOUT FACE

Until 1 September

Major paintings by artists including Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Cezanne and Goya can be seen in this new exhibition that forms the centrepiece of the Barber's 80th anniversary. A two-day Creative Textiles course (6 and 13 July) will also give you the chance to create your own portrait inspired by About Face.

DEFINING FACES: 20TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT DRAWINGS

Until 26 August

History of Art students have been working with curators to produce this new exhibition on portraiture in a century that witnessed radical changes in artistic style. This second exhibition in collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery features likenesses of sitters including Henry Moore, Ted Hughes and Stephen Hawking; complemented by original material from the University's Cadbury Research Library.

For more information visit www.barber.org.uk

Department of African Studies and Anthropology launches

The College of Arts and Law will be launching the Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) for the start of the 2013–14 academic year. Incorporating the Centre of West African Studies (CWAS), DASA will formalise the long-established expansion of teaching, research and supervision beyond West Africa to include the entire African continent and its diasporas, and the growing place of Anthropology in staff expertise and teaching.

CWAS, which celebrates 50 years in 2013, has been distinguished by interdisciplinary work spanning the humanities and social sciences, a focus on people's lived experience in Africa, and close and long-term engagement with African societies, perspectives and academic institutions. CWAS will continue as a centre within DASA to promote the development and dissemination of research specifically focused on West Africa.

Postgraduate funding database launched

Our new database contains details of postgraduate taught and research funding opportunities available to support your studies at the University of Birmingham. You can tailor it to your level of study, subject and the country you are from.

For more information please go to: www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgfunding

Thinking of starting a PhD?

Now you can create your own bespoke prospectus. Just go to: www.birmingham.ac.uk/drp

Starting a postgraduate course in September 2013?

Plan your Welcome Week activities here: www.birmingham.ac.uk/welcome/events



profile

Dr Berny Sèbe, Lecturer in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies... in my own words



© Alexander Morrison

The richness and diversity of personal and intellectual itineraries which lead to academia are an endless cause of fascination to me. Sharing knowledge, questions and enthusiasm to shape enquiring minds is all the more rewarding as it often taps into varied personal experiences – and the University of Birmingham is very good at valuing these diverse routes into academia.

I never went to school until my university years. I spent my childhood juggling between regular long-haul expeditions to the Sahara, being involved with my father in the preparation of his photographic books and doing homework for the purpose of my distance-learning education. This allowed me to hone a variety of skills such as independence and self-discipline, and permitted me to discover not only the simple elegance of the bare geological features displayed by the most beautiful desert on Earth, but also to learn about the geography, history and socio-political realities of such diverse countries as Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco or Tunisia.

My research specialism in colonial and postcolonial studies stems directly from this childhood experience. The multi-faceted legacies of European imperialisms are still vivid in these countries, and this fuelled my interest in the French imperial past and its consequences on modern-day European countries and the postcolonial states which replaced them overseas. The sheer extent of the British Empire made it a natural point of comparison, and this shaped my doctoral research project on the making of British and French colonial heroes in the context of the waves of 'popular imperialism' which swept the two countries in the late 19th century. My recent book, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa* (Manchester UP) explores how the concomitance of 'New Journalism' and 'New Imperialism' shaped the figure of the 'imperial hero'.

Since then, I have developed a variety of related projects, some of which have brought me back to my passion for deserts. As the principal investigator of a new AHRC-funded project, I am following in the footsteps of Beau Geste, looking at the strategic significance of fortresses in arid and semi-arid environments. In partnership with a historian of Central Asia (Dr Alexander Morrison, from the University of Liverpool), I am conducting fieldwork in Kazakhstan and Algeria, looking at the 19th-century power

struggles of the Russian and the French with nomadic populations in the Steppe and the Sahara. I have also published research on independence processes in Saharan territories, as well as their postcolonial fate – including the underlying phenomena which explain the current situation in Mali.

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, the media have become highly interested in those regions which, until recently, were often seen as relatively insignificant as long as they contributed their share of oil and gas at the best possible price. From January 2011 onwards, I have had to combine an already busy academic life with a rollercoaster of demands from the media (masterfully managed by the Press Office), commenting on TV and radio, and for newspapers, on the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and the rest of the Arab world, and explaining the situation that prevailed in northern Mali under the iron fist of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and then the French-led military intervention which ousted them. *Newsnight* also sought my views on the situation at the height of the In-Amenas hostage crisis. It was a privilege to offer my views to help the public understand the tectonic forces which toppled decade-long dictators, ripped open political traditions and created a promising but also potentially explosive power vacuum.

Deciphering for a lay audience this complex web of events is a powerful way of demonstrating the relevance of the humanities to today's world, and we are fortunate that the University supports public engagement. A journalist for the BBC wrote to me *'this was the biggest story in the world at the time and many of our readers would have had very little understanding of why it was happening... your article was invaluable in helping them'*.

This is all the truer since this activity of dissemination does not distract me from what I see as the core of my remit, which is research and teaching. In my view, these two activities cross-fertilise each other: arguably, they are two sides of the same coin. Students value immensely what they immediately identify as first-hand research experience, and feeling that the learners' expectations are met is one of the most rewarding sentiments that our profession can bestow on its practitioners. Or, at least, this is what, in all modesty, I believe!



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Edgbaston, Birmingham,
B15 2TT, United Kingdom
www.birmingham.ac.uk