

It's good to talk: University launches free speaker service for the city

Posted on Thursday 10th March 2011

The University of Birmingham has launched a new venture today [Thursday 10 March] that will see academics at the heart of the local community delivering talks on more than 100 topics ranging from Shakespeare to Sikhism.

The Birmingham Speakers Programme is a free service where clubs, schools and community groups in the Birmingham area can book a speaker from a range of 60 academics who have volunteered to give talks, sharing their knowledge and latest research on topics in the arts, law and humanities. This initiative has been developed by the University's College of Arts and Law.

The range of topics available to choose from are grouped into seven broad themes: English, drama, film and creative writing; heritage, history, archaeology and classical civilisation; international cultures and languages; law; local interest; philosophy, theology and religion; and politics, society and current affairs.

Introducing the programme, Professor Michael Whitby, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts and Law, said: "Access to the discoveries and innovations made by the University is vital to nurturing and maintaining interest and enthusiasm for education and the arts, whether you are five or 65.

"Subjects can be brought alive with exciting accounts of lost worlds under the sea; groups can debate the 'art' of minting coins; you can hear why Shakespeare is still as relevant as ever, or even the real history behind Britain and the USA's 'special relationship'. Culture in all its diverse forms is central to the civic health and prosperity of Birmingham, and the Birmingham Speaker Programme ensures our University remains a civic institution, serving its community by sharing the global research produced for the benefit of all."

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Len Gregory, was invited as the first citizen of the city to host the first public talk to launch the programme. The Lord Mayor selected Dr Richard Clay to speak at the Council House last night on how Birmingham's universities, heritage sector and creative industries are leading the way in harnessing new technologies to revolutionise displays in museums, libraries, archives and online.

The invited audience of representatives from community groups, charities and business organisations got an insight from Richard into how Birmingham is preserving and widening the appeal of its heritage and also found out which talks are available from the BSP in the future.

For information on the Birmingham Speaker Programme, including how to book a speaker free-of-charge, as well as a list of subjects and speakers, visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/speakersprogramme or email birminghamsspeakers@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Notes to editors

Images are available of the launch event to accompany this story. Please contact Rachel Burrows to request.

Media enquiries to:

Rachel Burrows - Head of Communications, University of Birmingham
Tel: 0121 414 6681 / mob: 07789 921165 / email: r.burrows@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:r.burrows@bham.ac.uk>)



Lord

Mayor of Birmingham Councillor Len Gregory is joined by University of Birmingham senior staff Dr Richard Clay (speaker), Professor Michael Sheppard (Provost & Vice-Principal), and Professor Michael Whitby, (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College of