CEPLER – a year of success
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From the Head of School

It’s been another busy year. The current research assessment period (REF) ends at the end of 2013. We need to do well in this, as we did in the last one in 2008, to retain our position as a leading Law School. We will do well because of the huge efforts, particularly in this final lap, made by my colleagues. And the annual National Student Survey (NSS), which measures the quality of our teaching, always looms large. Doing well in this is vital to maintaining our excellent reputation. Balancing the demands of teaching and research is not always easy, but our research-led teaching helps students to get the benefit of our research and teaching often inspires our research. Then there are our new developments: CEPLER, cutting-edge conferences and seminars, and plans for new programmes. All these, and much more, are highlighted in this issue. I hope you find it as interesting to read about as we do to engage in it.

Next year we are able to take the exciting step of delivering Holdsworth electronically. This will reach our international alumni faster and more effectively and, of course, going paperless will help us to do our bit for the environment.

Holdsworth will be delivered electronically in 2014. To ensure that you receive your copy, please check that we have your up-to-date email contact details at www.your.bham.ac.uk
If you wish to receive a paper copy of Holdsworth, please contact Charlotte Heap at c.heap@bham.ac.uk or call 0121 414 2787.

More Mooting than ever before

It was another great year for mooting at Birmingham Law School. CEPLER allowed us to increase the number of moots we held, with thanks to the participation of the local legal community. Next year we will introduce a final year mooting module, assisted by CEPLER, which will form part of participating students’ final year assessment.

Lord Dyson, Justice of the Supreme Court and Master of the Rolls, judged the Camm Cup Mooting Final this year, and the winner was 2nd year LLB student Rachel Pavey. The topic of the final was undue influence in contract law. We asked her how she felt:

‘I feel very privileged to win the 2013 Camm Cup Mooting Competition. It was an extremely valuable experience to receive feedback from, and be put through my paces by, top practitioners and Lord Dyson. Although it was challenging and nerve-wracking, I enjoyed every minute of the competition. As a result I have been inspired to pursue a career at the Bar. I am really looking forward to taking on the role of Mistress of the Moots in the next academic year and encouraging other students to take up mooting.’

We then spoke to Arrin Nouri and asked her to reflect on her year as Mistress of the Moots:

‘Mooting is such an important activity for any Law student as it provides a key opportunity to develop advocacy and legal research skills. It has been a pleasure to work alongside Theresa Lynch, Mooting Co-ordinator, to organise competitions and skills sessions this year. I am very proud of the large number of students involved and I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as Mistress of the Moots.’

In our other competitions, Clare Elliott won the Postgraduate Cup and Megan Durnford was victorious in the First Year Cup.

Alumni Impact Fund sends student to G20 Youth Forum

Law student Siu Yin Wong has become the first University of Birmingham student to attend the G20 Youth Forum, supported by the University’s Alumni Impact Fund. The G20 Youth Forum provides a platform for delegates from different backgrounds and countries to discuss and exchange ideas.

This year’s Youth Forum took place in St. Petersburg in April and was attended by more than 1500 young leaders, students, academics and government representatives. Siu Yin Wong tells us about his experience:

“The opportunity to speak and debate with students from all around the world was an intellectually stimulating experience. I met people from the United States, Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Africa, United Kingdom and so many other places.

The topics for discussion included legislation, cultural problems, energy crises, economic developments and international relationship issues. I participated in the law and legislation discussions and conducted a presentation on the topic of judicial independence in Hong Kong.’

This experience encouraged Sui Yin to develop: ‘I received some positive feedback but also encountered some really challenging questions which I hadn’t considered before.’

As well as debating topics, the Forum included a Silver Ball (themed around Russia’s Silver age) which gave delegates a chance to relax and network with influential business people and government officials from around the globe.

On returning to the University, Siu Yin Wong writes, ‘I would like to say a huge thank you to the College of Arts and Law and the Alumni Impact Fund for the financial support to attend the G20 Youth Forum. I am really grateful – without this help my trip would not have been as relaxing and fun as it was. I would also like to thank the University for selecting me as its representative at such an important and international event.’

www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni/giving/index.aspx
On Friday 15 March 2013 Lord Dyson, Justice of the Supreme Court and Master of the Rolls delivered this year’s Holdsworth Presidential Address on the topic of ‘Compensation Culture: Fact or Fantasy?’

Lord Dyson’s lecture explored the realities of what the press have termed ‘compensation culture’ and whether the judiciary is somehow responsible for it.

Discussing the details of famous cases that became tabloid headlines, he stated, ‘The damage caused by the perception that we have a compensation culture happens before matters reach the door of the court’.

Lord Dyson concluded that the idea of a compensation culture was mostly a myth.

After the lecture, Lord Dyson had lunch with members of academic staff and the student committee of the Holdsworth Club. He then spent the afternoon judging Birmingham’s prestigious Camm Cup Mooting final (see page 2).

Lord Dyson was accompanied by his wife, Jacqueline, a graduate of Birmingham Law School. We profile Lady Dyson on the back cover of this edition of Holdsworth.
Taking a different path

We spoke to four graduates whose law degrees were the springboard for very different careers.

Making Digital Media

Chris Unitt (Law, 2002) was a qualified solicitor who became an expert in digital media while freelancing. He started his own company which was acquired by Made Media where he is now an Account Director.

‘The Law School was a fantastic place to study – I had great lecturers and made good friends. Bearing in mind what I do now, it’s funny to remember being helped by a friend to sign up for my first email account while I was at the Law School. Most essays were handwritten back then.’

After qualifying for the litigation team of a national firm, Chris found that life as a solicitor didn’t suit him.

‘I took some excellent advice from my supervising partner who pointed out that I was plenty young enough to do something different. I left the firm and began promoting my freelancing services online. Soon people were asking for my advice on how to promote themselves and that led me into digital media.’

‘Now I’m helping to build websites, mobile apps and software products for major theatres and performing arts venues in the UK, USA and Australia. My job is a mixture of sales, project management and training – I talk to clients about what they need to achieve and then come up with solutions with our designers and programmers.’

Chris still benefits from his background in Law: ‘I learned a lot of lessons as a solicitor – good habits such as prioritising workloads, managing clients and the need to be adaptable and take creative approaches to problem solving. In my new career it can be tricky to prove your credentials. Being able to throw in the fact that I used to be a qualified solicitor helps – it’s usually taken as shorthand for ‘not an idiot!’’

Building Birmingham’s Future

Anthony McCourt (Law, 2004) began his legal career with Wragge and Co in Birmingham, qualifying as a solicitor with ambitions to become a barrister. He was inspired to turn his attentions to property development, however, when working with clients responsible for the iconic Mailbox development in Birmingham.

‘I was drawn to the prospect of creating a lasting, tangible difference to the city that I came to love after moving here to study at the Law School. Property development is about more than just building a hotel or a home, it creates jobs, stimulates the economy and changes lives.’

Now developing a mixed use property in the middle of Birmingham City Centre, Anthony remembers his first visit to the city, on Valentine’s Day 2001: ‘I fell in love with the campus and never looked back. You can’t beat Birmingham Law School – it’s academically brilliant and there are so many opportunities through the Holdsworth Club. I was even lucky enough to represent the University at an international debating competition in Cape Town.’

Anthony believes that his law background helped him to develop the career that saw him found Court Collaborations and become the youngest ever Birmingham Young Professional of the Year in 2008.

‘I realised that I wanted to instruct lawyers rather than be one. In complex development projects, it’s so important to be able to break down a problem, analyse the details and see the bigger picture and a law background gives you that and more.’

Going her own way

Award-winning writer, Tasmina Perry (LLB Law, 1990) used her Law degree as inspiration for one of her best-loved novels.

‘I remember my graduation so clearly – it was a boiling hot day and we all gathered in front of Old Joe to pose for pictures and say goodbye – we felt as if we could go on and conquer the world,’ recalls Tasmina Perry, who went on to do just that, just not in the way she perhaps expected at the time.

Upon leaving Birmingham, Tasmina continued her law studies, qualifying as a solicitor, but it was a gap-year job at Granada Studios Tour, working in their hot dog caravan, that was set to change her path and kick-start an award-winning writing career. ‘I hadn’t really given journalism much thought but there was an up and coming band who would often come and dance in front of us. One day I approached the friendliest looking member and asked for an interview,’ she explains.

It turns out that the band was Take That on the verge of superstardom and Tasmina, after completing her legal training contract, used her exclusive insight into one of the country’s favourite boy bands to land a job at more! magazine.

Tasmina admits to having always been obsessed with magazines and soon found herself in her dream career, travelling the world and interviewing the stars. Within two years she was editing more! and went on to edit other national titles including Instyle before landing a book deal in 2005. She is now an eight times Sunday Times bestselling novelist and is proof that you can put your law degree to use in many different ways – Tasmina’s sixth novel, Private Lives, is set in a scandalous media law firm and she feels that the novel’s success was down to the authenticity and legal knowledge that she brought to the book.

‘Did I make a false start studying Law? Perhaps, but it’s important to try lots of things and find out what you’re good at and passionate about. I’m sure I wouldn’t have been made an editor so quickly if I hadn’t been a qualified solicitor’ she concludes.

Where has your life taken you? We would like to hear from you about your life since graduation and hear your recollections about your time on campus. Please send your stories to Charlotte Heap, College Alumni Relations Officer, c.heap@bham.ac.uk or call 0121 414 2787
From Law to Fine Art!
Gillian Holding (Law with French 1981) left her successful career in Law to pursue her dream of becoming an artist.

‘I loved my time at Birmingham. I was in the second intake of Law with French students; it was a radical idea in those days to combine Law with another subject and I think we seemed a bit exotic! Unusually, we were taught politics and literature in French to prepare us for our third year of studying French Law at the University of Limoges.

‘I lived on the Vale and the walks to campus were a memorable part of everyday life. Campus was, and is, extraordinarily beautiful – when I went back a couple of years ago, I found it quite surreal; familiar yet unrecognisable. All the trees had matured, and new buildings had appeared.’

After graduating, Gillian took the conventional route – moving to London and qualifying with her articles with Linklaters. She then moved to France – making the most of her language skills in their Paris office.

‘Living in Paris was brilliant. When I wasn’t at work, I was making the most of all the art opportunities there.’

Despite her interest in art, Gillian returned to London in the late 1980s and, after moving to Leeds, became a partner with Booth & Co. (now Addleshaw Goddard). She couldn’t shake her desire to be an artist, however, and finally took the plunge in 1999. She emerged a decade later with a first class degree in Fine Art and numerous solo exhibitions and award nominations. For Gillian, this major life change has no regrets.

By the time she left her successful career in Law to pursue her dream of becoming an artist, Gillian had already amassed a wealth of experience, including:
- A dedicated 13 years at Linklaters, specialising in property and regulatory law.
- The successful second intake of Law with French students at Birmingham.
- A conventional career as a solicitor.

Gillian returned to Birmingham and pursued her dream of becoming an artist, exhibiting her work in the UK and internationally. Her artistic career is also marked by several awards and recognitions, including:
- The prestigious Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, where she represented the UK.
- Multiple solo exhibitions in London and abroad.
- She has also contributed to various art publications and exhibitions worldwide.

In her current role as a Fine Art artist, Gillian continues to inspire and challenge her audience through her thoughtful and visually captivating works. Her approach to art as a way of understanding and engaging with the world is evident in her works, which often explore themes of space, identity, and the human condition.
Pro Bono activity increases
Under the CEPLER umbrella, Birmingham Free Legal Advice Group (FLAG) has increased its support to the community through additional collaboration with No5 Chambers. Together with long-standing partners, Mills & Reeve, this has enabled FLAG student volunteers to increase the range of cases on which FLAG can assist. This year, FLAG has advised members of the public in more than 40 cases in areas such as: Family and Divorce, Employment, Tenancy and Neighbourhood Disputes, Wills and Probate and Civil Litigation. This has broadened the skills and experience of an unprecedented number of student volunteers:

Leaders in Law
Through the careful stewardship of new Head of Centre, Professor Sonia Harris-Short, CEPLER has forged a supportive partnership with No5 Chambers.

The CEPLER Leaders in Law lecture series was launched in February with two events: a lecture from the prestigious Law Commissioner, Professor David Ormerod and a panel event on ‘A Question of Sport and the Law’ featuring the Football Association Head of Governance and Regulation, Darren Bailey (Law, 1990).

Future lectures include: Stephen Parish, Chair of Norton Rose; Nazir Afzal OBE, Crown Prosecutor for the North West; Lord Justice Ward; and Lord Justice Rix.

The University was proud to host this year’s Criminal Bar Association Spring Conference and CEPLER was able to fund a number of student places, providing a detailed insight into the challenges of life in the Criminal Bar.

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‘An excellent opportunity and by far one of the most beneficial extra-curricular activities that I have undertaken at University.’

Nathan Needham, student on FLAG.
The Pro Bono Lecture Series featured Arizona Justice Project. Executive of Birmingham Law Centre, two fascinating and very well-attended presentations from Pete Lowen, Chief Mills & Reeve A.G.A.S 2013 will give FLAG the chance for two LawWorks Pro Bono schemes, we’re keen to offer a range of different experiences to give them a boost. We’re calling on our alumni to offer an opportunity ranging from a short placement to a full summer internship.

CEPLER Careers

In addition to an extensive careers programme, CEPLER’s dedicated office space has facilitated a weekly session drop-in with the Careers Network.

The partnership with No5 Chambers has secured a number of guaranteed internships and CEPLER is working to diversify the Law School’s careers provision to include non-commercial legal opportunities.

Alumni-judged Moots boost student experience

Ten of our alumni have lent their time and expertise to judging mooting competitions at the Law School since October. Their generosity enabled more Law School students than ever to benefit from the mooting experience.

Mark Beasley graduated in 1985 and is now a partner at Shakespeares Puttman LLP in Birmingham. He took part in judging a First Year Moot Competition in the autumn term and said ‘It was a pleasure to reconnect in a meaningful way with my old Law School and to revisit the delights and challenges of the Moot from the other side of the bench!

‘It was great to see the many changes that have taken place and to experience again the mooting experience.

On Monday 25th February, during the 150th Anniversary of the Football Association, we were delighted to welcome our Head of Governance and Regulation, UoB alumni Darren Bailey. He was joined by fellow Law alumnus Julz Adeniran, Great Britain and England 110m Hurdler, and Marketing graduate Michelle Leavesley, head of Cilidesk Sport Communications. Dr Leon McRae, of Birmingham Law School, and Dr Jonathan Grix of Sport and Exercise Sciences completed the panel which was chaired by James Lee, Director of Careers for CEPLER.

While on campus, Darren Bailey (Law, 1990) also delivered a Law in Practice seminar to students where he discussed his career in sports law from carving a niche for himself in a private practice to devising legal frameworks for Rugby World Cups.

Darren is organising an exclusive internship at the FA for a Law student next year.

Sport and the Law – panel discusses the future for sport in Britain and beyond.

Following the outstanding success of British sport in 2012, CEPLER was delighted to welcome a panel of experts as they discussed the future for sport in Britain and beyond.

Can you help to shape the lawyers of the future?

CEPLER is seeking to expand the number and range of internships and work experience opportunities for students – are you able to offer a high quality Birmingham Law School student some practical experience to support and enhance their studies?

It’s a competitive market and while our students already benefit from some fantastic schemes, we’re keen to offer a range of different experiences to give them a boost. We’re calling on our alumni to offer experiences within their private practices, chambers and even non-law firms.

Work experience is vital for our emerging future lawyers and leaders. Are you able to offer an opportunity ranging from a short placement to a full summer internship?

Please contact Charlotte Heap, College Alumni Relations Manager, at c.heap@bham.ac.uk or call 0121 414 2787.
The Institute of European Law

The highlight of the last 12 months in European Law was our international conference, Integration or Disintegration: the Future of European Law. Held last June on the Edgbaston campus, we welcomed nearly 100 scholars and practitioners from 22 countries to discuss the legal ramifications of the recent Eurozone crisis.

Also in June, scheduled to coincide with the conference, was the latest in our annual lecture series. Every year we invite an eminent scholar or practitioner to speak to students and invited guests on a current issue in European law. This year Professor Alan Dashwood, emeritus professor at Cambridge University, spoke on the topic of Judicial Activism and Conferred Powers – Is the Court of Justice of the European Union falling into bad habits? The lecture covered the wider topics of conferral and, therefore, competence of the EU and the role of the Court in determining these crucial issues.

Finally, we would like to thank Nina Slokar Boc who joined the Institute for seven months with us last year as part of the European Commission’s Erasmus placement scheme. Nina assisted with several projects of the Institute and provided administrative support and coordination of the abstracts and papers for the July conference. She is now a judicial trainee in the investigation division at the District Court of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Centre for Health Law, Science and Policy

It has been another productive year for the Centre for Health Law, Science and Policy, a research centre based at the Law School.

Professor Marie Fox’s co-authored article ‘The new politics of male circumcision: HIV/AIDS, health law and social justice’, published in the journal Legal Studies won the prestigious Society of Legal Scholars article prize for 2012. Similarly newsworthy, and demonstrating how Birmingham research influences the legal world, the Court of Appeal cited Dr Stephen W. Smith’s recent book, End-of-Life Decisions in Medical Care in March in the case of Aintree University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust v James & Ors [2013] EWCA Civ 65 (01 March 2013). The book, published in 2012 by Cambridge University Press, examines the legal and ethical issues that arise at the end of life and identifies ways to regulate decisions and minimise abuses based on ethical principles.

Dr Smith and Director of the Centre, Professor Jean McHale have received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to run two seminars which will be held in Birmingham in September 2013.

The UN Human Rights Council – A critique and early assessment

Routledge published Dr Rosa Freedman’s latest book in March, but it was officially launched at an event at the UN Library in Geneva on 28 May, organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office jointly with the United Nations. The book examines the creation and formative years of the United Nations Human Rights Council and assesses the extent to which the Council has fulfilled its mandate. Dr Freedman teaches International Human Rights Law at Birmingham and has written for the Guardian and the Huffington Post.

The two events, ‘Law and Regulation of New Health Technologies: Religion, Faith, belief and the scientific imperative: reconciling the irreconcilable?’ and ‘Conscientious Objection’ will involve national and international invited speakers and participants from a range of disciplines and interest groups.

The seminars are part of a broader AHRC research network and the David Price Memorial Seminar Series, ‘The Influence of Faith and Belief on the Formulation, Content and Operation of Health Law in the United Kingdom’. This seminar series involves events held at the Universities of Birmingham, De Montfort, Leicester, Nottingham and Nottingham Trent throughout 2013.

AHRC funds Legal Epidemiology project

Dr Claire McIvor, senior lecturer at Birmingham Law School, has been awarded a research networking grant from the AHRC for her Legal Epidemiology project.

Epidemiology is a core public health science that looks at determinants of health outcomes in human populations. Using medicine, research methodology and statistics as their key tools, epidemiologists are trained to draw causal inferences from empirical data. Legal Epidemiology refers to the use of epidemiologic methods and evidence to resolve problematic questions of causation in law, most notably within the context of personal injury litigation. The grant will be used to establish an international network of lawyers and scientists committed to working at the interface between law and epidemiology.

The Legal Epidemiology project is a collaborative, interdisciplinary project involving the following key participants: Professor Maurice Zeegers (epidemiologist, Maastricht University), Professor Michael Faure (lawyer, Maastricht University) and Professor Sana Loue (epidemiologist, Case Western University).

Dr Rosa Freedman (centre) with Ambassador Karen Pierce (head of UK Mission to Geneva) and Blandine Bluckacz-Louisfort, (Chief, Institutional Memory Section, Library, United Nations)
Despite her looming final exams, Poppy Wilkinson is surprisingly unruffled and calm as she sips her tea in the Bramall cafe. The Guild of Student’s President for 2013–14, Poppy believes her Law pedigree was key to her election success.

Asked how she had juggled campaigning and studying, Poppy laughs ‘Like most Law students, I’ve become expert at managing my time, which made the long hours campaigning much easier! Being analytically-minded, and using the diplomacy skills that my course has taught me, allowed me to deliver a winning manifesto based on increasing the accessibility of the Guild for all students.’

As Treasurer and Secretary of the Holdsworth Society, Poppy talks fondly of the diversity of friends made and experiences gained. Recalling their efforts to get corporate sponsorship, she says, ‘Meeting with leading professionals in law firms in Birmingham and London was fantastic. It certainly boosted my confidence and my faith in my persuasiveness’

On the subject of the election of four female Sabbatical Officers this year, compared to just one in previous years, Poppy is diplomatic but emphatic.

‘It is significant because it’s such an increase on past years but I think it’s important to note that we won because we are the best people for the job.’

After exams, Poppy will focus on delivering on her promise to equip students for life after Birmingham in a challenging climate – with a brief pause for a belated (‘Well, apart from a few glasses of wine on election night!’) celebration.

‘I want to thank my campaign team properly – they’re the unsung heroes. Then, it’ll be down to work. Student expectations are higher than ever and it’s my job to work with the University as a ‘critical friend’ to ensure that ours are the best all-round graduates. University is a stepping stone into the real world and it is important that the Guild focuses on what matters on campus – value for money, accommodation, finances...’ she pauses and smiles, ‘And social relationships too!’

As Poppy finishes her cup of tea and prepares to head off to the library, talk turns to the funeral of former Prime Minister Baroness Thatcher which is splashed over the front pages. Could her ambitions to become a commercial solicitor after the presidency take a back seat to becoming the next female Prime Minister?

‘Ask me in a year!’ she chuckles, ‘Maggie Thatcher said ‘Not in my lifetime’ but you never know!’

In March the Holdsworth Drama Club put on three performances of George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion at the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham. The famous play, in which a Victorian dialect expert wagers that he can teach a London flower girl to speak ‘proper’ English and thus be taken for a lady, was first performed in 1913 and was the inspiration for the famous Lerner and Loewe musical My Fair Lady.

SGH Martineau LLP sponsored the performances but our thespians also raised money and awareness for the production with a series of campus bake sales and entertainment nights at local pubs.

Many staff and students attended and enjoyed the performances, and the team are planning an even bigger and better production next year.

We spoke to Sarah Lodge, who was responsible for promoting the play:

‘Both the cast and committee really enjoyed being part of Pygmalion this year and we like to think the bar has been set high for future productions! Being part of the drama group is also a fun way to meet people, and perhaps learn a few new skills – this year’s production involved some of us learning to waltz! We are always looking for enthusiastic people to be in the cast or backstage crew and hope that new students will join us for a break from the pressures of legal work. We also hope to see alumni of the Law School and University at our future performances.’
Academic profile:
Dr James Treadwell, Lecturer in Criminology

Tell us how you became a criminologist?
Growing up in Birmingham and being familiar with some of its less salubrious settings, criminology was always going to connect better than, say, ancient history. I fell in love with the subject and when I graduated I went to work for NACRO. I played football with young people involved in crime while I did a Master’s degree in criminology and this led me into the Probation Service to work with very serious offenders. I then became a lecturer at Birmingham City University and undertook my PhD in criminology.

Can you tell us about your current research project on the 2011 English Riots?
I spent time on the streets watching what happened and talking to those involved in the riots. I knew there would be a lot of discussion afterwards but only one chance to capture the authentic voice of the riots in the moment so that is what I tried to do. There is an article that tells more in the British Journal of Criminology at the moment called ‘Shopocalypse now’.

Can you tell us about your work on the English Defence League (EDL)?
I worked as a researcher on the EDL: speaking to the rank and file members when the organisation first came to prominence. Some of their first demonstrations happened in Birmingham and I felt it was important to understand the perceptions of hate crime perpetrators because understanding can help shape criminal justice interventions.

And finally, I understand you’re a pretty nifty kickboxer – can you tell us a bit more?
I have been involved in martial arts for years, and I have trained and fought in boxing, kickboxing and Muay Thai (the Thai form of kickboxing) over the years. I plan some academic work drawing on it in the future…

New LLB Law with Criminology launching

In 2014 Birmingham Law School will be launching a new LLB Law with Criminology programme – a qualifying law degree that will focus on the nature, extent, causes, and control of criminal behaviour in both the individual and in society. The programme will be taught entirely within the Law School and draws upon the significant expertise of our academic staff, including Dr Treadwell, to offer a wide range of specialist modules in criminology.
Head of School’s Award for academic superhero

Each year Birmingham Law School invites students to nominate members of staff for the Head of School’s Award for Excellence in Teaching or Supporting Student Learning.

The award is intended to reward staff and raise the profile of learning and teaching activity throughout the University. Nominations can be made for anyone in the School who supports student learning. The winner receives £500 as well as the kudos.

The winner of the 2013 award is Martin George, Lecturer in Law at Birmingham Law School and Deputy Director of the Holdsworth Club. Martin is the module leader for Land Law on the undergraduate LLB programme, and Commercial Conflict of Laws on the postgraduate LLM course. Nominations for Martin cited his ‘enjoyable, thought-provoking and imaginative lectures’, that ‘he is genuinely happy to help and cares about his students’ success’, and ‘his use of technology, particularly social media, to promote student interaction and intellectual engagement.’ He is described as ‘inspiring, quirky and interactive’, ‘brilliant’, and ‘a fantastic lecturer whose views and arguments are easy to follow.’

An undergraduate law student, Elen Russell, draws Martin George.

Martin George was delighted to win the award, saying, ‘There has never been greater emphasis on the quality of teaching in higher education and investment in the student experience is vital if universities are to flourish in the new funding and fees regimes. The University very much supports members of staff in delivering this. I am privileged to be part of a first-rate Law School which cares deeply about its students.’

The Challenges of Transnational Investigations: international conference

In March the Institute of Judicial Administration at the snow-bound University of Birmingham hosted a conference on the Challenges of Transnational Investigations. The three-day, invitation-only event was co-funded by the Hercule programme of the European Commission and was filled to capacity. The event facilitated dialogue between academics, practitioners and policy-makers on the challenges to the achievement of criminal justice in cross-border cases.

The rich discussions focused upon topics such as prosecutorial leadership of investigations across borders, the particular challenges of investigating offences against the financial interests of the EU, securing defence rights in transnational proceedings and the challenges of ensuring judicial control of the same.

Discussions were informed by presentations from, amongst others, a Vice-President of Eurojust, the President of the European Criminal Bar Association, the inaugural director of the UK’s Serious Organised Crime Agency and academics of the EuroNEEDs study network. The EuroNEEDs study is headed by the IJA’s director, Dr Marianne Wade and it provided empirical insights into the need for and the needs of a European (EU) criminal justice system. By utilising the factual rigour provided by the study, the conference was focused on practicable solutions to what are often emotive issues.

Practitioners and other delegates also raised important questions on topics such as the sense of utilising enormous state resources to combat narcotic substances used recreationally but not to fight the multi-million dollar trade in counterfeit medicines, which causes enormous harm to already vulnerable individuals.

Discussion thus ranged from the very point of criminal justice systems to the role of the EU within them. The international and professional mix of attendees provided a range of very different opinions and produced a fruitful and enlightening experience for all. Held in the University’s beautiful Winterbourne estate, this event was Birmingham at its best, despite the crippling winter weather.

Winterbourne after the snow had thawed!
Charlotte Heap meets Lady Dyson, wife of the Master of the Rolls, and a Birmingham Law alumna

Lady Jacqueline Dyson jumped at the opportunity to explore campus again as she accompanied her husband, Justice of the Supreme Court and Master of the Rolls, Lord Dyson to Birmingham Law School for his Holdsworth Club Presidential Address.

As we enjoyed a warm drink on a very cold and windy day, Lady Jacqueline Dyson reminisced about her time studying at Birmingham Law School in the late 1960s.

‘It was a wonderful time to be on campus – we worked extremely hard but we used to enjoy all of the things the University had to offer. I lived very close to campus, played badminton at the Monroe Sports Centre regularly and enjoyed many a concert in the Barber Institute.’

Lady Dyson stayed at University House, which is now home to Birmingham Business School, and enjoyed her first year so much that she became Resident’s Association president so that she could stay there throughout her studies.

‘At the time, University House was unusual – it was one of the first unisex halls of residence in the country. The common areas were great for socialising. Living in such a prime location was great for attending lectures and working in the library as well.’

After graduating in 1969, Lady Dyson pursued an academic career and is a longstanding member of the UCL Law Faculty and the Honorary Secretary to their alumni group the Bentham Association. As we explore the changing campus, including the upgraded Law School facilities and the fantastic Bramall Building, Lady Dyson acknowledged the role that alumni play in shaping the experience of current students.

‘A new alumni-supported concert hall is fantastic for students – these projects can only help in attracting the best students to the University but alumni can also give back expertise and knowledge.’

Lady Dyson admits to encouraging her husband to take on the role of Holdsworth Club president. She laughs: ‘It’s a pleasure to be back to catch up with familiar Law School faces and see my husband deliver his Presidential Address and judge a mooting competition.

‘A lot has changed on campus and in higher education but the traditions of the Holdsworth Club are thriving. It is a great experience for students to interact with high profile alumni and legal professionals.’

Stay in touch!
We always want to hear your news – whether it’s a new job, a new programme of study, or perhaps you just got married. If you would like to find out more about volunteering for the Law School, or make suggestions about the content of the newsletter we would love to hear from you.

To stay in touch and receive regular events notifications, please make sure we have your current email address. Join your.bham, the online Birmingham alumni community, at www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni and join 9000+ of your fellow alumni in our LinkedIn group, called ‘University of Birmingham Alumni and Friends.’

Learn more
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