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HUMS Newsletter
School of Humanities, University of Bristol

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Estates and Space special edition

SM report

Now that term is well underway it seemed timely to update you on the Estates work that has been ongoing over the summer months to prepare offices for our incoming staff. Work was undertaken on a total of six offices to make them ready for new colleagues and, in addition, spaces to accommodate PDRAs and Teaching Fellows were renovated and made ready. The School has also benefitted from the new seminar room (G11) located in 3-5 Woodland Road. Works to the Link Corridor are almost complete and we are expecting new signage to be put up any time over the next couple of weeks. The front doors of all the Woodland Road villas are due to be painted before the end of TB2 and work to replace windows is also in train. I recently learned that there is still money in the project budget to replace all of the carpets along the corridor which should further improve that area. Finally, the Staff Common Room will re-open this week with a newly fitted kitchen.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Tom Begbie who did the difficult job over the summer of coordinating all of the Estates and removals work. Also Billie and Rosanne who worked extremely hard to ensure that transitioning new colleagues into their offices has been as easy as possible.

The challenge of keeping everyone warm and dry is ongoing and I hope I can build on the excellent work which has already taken place!

Finally, the plans for the new University Study Space at Beacons House are available for review at www.bristol.ac.uk/beacon - please do take a look and provide your feedback. This facility should be ready for student use at the start of 2015/16.

Jill Walsh
October 2014

Estates Update

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Jill Walsh
October 2014

Head of School report

Warm greetings to everyone and congratulations on a very successful start to the 2014/15 academic year. For our new starters there has been a busy round of inductions, meetings and the excitement of first lectures, first tutorials and the challenge of getting everything accomplished amidst the throng of students and unfamiliar routines. Thanks to our porters and other student-facing staff who have steered us on our way.

Corridor refurbishment

You will have noticed a visible improvement to the corridors of the Arts Complex. The School of Humanities has a new colour scheme and much improved signage. The new Staff Common Room kitchen (complete with dishwasher) has just been installed and entrances have been repainted and revamped.

To mark the occasion this issue of our Newsletter is focused on the theme of space (by which I mean space as in capital works not space as in the final frontier). For the future there are even more exciting plans in store. Faculty Director of Education Mark Atkinson has initiated consultations for an ambitious new learning centre focused on Humanities students. Look forward to hearing much more about the Humanities Commons Project beginning with visits from Gloria Visintini, Director of Technology Enhanced Learning, who will be working with staff to help develop the brief.

Jamaican Poet Laureate

Thanks to the hard work of Madhu Krishnan and generous support from Vice Chancellor Eric Thomas and other sponsors, we were honoured this week by a visit by Jamaican Poet Laureate Mervyn Morris. As well as working with Creative Writing students, Emeritus Professor Morris delivered the annual reading of the Bristol Poetry Institute on 10 October in the Great Hall of the Wills Memorial Building. Earlier this term, Madhu spearheaded the distribution of copies of Stephen Kelman’s debut novel Pigeon English to every first-year student on campus.

J A Symonds birthday

Shane Butler and the Bristol Institute of Greece Rome and the Classical Tradition hosted a birthday party in the Orangery of Goldney Hall to celebrate the remarkable life of John Addington Symonds. This included a rare opportunity to inspect the planned renovations of the garden of Symonds’s family home in Clifton Hill House, one of the University of Bristol’s oldest halls of residence.

The Conquering Hero

On Sunday 12 October the Wills
Memorial Hall was the setting for a performance and after-show debate featuring Nick Nourse and Tom Beaumont from the School of Humanities of The Conquering Hero by Allan Monkhouse, a co-production between the University and Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory.

Congratulations to staff
In staff news, congratulations to Ian Wei who has completed 25 years’ dedicated service to the University and to our remarkable and gifted early career staff in English, History and Religious Studies who have just completed their initial service review which happens after twelve months. Well done Jennifer Batt, Victoria Bates, Alex Hoare, Cathy Hume, Laura Jansen, Madhu Krishnan, David Leech and John McTague. We will have an opportunity to celebrate these achievements at our monthly departmental afternoon teas in the newly renovated Staff Common Room. The first Tea will be in November; details to come.

University management visits
These are changing times for the UK higher education sector and our own University. Vice Chancellor Eric Thomas will be stepping down in August 2015 and there are new faces in the senior management team. In the next few weeks we will be hosting visits from the PVCo for Research, Education and International. They are interested to find out what distinguishes the work of our School and also to track performance in the light of the recent NSS results and the imminent REF. This will be a good preparation for the School Review scheduled for 5-6 March 2015.

Pressure to lift our performance is building but there is increasing uncertainty about just what will help us achieve our goals. In these circumstances we need to pay attention to key performance indicators such as REF2014 and the annual NSS but also aspire beyond them. To make these aspirations a reality please actively contribute your ideas to the Humanities Commons Project and other Faculty, School and departmental initiatives.

Want to know more? The brief for the Humanities Commons can be found in the School Blackboard site along with minutes from SPARC (the monthly management committee) and the School Meeting, back issues of the HUMS Bulletin and Newsletter, workload and research leave updates.

Hilary Carey
October 2014

NSS Action Plan

The new academic year is now well under way, but I’d like to thank all staff, both academic and support, who made Welcome Week a great start to the year. As last year, in response to our National Student Survey (NSS) results, we have developed a School Action Plan, and, as throughout the University, we will be meeting with the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education to discuss this. Our NSS School Visit is scheduled for October 28.

The NSS Action Plan will be discussed in Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings throughout the School. It will develop over time in response to feedback, and updates will be shared with staff and students. The Action Plan recognises the shared characteristics of teaching in the School that are cherished by staff and students, such as small group teaching and a diverse range of units. It pays close attention to the valuable feedback from last year’s finalists about ways in which we can further strengthen undergraduate education across our various programmes.

As part of the Action Plan, we will be running a series of teaching and learning workshops, building on last year’s workshops. This year in the School workshops we will be focusing on feedback on written work, academic personal tutoring, and developing Blackboard sites. These themes are supported, and complemented, by workshops held in departments.

This year we have a dedicated budget to support initiatives in developing teaching in the School. Please get in touch with me if you have ideas for doing so that would benefit from funding. We also have a specific fund designed to strengthen the student experience in the School of Humanities, which we will be using to support student societies in the School, and to facilitate staff-led trips to galleries or museums where these helpfully supplement teaching.

We are pleased that the Peer Assisted Student Support Scheme (PASS), in which second and third year students support first years in developing study skills, has had a good start this year in the School. We will be publicising this scheme further through emails and in lectures, but if you want to know more about PASS, please do get in touch.

Finally, I’d like to add my own welcome to new colleagues in the School. I’d like in particular to welcome our new Senior Tutor, Sarah Sermin, to the School. We have always prided ourselves in the School on our commitment to supporting students, and Sarah’s appointment further strengthens the pastoral support available to students in the School.

James Thompson
October 2014
TWO NIGHTS WITH BORGES

October 7th and 21st
Under the auspices of the Institute of Greece, Rome and the Classical Tradition (IGRCT)

Our first night with Jorge Luis Borges was a great success. We would like to thank all of you who came to the event on October 7th and shared the exhilarating experience of listening to this twentieth century author in his very own voice. Making use of live readings and audio recordings long thought lost, we sought to relive some of the magic of the first of the Norton Lectures, “The Riddle of Poetry”, which Borges gave at Harvard in the autumn of 1967. Dr. Laura Jansen, lecturer in Latin, who has undertaken a major research project on Borges and the Classics, introduced the lecture with a few preliminary words about Borges, time, and the senses. The audio lecture was followed by some superb live readings of Borges’ most powerful poetry by Professor Andrew Ginger (Iberian and Latin American Studies), Dr. Ruth Glynn (Modern Italian Culture), Dr. Adam Lecznar (Greek Studies), and Professor Shane Butler (Classics). The event also offered an excellent opportunity to give a warm welcome to Professor Shane Butler as new Director of IGRCT.

Don’t miss our second night with Borges on October 21st! The night promises another feast for the imagination, as we listen to Borges’ second Norton lecture, “Metaphor”, and enjoy more live readings of his work in different languages.

Laura Jansen
October 2014

Happy Birthday John Addington Symonds

Researchers and revellers from the University and the wider Bristol community gathered at Goldney Hall under beautiful skies on 5 October in order to toast the 174th birthday of one of Clifton’s favourite sons, John Addington Symonds. Co-sponsored by the University’s Institute of Greece, Rome and the Classical Tradition (IGRCT) and local LGBT history organisation OutStories Bristol, the celebration (which it is hoped will become an annual tradition) took special note of Symonds’ 1883 “A Problem in Greek Ethics”, the first major study of ancient sexuality and a landmark in the early struggle for gay rights in Britain and around the world. Symonds’ connection to the university is significant: his family home was Clifton Hill House, now a hall of residence, and the only major archive of his manuscripts and letters, many of which were burned after his death to conceal his homosexuality, now resides in the Special Collections department of the University library.

Shane Butler
October 2014
The Conquering Hero

Members of the History Department took part last Sunday evening in a co-production between the Tobacco Factory and the University of Bristol exploring the history and memory of the events of 1914. Following a performance of Allan Monkhouse's 'The Conquering Hero', first performed in 1924, Dr Nick Norse and Dr Tom Beaumont spoke as part of a round-table discussion responding to the themes raised by the play and exploring its relationship with the events surrounding the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

Tom Beaumont
October 2014

Jamaica Rising: visit of Professor Mervyn Morris, Jamaican Poet Laureate

A series of events and readings took place last week to honour the visit of Professor Morris. Collaborations included not just University institutions such as the Institute for Advanced Studies and BIRTHA, but also the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Bristol Festival of Literature, Yardstick and Ujima. In addition, Mayor George Ferguson arranged a civic reception for Professor Morris, and an audience of over 650 people turned up for the main reading on the Friday.

Professor Mervyn Morris at the Bristol Poetry Institute reading at the Wills Memorial Building on Friday

Renovations: before and after

Over 650 people came out to listen to Professor Morris read

New painted door behind 3-5 Woodland Road, with wheelchair access.

B46, 13 Woodland Road—renovated post room

'I thoroughly enjoyed The Conquering Hero. It was brilliant to see such a good turnout and participate in such a lively discussion. Well done Tom and Nick.'

Hilary Carey, Head of School, Humanities

Andrew Hilton
Director, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory

Andrew Kelly
Director, Festival of Ideas

Tom Beaumont with Andrew Kelly

Nick Nourse with Andrew Hilton

Audience discussion
From the editor

It was my intention for this to be an Estates and space special edition, but it could have just as well been an Events special edition! The next Newsletter will be on Research, and it will be published on Wednesday 17 December. Please get your contributions and photos to me by Friday 12 December at the latest, focussing on research success and activities. Please also include student news, successful vivas etc. Send to r.jacks@bristol.ac.uk

Next Newsletter to be published on 17 December!
Theme: Research.
Please get your stories to Rosanne Jacks by Friday 12 December!