As pretty well everybody in the School knows, the University now has an International Strategy, and my job is to ensure that it is enacted as far as possible. The strategy, entitled ‘Global Bristol’, is a long and complex document but boils down to three goals: a richer cross-fertilisation of ideas, leading to improved research outputs; a student experience enhanced by improved international mobility and cultural diversity; and substantial financial benefits delivered by the growth of overseas student communities.

In practice, my role with regard to the first of those is mostly reactive at present and that of a facilitator, though I have put in plenty of work in support of it, and the appointment of ambassadors and champions at subject level is making it much easier. The second is largely a knock-on consequence of the third, and it is that third aim which is currently my main preoccupation. Bluntly, unless we significantly improve our recruitment of good overseas students, at all levels, we are not going to make our budget work. To put it more positively, that achievement is the swiftest and most practicable route to a strong financial position. In an ideal world, this means replacing some of our weaker home intake with strong equivalents from abroad.

As a faculty, we suffer from decided handicaps in achieving this goal. We offer very few of the vocationally based subjects which foreign applicants are mostly seeking, and of the mixed-discipline, ‘studies’-based units which they also like. Moreover, we are based in a city of which, most unjustly, foreigners tend not to have heard. On the other hand, most of these problems are shared by universities like Sheffield and Nottingham, which now recruit effectively from abroad. Only a modest increase in such recruitment would make a big difference to our finances, and our traditional rate of success has been so low that an improvement should be relatively easy to achieve.

This depends on three main factors: good advertising; good processing of applications; and good results in national league tables. The last of those is a general concern of ours. The second seems now to have been generally achieved. The first is my main area of activity at present, focused on the production of our first-ever Faculty brochure, and of hand-out leaflets for individual subjects, which can be distributed by the University’s recruiting agents abroad from September. I am immensely grateful to the subject leads and other officers who have provided the vital data for these in two waves over the past year. A potential project, to make us some money and advertise our wares, is a summer school to be held next year, both on our own account and as a pilot for the university, using structures and staff input already successfully created for the existing Fulbright summer event.

So that is what is happening at present. I find it extremely exciting, both because of the prospective rewards and because of the pleasure that I experience in engaging with colleagues all over the Faculty in quest of them. As its largest school, Humanities supplies the lion’s share of both the prospective rewards and the pleasure.

Ronald Hutton
June 2015
Exciting times ahead!

Our students will have the opportunity to meet their peers from other countries and cultures in Bristol as well as experience different systems of education abroad. Bristol fees cover fees abroad, which is particularly relevant for our North American links. European exchanges benefit from small grants available under the aegis of the Erasmus programme.

For our staff, the links open up new channels for exchange with scholars from our partner universities, while also establishing and consolidating a framework for existing cooperations. Undeniably, some programmes may face initial challenges. However, once the system is established, the benefits to our students and staff will make the effort worthwhile and the attractive offer will help recruitment by making Bristol University even more appealing.

School of Humanities—Looking Ahead: Head of School Report

The School is reaching the end of a rather remarkable academic year. Looking back, I am chiefly struck by the rich tide of incoming staff. I still feel a newcomer to the University since I arrived in January 2014, but in 2014 I was one of 19 new appointments to the School including eight lecturers, our Senior Tutor, Sarah Serning, and a troop of teaching fellows, research and professional support staff. In the first six months of 2015, we are on track to make another 25 appointments spearheaded by Helen Fulton, Professor of Medieval Literature, who arrived in January. She will soon be joined by nine new lecturers in History and English as well as another four in ‘New Humanities’: Digital Humanities, Environmental Humanities and Medical Humanities. There has been a certain degree of changing of the guard as we have said ‘good-bye’ to staff on Pathway 3 (teaching) contracts and replaced them with lecturers on Pathway 1 (research and teaching). By this means the School strengthens its capacity to deliver research and teaching of the very highest standard. More prosaically, having more people means that the ratio of staff to students, which has been at historically high levels, will continue to fall. This has also been the year of the School Review and the REF and coming to terms with less-than-ideal outcomes for some external measures of research and teaching. The research snapshot meetings, led by FRD Robert Bickers, are inspiring us to look with fresh eyes on external measures of research and teaching performance. In terms of grant applications, the School has never been more active. The success of our ECR Leverhulme Fellows has been a bright spot in the research cycle, but we need to refresh our research leave policy and respond to some challenging recommendations in the School Review.

There have also been visible changes to the Arts complex: new lighting, signage and windows for the Arts corridor. Over the coming summer we will also see the villa refurbishment project proceed. This will bring new learning spaces for students in accessible locations with new furniture and equipment as well as much-needed carpeting, repainting and signage in older parts of the estate.

Looking ahead is not only the theme of this Newsletter, but also that of the SPARC Away Day which is coming up on 11 June. As part of the preparations for this event, the School Manager, Jill Walsh, asked the School to respond to three questions:

- What are our strengths as a school and where should we be building capacity?
Head of School Report (Continued)

- How is the external environment changing and what opportunities and threats might this present?
- What are our most cherished goals and values, how have these evolved and how might they continue to evolve in the future?

Your responses to these questions made for some fascinating reading. You said that we needed to sustain an intellectually broad and audacious research culture, ‘good scholarship’ which was not easily measured but was not reducible to REF, creative thinking which was central to our identity as scholars, achieve work-life balance, cherish intellectual freedom and integrity and trumpet the contribution the universities made to national life through teaching. The threat was that these core values might be commoditized and that we needed to generate fresh thinking about the value of the humanities. I found these ideas inspiring and salutary in equal measure. It will be a tall order to live up to them but they provide a rich source of ideas as we plan for the year ahead.

Hilary Carey
June 2015

New Humanities lecturers for September 2015:

- **HISTORY**
  - Marianna Dudley: Lecturer in Environmental Humanities
  - James Freeman: Lecturer in Digital Humanities

- **ENGLISH**
  - Leah Tether: Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities
  - Maria Vaccarella: Lecturer in Medical Humanities

Former international student, Erica O’Brien, reports on the activities of international students in School

This year the School of Humanities welcomed over 80 Study Abroad and Erasmus students, some studying for the full year and others for only a term. As a former Study Abroad student in Bristol’s English department, I was brought on board as a Humanities Academic Assistant to offer support and guidance to these students as they navigated different academic systems and integrated into a new culture. To facilitate this process, we held welcome lunches at the beginning of each term to give the students the opportunity to meet each other and to ask questions of me, the Head of School, Professor Hilary Carey, and the Senior Tutor, Dr Sarah Seming. Later in each term we also held socials at The White Bear on St. Michael’s Hill, which provided us with the opportunity to receive feedback from students regarding how they felt the term had gone. Students spoke very positively about their experiences, particularly about how accessible and helpful their lecturers were in giving them additional support and advice about such academic issues as essay writing and referencing conventions.

Through liaising with David Line of the International Office, I was able to contribute to the orientation for all of the University’s Study Abroad and Erasmus students entering in the January term, speaking about my experience as a Study Abroad student and about the aspects of British academic culture that may have been unfamiliar, such as the emphasis on independent study and the marking scheme.

In April, Professors Hilary Carey and Ronald Hutton and I represented the School of Humanities at a postgraduate recruitment fair held for all Study Abroad and Erasmus students across the University. The students we spoke with were very enthusiastic about the potential for returning to Bristol for their postgraduate studies, so we can look forward to a cohort of international students beginning their postgraduate programmes in the next year or two.

Erica O’Brien
June 2015

Art History in Schools Programme

The Department has for the past few months been involved in a widening-participation programme, organized by Dr Catherine Hunt, which has developed a series of projects, directed by pairs of our undergraduates, in four local schools.

Our undergraduates have been working with Key Stage 3 students from Churchill Academy, Colston’s Girls School; Fairfield High School and Redland Green School.

The fruits of this collaboration were recently exhibited in the University’s Victoria Rooms, and all who attended agreed we saw some truly original and creative projects that developed from the inspiration of famous art works – for example, to mention only a few, Churchill School produced a reversal of the existential angst of Edvard Munch’s The Scream in their happy, saxophone-playing, dancing clown; Fairfield produced a wonderful animation of twin serpents, devised from the Aztec maquizcoatl double-headed serpent in the British Museum (gifted c. 1519); Colston’s Girls School produced a digital reinterpretation of Sofonisba Anguissola’s oil painting Lucia, Minerva and Europa Anguissola Playing Chess, of 1555, and Redland’s Green School produced a painted and culinary take on Hokusai’s iconic image of the Great Wave off Kanagawa of 1830, creating a delicious wave cake, which looked as good as it tasted!

It was a truly inspiring day, and the start, we hope, of more collaboration between our Department and our inspiring local schools!

We would like to thank and congratulate Catherine Hunt for her leadership of the project, and our undergraduates: Olivia Webb, Anna Booth-Cibbourn, Louise Coleman, Miriam Sadowska, Camilla Garnier, Lucy Ronan, Plum Ayloff and Molly Kennedy.

Graduation Teas! 23 and 24 July 2015

English
Thursday, 23 July
17.30, HUMs Common Rm/Link Rooms

Religion and Theology
Thursday, 23 July
17.30, SML Common Room

History of Art
Thursday, 23 July
17.30, G31 and G33

History
Friday, 24 July
15.00, Priory Road Forum

Classics and Ancient History
Friday, 24 July
15.00, HUMs Common Rm/Link Rooms

Information on prize-giving ceremonies nearer the time.
**Kitchen Cosmology:**
*Feeding humans and non-humans in Theravāda Buddhism*

The theoretical cosmology of the Buddhist texts comprises 31 realms reaching from beings in hell at the bottom of the scale to the gods of the formless realms at the top, with humans somewhere in the middle. In practice the relationship between humans and non-humans in Sri Lanka finds its expression more often than not by way of food offerings or feasts, which are prepared in the still largely female domain of the kitchen. This project explores the relationship in a series of mini documentaries in mixed medium (video, stills, sounds) to be combined into a film and an accompanying article. While individually the six videos document already familiar instances of food offering in Sri Lanka, as a group they provide a series of windows on to an integrated cosmology of food and merit with humans at the centre. They reveal an intricate network of relationships and dependencies, an economy of faith and a communal community which includes the dead, gods, ghosts, animals and even relics of the Buddha.

The six short documentaries (four-seven minutes) were filmed in Sri Lanka during three separate field trips. The first three videos were filmed in a small village north of Colombo and document a private food offering to the Buddha in someone’s home, a pūjā at a local shrine dedicated to the goddess Pattini and an all-night cooking event culminating in a food offering to seven women, “milk mothers”, who are associated with Pattini. The fourth video was filmed in a suburb of Colombo and documents ritual feeding of crows to appease the planetary deity Senasuru (Saturn) with whom crows are associated. The last two videos were filmed in a medium sized town south of Colombo and partly in Colombo itself. The fifth video documents the “generosity stalls” where free food is prepared and handed out to passers by during the festival week of Vesak in May (commemorating the Buddha’s birth, awakening and death). The last video documents an alms giving to Buddhist monks on behalf of the dead; this includes offerings to the relic and the hungry ghosts.

I filmed all the events myself, produced a rough cut and added the voiceover (in Sinhala) and subtitles (in English). I had involved to be sure they were happy with the result. The videos are now completed. Two very talented students of film composition (Stathis Kampylis and Kostas Andrikopoulos) composed the music for the individual videos and the combined DVD. I distributed physical copies of the DVD during my research trip to Sri Lanka in May 2015. The individual videos and the combined DVD are now available online (Vimeo) and will soon be available on YouTube and the departmental website. These have already attracted the attention of Sri Lankan expats in London and Melbourne as well as school teachers and university teachers.

For more information, see: [https://vimeo.com/channels/buddhistscosmologyinfood](https://vimeo.com/channels/buddhistscosmologyinfood)

*From the editor*

Summer term is always the season for celebration, and we have been celebrating so many accomplishments recently: ‘Thank you’ to our teaching fellows, mingling with our Digital Humanities candidates and still to look forward to are our Graduation Teas, which include prize-giving ceremonies, and the finalists’ parties. We look forward to seeing you there! See final page for photos of the merriment!

The next issue of the Newsletter will be next term — date to be announced nearer the time.
Some continuing with us….

… and others sadly leaving…