HEALTH EXPERIENCES | INTERACTIVE OXFORD MAPS | CONNECTING CULTURES
The University has reported a £38.9m surplus for 2013/14. Of this, £33.6m related to the University’s profit from the sale of its stake in games and technology company NaturalMotion. After excluding this one-off item and the value of donated heritage assets (£0.9m), the net surplus for the year was £4.4m. Income has continued to grow, increasing by 8.1% to £1,146.3m. However, the upward pressure on costs continues to be significant: expenditure rose by 10.5% to £1,174.4m. However, the living wage is intended to allow people to provide for themselves and their families. It currently stands at £7.85 per hour, approximately 20% more than the national minimum wage.

The University is seeking accreditation as a living wage employer. While all those employed by the central University have been paid the living wage for many years, accreditation means the University is committing to pay the living wage to contractors who work regularly on University premises. Accreditation by the central University have been paid the living wage for many years, accreditation to contractors who work.

A revised University Policy and Procedure on Harassment has been approved by Council. Available at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/harassmentadvice/policyandprocedure, it includes a new procedure for student complaints of harassment against other students. New guidance for staff has also been developed on handling cases of sexual assault or sexual violence; there is advice to staff on handling disclosures of sexual assault or sexual violence, and signposts to sources of support.

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Do you have a great idea for a digital project which would benefit Oxford staff or students? The newly launched IT Innovation Seed Fund (www.it.ox.ac.uk/innovation-fund) aims to fund innovative IT projects that will enhance the staff or student experience through digital means. Each term a 'challenge' will be set to encourage University staff to submit ideas for discussion and development via an open collaboration tool. Details of this term's challenge, which closes on 15 February, are at https://oxfordideas.wazoku.com.

Do you advise new staff who are moving to Oxford from overseas? If so, check out a new website that provides information for staff moving to Oxford or who have recently arrived. Located at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/international, the site provides advice on issues to consider when planning a move to the UK, such as immigration, relocation and finances, together with information for the first weeks post-arrival, such as finding accommodation, registering with a GP and opening a bank account.

Help shape the future of the University’s Technology Transfer Office by sharing your views with the Isis Innovation team in their annual impact survey. The 2015 survey, which is available at www.marmaladesurvey.co.uk/IsisInnovation2015, runs until 23 February. Feedback from the first Isis survey in 2013 resulted in a number of improvements to the services offered to University members, such as the introduction of Isis hotdesks in University departments, and the latest survey is designed to identify further improvements.

Oxford has been ranked number one in the UK for the quality of its research according to the 2014 REF results, which were published in December. The REF (Research Excellence Framework) is a peer-review process to assess the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, the results of which will be used to allocate block-grant research funding from 2015/16. Oxford's submission comprised 8,414 research outputs from 2,409 members of staff across 31 subjects. 48% of their research and impact was rated 4*, which means the University has the largest volume of world-leading (4*) research in the country. A further 39% was rated 3*. The University ranked first in 12 subjects for their volume of world-leading research, while 8 other subjects were ranked first on other measures. The University also performed strongly in the new impact category, with the assessment panels scoring 92% of Oxford's impact at 3* and 4*. Details at www.ox.ac.uk/ref.
RESEARCH ROUND-UP

A national obsession with balloon flight left a surprising mark on English literature in the late 18th century, according to Fiona Stafford, Professor of English Language and Literature. While researching her new book, The Oxford History of English Literature: The Romantic Period, 1785–1830 (to be published by OUP), Professor Stafford found repeated references to balloons. ‘Again and again I found that very different writers, who would not normally be read alongside each other, were united by a fascination with balloons,’ she says. This balloon mania, which took place between 1783 and 1786, could change our understanding of when ‘modern celebrity’ began, as the balloon craze and its early aeronautical heroes predate Byron and Nelson.

Since 2013 China has relaxed its strict ‘one-child’ policy in order to reverse a shrinking workforce. However, a joint study by researchers in Oxford and China suggests that this is unlikely to change long-term demographic trends. While couples where either parent is an only child are now allowed to have a second baby, the report outlines several factors affecting couples’ decisions to stick with one-child families. They range from the additional costs of having another child to the entrenched family-planning bureaucracy. According to co-author Dr Stuart Basten from the Department of Social Policy and Intervention: ‘The research suggests that in order to overcome the barriers currently preventing more couples from having bigger families, there may have to be structural reform in local government and the introduction of more family-friendly policies.’

Some breathalysers on sale to the UK public vary considerably in their ability to detect potentially unsafe levels of breath alcohol for driving, finds a study published in BMJ Open. Dr Helen Ashdown of the Department of Primary Care Health Sciences and her colleagues used a police standard and three high-street breathalysers to measure breath alcohol levels in 208 people around college bars and pubs. They found that some high-street breathalysers could potentially miss alcohol levels above the legal limit in as many as three in every four people. The findings call into question the regulatory process for approving these devices for personal use. Dr Ashdown points out that the use of insufficiently sensitive breathalysers could have catastrophic safety implications for drivers.

A study published in Nature finds that birds learn new foraging techniques by observing others in their social network, and this ‘copycat’ behaviour can sustain foraging ‘traditions’ that last years. Working with eight local populations of great tits in Wytham Woods, Dr Lucy Aplin of the Department of Zoology and her colleagues trained the birds to slide a puzzle box door to either the left or the right before releasing them back into the wild. Researchers also deposited the puzzle boxes, containing a tasty mealworm treat, in the birds’ habitat, and tracked the spread of box-opening methods using electronic tags on the birds. In the wild, the birds could get at the worm by arbitrarily sliding the puzzle box door to the left or the right, but each population strongly favoured the solution introduced by its own ‘innovator’. This preference was still there a year later, when only 40% of the birds had survived from the year before.

There has been a significant rise in people leaving unemployment benefits after being sanctioned but very few of them are finding work, according to research by the Department of Sociology with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Sanctions are used to punish claimants who do not meet government conditions for actively seeking work and result in cuts to benefits for at least four weeks. Researchers analysed UK data between 2005 and 2014 and found that, after stronger penalties were introduced in 2011, an estimated 43% of claimants of Jobseeker’s Allowance who received sanctions went on to leave the JSA altogether. However, Jobcentre Plus records of the reasons given show that only one-fifth left for work, with most exiting for ‘unknown destinations’ or ‘other reasons’. Professor David Stuckler said: ‘There is a real concern that sanctioned people are disappearing from view.’

Researchers in the Department of Chemistry have recorded a tiny molecule taking its first nanometre-sized steps. Previous attempts at catching these ‘molecule walkers’ in motion have been limited by microscopes being limited to a resolution of 10–20 nanometres, far larger than the one nanometre stride of these molecules. As described in Nature Nanotechnology, Dr Gokce Su Pulcu and her team instead used a nanopore with footholds. ‘We can’t “see” the walker moving, but by mapping changes in the ionic current flowing through the pore as the molecule moves from foothold to foothold, we are able to chart how it is stepping from one to the other and back again,’ she explains. These molecules could potentially be used to deliver small cargoes to specific locations.

For more information, visit www.ox.ac.uk/news and www.ox.ac.uk/staffnews
Dr Jeffrey Aronson, Reader in Clinical Pharmacology, has been awarded an honorary fellowship by the British Pharmacological Society, in recognition of his achievements as President of the Society (2008–9) and his work to promote and advance pharmacology.

Frances Ashcroft, Royal Society GlaxoSmithKline Research Professor in the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, has been awarded the Jacobaeus Prize, given by the Novo Nordisk Foundation for extraordinary achievements in medical research. Her research aims to elucidate how changes in blood glucose levels regulate insulin secretion from the pancreas and how this process is impaired in diabetes.

Paul Beer, Professor of Chemistry, has been awarded the 2015 Izatt–Christensen Award for his work in the field of macrocyclic and supramolecular chemistry, both in creative research and in the training of students.

Andrea Cavalleri, Professor of Physics at Oxford and at the Max Planck Institute for the Structure and Dynamics of Matter, has been awarded the 2015 Max Born Medal and Prize. The award is given jointly by the UK Institute of Physics and the German Physical Society and recognises his pioneering work on ultra-fast studies of materials.

In Science and Engineering, for her research on Duchenne muscular dystrophy and her championing of women in science.

Samantha de Silva, a Wellcome Trust clinical research training fellow in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences, has been named the Royal Society of Medicine Wesleyan Trainee of the Year 2014 for her research into gene therapy to restore visual function in end-stage retinitis pigmentosa.

Isobel Hook, Professor of Astrophysics, is a member of the Supernova Cosmology Project Team led by Professor Saul Perlmutter (Berkeley) which has won the 2015 Breakthrough Prize for Fundamental Physics ‘for the most unexpected discovery that the expansion of the universe is accelerating, rather than slowing as had been long assumed’.

Desmond King, Andrew W Mellon Professor of American Government, has been elected to the Royal Irish Academy.

Mark McCarthy, Robert Turner Professor of Diabetic Medicine, is a joint winner of the Naomi Berrie Award for Outstanding Achievement in Diabetes Research.

The annual award aims to foster high-quality diabetes research by rewarding outstanding achievement and increasing collaboration and scientific exchange among major academic medical schools.

Professor Ewan McKendrick, Registrar of the University, has been awarded Queen’s Counsel Honoris Causa. The appointment is made to lawyers who have made a major contribution to the law of England and Wales outside practice in the courts. Professor McKendrick was recommended for the honour for his work as Registrar and his notable contributions to the practice of law.

Gillies McKenna, Professor of Radiation Oncology and Biology and Head of the Department of Oncology, has been awarded the Gold Medal by the Royal College of Radiologists in recognition of his outstanding contributions to radiation oncology.

Iain McLean, Professor of Politics, has been given the 2014 Special Recognition Award by the Political Studies Association.

Paul Newman, BP Professor of Information Engineering, has been elected to a Fellowship of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers for his contribution to robot navigation.

François Nosten, Professor of Tropical Medicine and Director of the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit in Thailand, has been awarded the 2014 TWAS Regional Prize for Science Diplomacy. The award recognises his 35 years fighting malaria in the conflict zones of the Thai–Myanmar border and his achievement in bringing around the same table Karen and Burmese representatives to discuss malaria elimination.

Dr Christopher Summerfield of the Department of Experimental Psychology has received the 2015 Young Investigator Award from the Cognitive Neuroscience Society.

Jeremy Tomlinson, Professor of Metabolic Endocrinology, has been awarded the Graham Bull Prize in Clinical Science by the Royal College of Physicians.

Antonios Tzanakopoulos, Associate Professor of Public International Law, has been elected Secretary-General of the International Law Association. He will also continue as joint secretary of the British branch.

Scott Waddell, Professor of Neurobiology, is the recipient of the 2014 Liliane Bettencourt Prize for Life Sciences, awarded to a young researcher for the quality of his or her international publications and for a particularly promising research project.

Dr Philippa Walton, Heberden Coin Room Research Fellow at the Ashmolean Museum, has received the Blunt Prize for Numismatics, awarded by the British Numismatic Society to a young scholar who has made a significant recent contribution to the study of numismatics.

Mike Webb, Head of Manuscript Cataloguing, Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, was shortlisted for his book From Downing Street to the Trenches in the Paddy Power Political Book Awards, in the new category Best Book on World War One. The book draws on Bodleian archives to tell the story of the war as it unfolded daily, through the letters, diaries and personal accounts of those who lived through it.
New Year Honours

Seven senior members of the University were recognised in the New Year honours.

Professor Jonathan Bate, CBE, FRA, Provost of Worcester College and Professor of Literature, was knighted for services to literary scholarship and higher education. Professor Bate is a biographer, critic, broadcaster, novelist and scholar of Shakespeare, Romanticism and Ecocriticism. He is a governor and board member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Vice-President (leading the Humanities) of the British Academy, and from 2007 to 2011 sat on the Council of the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Prof Bate is a main focus on the mechanisms whereby light regulates vertebrate circadian rhythms. He has been awarded a number of international prizes for his discovery of non-rod, non-cone ocular photoreceptors.

Professor Sir John Bell, FRS, Regius Professor of Medicine and Student of Christ Church, was appointed GBE for services to medicine, medical research and the UK life science industry. Sir John has pioneered the development of genomic and genetic research programmes across the UK. He founded the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics and sits on advisory panels for public and private sector bodies responsible for biomedical research in Canada, Sweden, Denmark, France, Singapore and the UK. He is a founding director of three biotechnology start-up companies, a board member of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration and UK Biobank, and is chairman of the Oxford Health Alliance, a private–public partnership that sponsors research and advocacy on chronic disease globally.

Professor Tim Palmer, FRS, Professor of Climate Physics, Co-Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on Modelling and Predicting Climate and Fellow of Jesus College, was appointed CBE for services to science. Professor Palmer has spent most of his career working on the dynamics and predictability of weather and climate, including pioneering the development of probabilistic ensemble-based techniques for weather and climate prediction which are now standard in operational weather and climate prediction around the world. He has been involved in all five IPCC assessment reports and has coordinated two European Union climate projects. In 2011–12 he was President of the Royal Meteorological Society. He serves on a number of advisory committees, including the Met Office’s Scientific Advisory Committee.

Professor Cyrus Cooper, Professor of Epidemiology and Director of Research Strategy at the Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences and Fellow of St Peter’s College, was appointed OBE for services to medical research. He is Professor of Rheumatology and Director of the MRC Epidemiology Resource Centre at the University of Southampton, and leads a programme of research into the epidemiology of musculoskeletal disorders, most notably osteoporosis. He has previously served as chairman of the National Osteoporosis Society and chairs the MRC Population Health Sciences Research Network.

Professor Hugh Williamson, FBA, Emeritus Regius Professor of Hebrew and Emeritus Student of Christ Church, was appointed OBE for services to scholarship and theology. His research interests include the Book of Isaiah and the history and literature of the Achaemenid Period. He has served as chairman of the British Academy’s Humanities Group and chaired the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society.

In addition, Dickson Poon, CBE, the Hong Kong-based philanthropist who gave £10m to establish the Dickson Poon China Centre Building at St Hugh’s College, was knighted for services to business and to charity, particularly higher education.

Apprenticeship Achievements

Three young members of staff have been presented with University Apprenticeship Awards by Dr Stephen Goss (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Personnel and Equality). Benjamin Neal of the Department of Computer Science (left) and Kathryn Scott of the Department of Engineering Science (centre) were jointly awarded a 2014 Apprenticeship Prize for outstanding contributions to their departments’ objectives. Joshua Carr from IT Services (right) was presented with his University Digital Media Production Apprenticeship completion certificate. After his three-year apprenticeship Joshua has now stepped into a full-time role in the department and is a key member of the production team.
Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity

Carol Harrison, Professor of the History and Theology of the Latin West, University of Durham, took up this post in the Faculty of Theology and Religion on 1 January 2015. She also became a Canon of Christ Church.

Her research centres on early Christianity in the West, in particular Augustine of Hippo, auditory culture, spirituality and the senses. She is currently working on a theology of music in performance and examining the art of music in the early Church.

PROFESSOR OF GERMAN MEDIEVAL AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

Henrike Lähnemann, Chair of German Studies at Newcastle University, took up this post in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages on 1 January 2015. She also became a Fellow of St Edmund Hall.

Professor Lähnemann specialises in medieval to early modern German literature, especially manuscript transmission, visual culture, bilingual texts and their representation in the Digital Humanities. She is currently working on devotional writing in late medieval Northern Germany, especially the Medingen Manuscripts.

Freshfields Professor of Commercial Law

Horst Eidenmüller, Professor of Private Law, German, European and International Commercial and Corporate Law at Munich University; Director of the Munich Centre for Dispute Resolution, and Director of the Institute of International Law, Munich University, took up this post in the Faculty of Law on 1 January 2015. He also became a Fellow of St Hugh’s College.

Professor Eidenmüller focuses on company and insolvency law, on commercial contracts and on dispute resolution, and is particularly known for his economic and empirical studies of important legal issues in these fields. He has been a visiting professor at Oxford since 2009, lecturing on Corporate Insolvency Law and on Comparative and European Corporate Law.

Noticeboard

◆ Professor Anne Trefethen, Chief Information Officer, IT Services, has been appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services and University Collections) with effect from 1 January 2015. This is an appointment at 25% of full-time. As Pro-Vice-Chancellor (ASUC), she will oversee the University’s libraries, museums and collections and its language teaching services.

◆ Simon Russell Beale has been named as the next Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre, based at St Catherine’s College. His stage and screen acting credits span a diverse career across theatre, TV, film and radio and include the title roles in King Lear and Hamlet. An Associate Artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company, his many accolades include a BAFTA for Best Supporting Actor in Henry IV Parts I & II and a Laurence Olivier Award for Best Actor in Uncle Vanya. He was appointed CBE in the 2003 Queen’s Birthday Honours List. As Visiting Professor, he will speak at a public event and undertake student workshops in the art of theatre.

◆ Paul Sullivan, Acting Head of Security Services and University Marshal. He is responsible for a wide range of services aimed at maintaining a safe and secure physical environment for the University community, including the University Security Services, who provide foot and vehicle patrols across the University estate, monitor CCTV and fire and intruder alarms, and provide planning support and the security response for VIP visits and other University events. Paul joined the University after 32 years as a police officer with Thames Valley Police, where his roles included Police Commander for the City of Oxford and Head of the Tactical Support Department.

3,000 Magnets Support New Lighting

A major lighting project at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History has been Commended in the Hospitality and Leisure Project of the Year category of the 2014 annual LUX Awards, which recognise the exceptional use of lighting to improve the lit environment and reduce energy.

The task of lighting the museum was managed by the Estates Services electrical services team, who worked with Monard Electrical Contractors to meet the challenge of installing cabling and lighting in a grade 1 listed building with many conservation requirements. Drilling into the building’s large iron upright structure (which supports its spectacular roof) was not allowed, so 3,000 magnets were used to support the cables and lighting.

The new installation features both colour-changing and white light options, to create different atmospheres. There are other benefits too, says Rob Gregg, Deputy Electrical Engineer in Estates Services: ‘Up on the roof there’s a lot of detail which was installed back in 1860 which no-one’s ever seen. We can now pick out the detail and the whole building comes to life.’

Viewfinder Found

The University is looking for artwork to be displayed on panels of the new University Images/Museum of Natural History building that will open late 2016. The panels are made of 1.5mm aluminium. The project is part of the building’s programmed art collection. The deadline for entries is 30 April 2015. Further information and submission guidelines can be found at www.ox.ac.uk/units/museum/collect-art.
The first ‘megaproject’ encountered by Professor Bent Flyvbjerg was in his homeland, Denmark, in the 1990s. The Danish were on the brink of building the world’s longest suspension bridge and an underwater rail tunnel which was to be the second longest in Europe, only surpassed by the Channel Tunnel. He and his father were watching TV together when his father, who worked in the construction industry, said: ‘Jeez, if I was going to dig two big holes like that, I wouldn’t have chosen those people to do it because they haven’t tried it before.’ It was a prescient remark: the underwater rail tunnel not only flooded and had a fire but it also went more than 100% over budget. His father’s remark is at the back of Bent’s mind while he continues to fathom out why mega-infrastructure projects often go badly wrong.

According to Bent, a megaproject is one costing over one billion pounds (or its equivalent) that is scheduled to take five years or more to deliver and typically affects more than one million people. The Great Belt Fixed Link in Denmark 20 years ago was only the start and megaprojects have become ever more pervasive. As a graduate of economic geography with a PhD in the subject, he wanted to gather evidence to see whether their eye-watering budgets and sizeable ambition made them exposed to special risks. ‘I wondered: is it normal to have as many things go wrong as did with Denmark’s first megaproject?’ It took him five years to collect data from across the world, resulting in a research publication in 2002 in the top planning journal. It immediately attracted headlines in the world media.

Engaging with his critics and the public is something he finds ‘exhilarating’, explaining: ‘I don’t want to do research that just sits on a shelf in a library.’

He found that the disastrous outcome in Denmark was not that atypical. While everyone likes to think they will not make the same mistake again, he discovered that with megaprojects, there is an 86% likelihood of getting it just as wrong the next time. ‘Larger numbers are involved and such projects also take longer than smaller ones, making them more risky. That’s the key thing, you are just accumulating risk,’ he says. ‘Even an overspend that is relatively small – say 20 or 30% – often became a political problem as well, because a few percent of billions matters to stakeholders.’

Bent’s work is focused on how very big projects can be successfully completed in a shorter period of time. His work was used on Crossrail, the new east–west rail route across Greater London and one of the biggest, most expensive projects in Europe. He has also helped devise ways of estimating risk and schedules more accurately for HS2, the high-speed rail link from London to Birmingham and the north. His research also sheds light on why Olympic Games always go over budget and he has examined the economic pros and cons of IT and hydrodam megaprojects with his team.

As Professor of Major Programme Management at the Said Business School and the founding director of the University’s BT Centre for Major Programme Management, he teaches students and UK civil servants about how to lead big projects. He says no civil servant in the UK can lead a major project without first having taken the Major Projects Leadership Academy, a programme run by the Business School since 2012.

Bent was brought up to be ‘optimistically realistic’. He is slightly irked though about the number of people who cannot spell his Scandinavian surname, Flyvbjerg, particularly as it affects his author citation count. He wryly comments: ‘You know it rains some of the time in the UK and in Denmark too. It’s just one of those things that you have to accept.’
For those newly diagnosed with medical conditions, hearing from others with shared experience can be vital. The University-led website healthtalk.org provides exactly that – and its impact is increasingly felt by healthcare professionals, too.

The site was created by Oxford academic and GP Dr Ann McPherson and her friend Dr Andrew Herxheimer in 2001. McPherson had been diagnosed with breast cancer; Herxheimer had undergone knee replacement. ‘They decided that a patient experience website would be useful,’ explains Professor Sue Ziebland, who leads the research group behind the content on healthtalk.org. ‘So if you had breast cancer or were having your knee replaced, you could find out about the experiences of people who’d already been through it.’

Initially the project was based on written accounts, but ‘patients provided feedback about how nice the nurses were or how horrible hospital food was,’ explains Professor Ziebland. ‘Ann knew me as a health sociologist working in Oxford, and invited me to join the team when they started thinking about interviews instead of written accounts.’ Then Professor Sir Muir Gray suggested that digital videos might make the work more accessible, and the fundamental concept behind the website that exists today was born. The project slowly worked its way through NHS ethics approval before Professor Ziebland and her team of researchers began to carry out interviews around the country.

Nowadays the site is run as a partnership between the charity DIPEx and Ziebland’s Health Experiences Research Group (which is based in the University’s Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences). The charity runs the site and raises funding, while the research group provides content. Each section of the site, covering topics from AIDS and Alzheimer’s to gout and the menopause, is populated by findings from the interviews carried out by Ziebland’s team. ‘We identify people with as broad a range of experiences of a medical condition as possible, and then we go and visit them at home,’ she explains. ‘We say “Tell us all about it, from the point you first suspected a problem.” Some people talk for hours.’

Then the interviews – which are archived for use by University researchers in the future – are distilled into key themes to make up the sections for each health condition on the site. Each point is illustrated by video clips from the interviews, so users see and hear the experiences of people affected by the condition. That could be anything from the side effects of treatment to the way an illness affects personal relationships.

The information can prove vital. In one video, Alan Grafen, Professor of Zoology at Oxford, describes how his wife Elizabeth, then Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education at the University, was diagnosed with motor neurone disease. After using healthtalk.org, they began using a small whiteboard to allow Elizabeth to communicate, on the suggestion of another sufferer. ‘It was a very small, pragmatic thing that made life easier,’ he explains in an interview on healthtalk.org. ‘But nobody else mentioned the idea – not the doctors, not the clinics... She was still communicating with it on the morning that she died.’

Similar stories abound. Indeed, with 2.3 million people using the website in 2014, watching a combined total of 36 hours of video every day, it’s perhaps not surprising that the site won the Good Web Guide’s Charity Website of the Year 2014 award. Increasingly, though, its reach goes beyond those affected by the conditions. The videos are now used in co-design projects to prompt discussions between clinicians and patients about how to improve the way that services are run. They’re even used in 80% of British medical schools to teach students about patient experience.

Tellingly the website is now being emulated around the world. ‘People are developing similar sites in Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Canada...’ explains Professor Ziebland. ‘Soon we hope to help similar teams in low- and middle-income countries too.’ But in the UK there’s plenty of room still to grow. ‘There are currently 87 conditions on the website,’ she says. ‘But there are 3,000 indexed medical conditions. Now we need to raise the funds to do the rest.’

More information at www.healthtalk.org
A problem shared – learning more about an illness can relieve worries
Access advisors Niall Strawson and Martha Buckley at the Radcliffe Camera.

Rob Judges
Thousands of people visit the collegiate University every year, be they academic visitors, potential students, attendees at a meeting or conference or perhaps someone coming for a job interview. Many of them will want answers to the same questions: Where can I park? Where’s the nearest bus stop? What does the building look like and how do I get in? And for some visitors – those in a wheelchair or with limited mobility, for example – knowing the answers to these questions before they arrive is particularly important.

In December the University launched a new interactive map (maps.ox.ac.uk), covering all departments, colleges, halls, libraries and museums. Click on a department name, for example, and you are shown a map of all buildings that relate to that department; click on a building and its picture appears, together with a link to the departmental webpage and its access guide page. A related ‘lifestyle’ section highlights the locations of nearby cafes and pubs, car and bicycle parking, post boxes, recycling facilities and ATMs. And, impressively, the public transport information tells you not only which buses stop at that particular stop, but when the next one is due. ‘The map is embeddable on any site and we very much hope that all parts of the collegiate University will now link to it from their own webpages,’ says Isobel Hughes, Head of Conservation and Buildings. ‘The instructions are at maps.ox.ac.uk/embedding.html.’

The map is one facet of the University’s determination to lead the way in providing access information. Three years ago Niall Strawson, a young researcher who had become a wheelchair user following a winter sports accident, was asked by Estates Services to help assess how accessible the University was. ‘I went undercover to various places around the University to see how things actually were,’ he says. ‘Some had bits of access information on their webpages but you had to hunt for it; others gave information that turned out to be misleading; and in other places, although access information was offered, I felt I was being a burden when I asked for it.’ He went on to examine the access information provided by top international and Russell Group universities and it quickly became clear that Oxford was lagging behind.

Today Niall is the University’s Accessibility Advisor and for the last couple of years has been working with teams from Estates Services, IT Services and the University’s Disability Advisory Service to create a friendly informal-looking online access guide (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access). Each University building has its own page with a photograph. Those that have been audited give detailed information about building entrances (with pictures), disabled parking facilities, opening hours, lifts, toilets, whether there’s a hearing support system and whether there are any inaccessible areas. There’s also a handy ‘at-a-glance’ summary box, floor plans and contact information.

‘Getting all the access information together for over 290 buildings is a huge task, so it’s very much a work in progress,’ says Niall. ‘The majority of buildings that we haven’t yet audited have a stub where we give slimmed-down access information.’

He hopes that the colleges will also sign up. So far, Pembroke is the only college up and running, though Merton’s entry is imminent and other colleges are expressing interest. ‘Providing an online guide which helps people prepare for their visit to Pembroke was a “no-brainer” and emphasises our ethos of being a welcoming college,’ says Mike Naworynsky, Pembroke’s Home Bursar. ‘The guide clearly helps those with specific mobility issues but it also provides an excellent guide for every visitor. For example, we run a very busy Access programme and allowing potential students to see what facilities and areas they will experience before they come here has been very useful: it takes away some of the uncertainty.’ Grants of up to £1,000 per college are available from the van Houten fund to support the cost of college pages.

Niall has been joined this year by an intern. Martha Buckley is also a wheelchair user and came to Oxford to do a master’s degree at Worcester College. ‘I was really worried about looking at Oxford when deciding where to go for my master’s, but it turned out to be the most friendly and accessible’

Click and see – interactive maps reveal a wealth of information

it’s all about realising your academic potential and they were absolutely brilliant to me.’

Oxford currently has over 400 members of staff and an annual intake of around 1,600 new students who declare themselves as disabled. Not all, of course, have mobility problems, but may still appreciate knowing about buildings in advance: people with a visual impairment or anxiety issues may want to research the layout; someone with asthma may want to know about lifts; someone with dyspraxia may need help finding a place. The disability advice team today plays an important role in the design of new buildings and the refurbishment of old ones, providing the architect and project manager with a checklist of needs and pictures of how problems have already been solved around the University.

‘It’s not impossible to create access to old or listed buildings – you just have to think creatively,’ says Martha. For Niall, it’s all about inclusivity and normality. ‘I’m passionate that everyone can use the same door, not have to go round the side,’ he says. ‘I think it’s great that the Radcliffe Camera – one of the most iconic buildings in Oxford – has a main entrance that everyone can use. Changes like that are our legacy.’

A Disabled Staff Network has just been launched to help improve the experience of disabled staff, students and visitors to the University; to enable their views to inform policy development and decision-making; and to provide peer support for disabled University employees. Most of the network’s activity is expected to be online. To join, please contact Caroline Moughton, Staff Disability Advisor, at caroline.moughton@admin.ox.ac.uk. More at www.maps.ox.ac.uk, www.admin.ox.ac.uk/access and @OxUniAG
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Centre for the Study of the Book provides access to the Bodleian's extensive collections and resources and helps researchers network, learns Julia Paolitto

Since its foundation in 2006 the Bodleian Library’s Centre for the Study of the Book has provided a valuable network to bring together scholars with interests ranging from medieval manuscripts to the history of the wireless industry and the analysis of 18th-century watercolour pigments. Now it is also becoming a physical centre of activity, thanks to the development of the Bodleian’s Weston Library. Among the new reader areas that opened to the University last October is the Library’s Centre for the Study of the Book. This has provided a valuable network to bring together 17th-century watercolour pigments. Now it is also a physical centre of activity, thanks to the development of the Bodleian’s Weston Library. Among the new reader areas that opened to the University last October is the Library’s Centre for the Study of the Book, which provides an environment where conservation experts, researchers and students working together under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of the Book can have physical access to manuscripts and other collection items.

Oxford’s scholarly community includes specialists in the materials that convey the written text – from ancient parchment to digital memory – as well as those who interpret texts and their historical significance. It has been the mission of the centre to bring these experts together via events and workshops, as part of the Bodleian’s academic outreach programme.

‘The term “book history” is a shorthand for what researchers learn from all of the processes surrounding the production and consumption of the written word,’ explains Dr Alexandra Franklin, Project Coordinator for the Centre. ‘Adding book history to the study of literary or historical texts adds the dimensions of provenance and reception: Who first created the physical item that contains the text, and how have readers used it since it was created?’

The centre has already facilitated a wide range of academic collaborations between scholars working in literature and history, as well as those further afield in plant science and even engineering. For the past three years the centre has been involved in a collaboration bringing together 17th-century literature and digital image matching. It started with Dr Giles Bergel, who wondered whether his work in the Faculty of English looking at printed illustrations in early modern broadside ballads could be given a digital dimension.

‘The Centre for the Study of the Book has been invaluable as a forum for planning future developments’

Broadside ballads, which were printed cheaply on one side of a sheet of paper from the earliest days of printing, contain song-lyrics, tunes and woodcut illustrations, as well as news, prophecies, histories, moral advice, religious warnings, political arguments, satire, comedy and bawdy tales. They were sold in large numbers on street corners, in town squares and at fairs by travelling ballad-singers and pinned on the walls of alehouses and other public places. They were sung, read and viewed with pleasure by a wide audience, but survive in only small numbers. The Bodleian holds nearly 30,000 songs, many of them unique survivals, printed from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

Looking for digital expertise within Oxford led Dr Bergel to Professor Andrew Zisserman’s Visual Geometry Group in the Department of Engineering Science. With the help of several doctoral students, a programme called ImageMatch was born and a larger, externally funded web resource took shape at ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk.

The technology allows researchers to search speedily for the same or similar woodblock-printed images, providing what Bergel says is a ‘much richer sense of the overall canon of printed illustrations from these items of popular culture’. He explains: ‘The Centre for the Study of the Book acted as a hub to coordinate communications between me, Andrew and funders, and coordinated the large project that resulted. It has been invaluable as a forum for planning future developments: we have been able to engage with the Bodleian’s national and international peers through the centre.’

With ten research projects now housing researchers in the Visiting Scholars’ Centre, a practical programme training graduate students to use medieval manuscripts in the classroom, and a programme of exhibitions and seminars drawing on Bodleian artefacts, the Centre for the Study of the Book provides a point of access to the Bodleian’s extensive collections and resources, tailored to the needs of scholars across the University. And thanks to the Weston Library, the next few years will not only see more scholars in residence, but further opportunities for the centre’s work to inform research across all areas.

‘Bodleian staff in the Weston Library are looking forward to using the seminar rooms, conservation labs, historical printing workshop, digital scholarship centre, exhibition areas and imaging studios to discover new ways of seeing our archives and early collections, and using these for teaching the next generation of scholars in every discipline,’ says Dr Franklin. ‘This will happen in partnership with academics, in response to the questions that drive research in Oxford faculties and in universities around the world.’

More information at www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/csb
WHAT’S ON

LECTURES AND TALKS

Plays for today? The place of the playwright in contemporary theatre
Saturday 7 February, 5pm
Andrew Wiles Building, Mathematical Institute
www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/humanitas/drama

LGBT equality in the 21st century
Thursday 19 February, 6pm
Andrew Wiles Building, Mathematical Institute
www.eventbrite.co.uk/event/14919187692

The origin of our species
Thursday 5 March, 5.30pm
Wolfson College
www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/events-calendar

Genius: Reality or Myth?
Saturday 14 March, 2pm
Lecture Theatre, Ashmolean Museum
www.ashmolean.org/events/lectures

Knowledge, nudge and nanny: opportunities to improve the nation’s diet
Tuesday 17 March, 6.45pm
Church House, Westminster
Tickets £15
www.ox.ac.uk/oll15

Tackling brain diseases
Wednesday 18 March, 5.30–8pm
Andrew Wiles Building, Mathematical Institute
www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tackling-brain-diseases-tickets-14478231781

EXHIBITIONS

Aldus Manutius: The Struggle and the Dream
Until 22 February
Proscholium, Bodleian Library
www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/whats-on/online/aldus-manutius

Gods in Colour: Painted Sculpture in Antiquity
Until 14 June
Ashmolean Museum
www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions

Concerts

The Cavaleri Quartet
Sunday 15 February, 4pm
Holywell Music Room
www.holywell.ox.ac.uk/whats-on
Performances of the Cavaleri Quartet perform Beethoven’s string quartet in C minor.

Conferences

UAS Conference
Tuesday 24 March, 9am–3pm
Andrew Wiles Building, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/usasconference

Displays and tours of the University’s mini-campus in Headington. Further details are available on the UAS Conference website.

Childcare

Did you know that you can save tax and national insurance on your childcare costs by using the workplace salary-sacrifice scheme or childcare vouchers?

The salary-sacrifice scheme is for those who use the University’s nursery provision. This includes the four University nurseries at Bradmore Road, Mansion House, Jack Straws Lane and Woodstock Road, as well as University-supported places at 11 private nurseries. Childcare vouchers can be used towards fees for private nurseries, childminders, nannies, holiday play schemes and breakfast or after-school clubs.

Both schemes enable parents to benefit from tax and national insurance savings, while the University benefits from employer NI savings, which are reinvested in its childcare provision.

From autumn 2015 the voucher scheme will be replaced by a new tax-free scheme, managed by National Savings and Investments (NS&I) on behalf of the government. The new scheme will be open to a wider range of families than childcare vouchers, although it will be subject to qualifying criteria. Eligible families will be able to save up to 20% of care costs per child (up to a maximum of £2k per year), and the scheme will be available for children up to the age of 12.

If you are currently a member of the voucher scheme, you will be able to stay in this scheme while you remain with the University. If you are not a member or are interested in moving to the new tax-free scheme, you can find out more on the Childcare Services website. A ready reckoner is being developed by NS&I to help parents make informed choices.

Oxford offers more subsidised nursery places than any other Russell Group institution, but demand still exceeds supply. The University is therefore looking to expand nursery provision further through the proposed conversion of the Triangle building on the Old Road Campus in Headington. Further details will be communicated once the scheme has the relevant approvals.

More at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare.
What can mental health practitioners learn from the arts? Should a mathematical proof be considered a form of narrative? And how can musicians use concepts from physics to enrich their compositions? TORCH, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, will be exploring these questions as part of its annual headline series Humanities & Science.

TORCH was launched in 2013 to stimulate, support and promote high-quality humanities research that transcends disciplinary boundaries and engages with a wide audience. It currently sponsors 9 major research programmes, such as Women and the Humanities, and has 18 research networks covering subjects as diverse as ancient dance, medieval mysticism and war crimes investigations. ‘Oxford has always thrived on exploring interdisciplinary connections between subjects; it is one of the strengths of our collegiate system,’ says Marcus du Sautoy, Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science and Professor of Mathematics. And, he adds, the activities that TORCH is pioneering, which bring unexpected disciplines together and trial new forms of research, will realise the full potential of these links.

‘Oxford has always thrived on exploring interdisciplinary connections between subjects; it is one of the strengths of our collegiate system’

One new scheme offers humanities–science research sabbaticals to enable pairs of Oxford academics to work on a project that spans science and the humanities. The TORCH initiative also includes the provision of paired doctoral studentships, knowledge exchange fellowships and a programme of discussions, performances and exhibitions.

The new doctoral studentships pair Oxford academics – one from the humanities and one from the sciences – to co-supervise two doctoral students (with backgrounds in the sciences and humanities) on a joint project that reaches across the disciplines. Psychologist Lucy Bowes and historian Siân Pooley will, for instance, co-supervise a doctoral project on childhood maltreatment and lifetime resilience that seeks to bring together the strengths of historical and psychological approaches in pioneering ways to explore the life-long impacts of abuse and neglect in childhood. In another project, academics from Theology, Engineering Science, History and Psychology will supervise research into the mental and material laboratory of 13th-century science, as students develop an understanding of medieval science and create an exhibition revealing both the laboratory of the medieval mind and the material world in which 13th-century scholars were working.

Academics are also developing humanities/ science partnerships with external organisations. Dr Emily Troscianko, a Junior Research Fellow in Modern Languages, is working with Beat, the UK’s leading eating disorders charity, to investigate how fiction affects and is affected by readers’ mental health. It is hoped that the project will benefit both the study of literature and the study and treatment of eating disorders. Meanwhile Dr Ladan Baghai-Ravary of the Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics is working with two industrial partners, Aculab plc and Oxford Wave Research, to develop a telehealth system to aid screening and monitoring of medical disorders affecting speech. While current systems are costly and inconvenient, Dr Baghai-Ravary’s project could potentially lead to dramatic changes in the treatment of patients with speech disorders by the NHS and other health services around the world.

The Humanities & Science series, which has been made possible with the support of the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, will also bring different disciplines together for talks, discussions, debates and performances – all of which will be open to the public. An In Conversation series of panel discussions is exploring how points of methodological conversions across diverse fields can be used to address current research questions.

Narrative and Proof, the opening event on 20 January which was co-hosted with the Mathematical Institute, saw Professor Marcus du Sautoy argue that mathematical proofs are not just number-based, but also a form of narrative. He was joined by poet and novelist Ben Okri, Oxford mathematician Professor Sir Roger Penrose, and Professor of English Literature Laura Marcus, to consider how narrative underpins and nurtures their respective disciplines. The session was chaired by Elleke Boehmer, novelist, critic and Professor of World Literature, who remarked: ‘Literary narrative and mathematical proof, far from being poles apart, in fact fall into intriguingly similar symbolic patterns: stage-by-stage sequences, tricky reversals, surprising denouements.’

The rest of the series will explore Randomness and Order, Representing Science, Culture and Technology and Mental Health. ‘Bringing the humanities back into the study of mental health would, in turn, bring care of the mind and brain into the heart of Oxford life,’ comments Professor John Geddes, Head of the Department of Psychiatry, who is leading the mental health discussion. ‘It seems the obvious place to do it as one of the objectives of the University is to maximise the ability of the human mind to seek and transmit knowledge.’

Mental health is also the subject of an exhibition TORCH is holding with the O3 Gallery in Oxford. That Other Place, which runs from 4 to 24 April at the gallery within the Oxford Castle Quarter, explores Alzheimer’s disease in its various neuropathological manifestations, from the dual perspectives of sufferer and carer. Art and performance are an integral part of the Humanities & Science series and TORCH will also be supporting a number of collaborations over the next year with arts and cultural organisations across Oxford, exploring the relationship between the humanities and sciences through film, visual arts, music and dance. TORCH’s Dance Scholarship programme will be holding an event on 10 March examining the relationship between neuroscience and dance with leading choreographer Wayne McGregor.

“We’ve been delighted to support research projects that are of such high quality, originality and importance,” says Professor Shearer West, Head of the Humanities Division. “The Humanities & Science series is an example of how TORCH provides opportunities for researchers to reach across subject and institutional boundaries in innovative ways.”

More information about the Humanities & Science series, and the dates of talks, lectures, performances and discussions, are available at www.torch.ox.ac.uk/humsciox
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Accounts welcome

The Oxford Almanack 2015

The illustration for 2015 is a view of St Cross College, Oxford from an original reduction linocut by Robin Wilson. The remainder of the sheet consists of a calendar for the year which includes information relevant to the University as well as, for instance, sunrise and sunset times.

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Why am I here?

Gail Anderson
Head of Communications and Marketing, Department for Continuing Education

What does your department do?
We run more than 1,000 part-time courses and programmes a year for adult learners. People might come to us for a short course – a day-school in architectural history, a week-long professional programme in nanotechnology, or a Spanish class meeting weekly for one or two terms – while others do full-blown masters’ and DPhil’s with us, part-time. We also offer online classes, summer schools, professional development, undergraduate certificates and diplomas.

We have around 14,000 part-time students taking our courses each year – more than the main University has full-time undergraduates. Our students are almost exclusively working or retired adults (ranging in age from 20 to over 100) and they bring a huge amount of life experience to their studies. I personally attended a class which included a journalist, the CEO of a highly successful global technology company, a short-order cook, a grandmother and a GP – each of them taking part in a lively discussion of poetic forms, each bringing their own backgrounds and experiences to bear.

What’s your own role?
To communicate our department’s activities to the broadest possible audience, using all available channels. In any given week I might be coordinating a photo/video project, analysing hits to our website, pitching an ‘inspiring’ student story to a national magazine, writing a newsletter or planning an open day.

Which are the most popular courses?
For short courses: archaeology, creative writing, economics, art history and philosophy. For degree programmes, our Masters’ in International Human Rights Law, Sustainable Urban Development and Creative Writing programmes are possibly our best known. We have many ‘perpetual students’ who take courses each term – people who love to learn and discuss and would be pleased to think of themselves as ‘education addicts’. Many lasting friendships are formed here.

Some people use Continuing Education to approach higher education for the first time, or for re-entering education. We have two Foundation Certificates (in History and English Literature) for students wishing to transfer into year two of these subjects at university level – some end up at Oxford. Our Certificate of Higher Education lets students accumulate credits towards an award equivalent to first-year university level in one of nine subjects, which many of them transfer to other institutions. And in some subject areas (such as archaeology and local history) we offer opportunities for progression from a single day school through to a DPhil, all here in the department.

Done any of the courses yourself?
I have! When I first arrived I took a 20-week course in French. (It was excellent – I was hopeless.) And last summer I completed our two-year Undergraduate Diploma in Creative Writing. I’ve been a student of continuing education all my life. I only went to university at 24, and probably wouldn’t have gone at all without Continuing Ed. So I am very much a believer in what we do here. Not everyone is ready to go to university at 18.

Childhood ambition?
My first aspirations were to be a writer, a musician and a cinematographer. My very first job was working at Baskin Robbins, scooping ice cream.

So how did you get from there to here?
The road from ice cream to Oxford University had many stops along the way: I’ve worked as a musical instrument repair technician, a stop-motion animator (for about 10 years), a reference librarian (art, music and dentistry), a photographer and a graphic designer. Before coming to Oxford I was Director of Online Communications at the California Institute of Technology. I’ve been here for five and a half years.

What’s the most unexpected thing you’ve found yourself doing?
Standing in Prince Charles’s living room at Clarence House, photographing him (along with our Director, Professor Jonathan Michie, and others) signing the Memorandum of Understanding that launched our Master’s programme in Sustainable Urban Development.

And your most embarrassing moment?
Appearing on a cheesy American game show dressed as the Sheriff of Nottingham, in company with a friend dressed as Robin Hood. (We won $1,000, however, which went a fair way towards easing the pain.)