Oxford is once again at Davos this year, holding two events at the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting, which takes place from 25 to 29 January. The Vice-Chancellor and the Director of the Oxford Martin School, Professor Ian Goldin, are leading a team of Oxford academics in an IdeasLab on the theme ‘Hyperconnectivity – Harvesting Globalization and Limiting Systemic Risk’, focusing on the collaborative models needed to solve global issues (details at www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/news/201201-ox-wef). The Vice-Chancellor is also hosting a nightcap reception for alumni, donors and friends.

How do you use digital technologies and services when teaching or supporting students? A project team from OUCS and the Academic Administration Division is keen to find out. They are currently undertaking a six-month project looking at the online systems that Oxford provides to support students throughout their academic career. As part of this, academic and administrative staff are invited to complete a short survey about their use of online services and how these services may change over the next five years. Visit http://tinyurl.com/digestaff to find out more.

Interested to see what’s been happening at the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter site recently? Visit www.ox.ac.uk/roq for a timelapse video of the site from 29 September to 6 December, including footage of the Big Dig in which over 47,000m³ of soil has been removed to create two underground storeys for the Mathematical Institute building. You can also find out about the refurbishment of the Radcliffe Infirmary building, set to complete this summer, which will house the Humanities Divisional Office, the Faculty of Philosophy and the Philosophy and Theology Libraries.

The Bannister running track at Iffley Road now boasts state-of-the-art floodlighting thanks to a grant of £165,000 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and other alumni fundraising. The new lighting not only means that training can continue long into the evening and during the winter months, but the football pitch in the middle of the track can be lit for key matches. Fundraising is currently underway for other major developments at Iffley Road, including a new grandstand building and the redevelopment of the main sports centre.

New year, new wheels for the University’s Messenger Service! The team of five messengers operates a twice-daily delivery and collection service for internal mail across the collegiate University, with a large proportion of the two million items a year sent via bicycle. The team are now the proud recipients of five new bikes, supplied by England’s longest established bicycle manufacturer, Pashley’s, together with two bike trailers – an initiative funded by the University’s Travel Fund as a means of transporting bulk mail and reducing the use of the Messengers’ van.

A new podcasts portal has been launched to showcase the 3,000 audio, video and eBook items freely available for download. Available at http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk, the website complements the University’s iTunes U service for those who do not want to use iTunes software. The portal enables material to be found and grouped in a range of different ways, including searching by speaker, department and keyword. Each item has its own linkable URL, making it easy to link to resources from reading lists or emails or share via social media channels.

The University reported a £15.4m surplus for the year, according to the Financial Statements for 2010/11, released on 9 January. Total income grew by 4.5% to £920m, with research grants and contracts representing the largest source of income at £377m. Income was also bolstered by generous donations to the Oxford Thinking campaign, including 12 gifts of more than £1m each.

The upward pressure on costs continues to be significant, with total expenditure increasing by 2.7% to £908m. Staff costs, which account for just over half of all expenditure, rose by 2.2% to £479m, including £4m for the University’s early retirement scheme, OMIS. The average number of staff decreased by 1.1% and it is expected that the University will start to see the positive financial impact of the OMIS scheme in terms of reduced staff numbers and costs in 2011/12.

The surplus for the year takes into account two one-off items: a £5.6m donation of assets to Green Templeton College following the merger of Green and Templeton Colleges; and an £8.1m write-back of impairment provisions in relation to Icelandic bank deposits, which was better than expected.

The Financial Statements are available online at www.ox.ac.uk/financial_statements, together with a commentary by Giles Kerr, Director of Finance, in which he discusses the results and the future financial challenges facing the University.

Wheely good fun – Robert Syratt of St Hugh’s College, a museums volunteer, demonstrates gyroscopic motion (see p14)
In recent years many countries have developed policies that make users of nature’s services pay for conservation. Water and energy companies are already entering agreements to provide PES (Payments for Ecosystem Services) and in the UK there have been two recent government reports that put a value on the services nature provides. According to Paul Jepson and Timothy Hodgetts in Oxford’s School of Geography and the Environment, the makers of wildlife programmes should join those who pay. With colleagues, they suggest in a recent *Science* paper that global media companies making money from wildlife programmes could make payments to a central trust fund, which would finance on-the-ground conservation. The trust could be combined with an NGO-governed certification scheme, which would set fair prices for film-makers. ‘Our aim is to start a conversation,’ Dr Jepson says. ‘We all love wildlife films and want to secure the fabulous environments where they are filmed for generations to come. Rather than just leaving the audience with a warm, fuzzy feeling about the animals and places that have featured, we need to think about how we might harness the appeal of these programmes in an organised way that can benefit nature conservation.’

Research analysing anti-malarial medications in Africa has found poor-quality and even fraudulent treatments in circulation – which not only puts patients at risk but promotes drug-resistance among the parasites that cause the disease. Dr Paul Newton and colleagues from the Wellcome Trust–Mahosot Hospital–Oxford University Tropical Medicine Research Collaboration in Laos examined anti-malarials collected in 11 African countries between 2002 and 2010 which they believed to be counterfeit or substandard and found various incorrect pharmaceutical ingredients. The researchers say that multiple parallel strategies are needed to tackle the problem, including increased investment in national medicine regulatory authorities in Africa.

If you want to win at the classic arcade game ‘Whack-a-mole’, you need a crying baby in the background. Oxford researchers comparing the scores of 40 volunteers playing the game found they did better if they had just been listening to the sound of a crying baby. ‘Whack-a-mole’ requires people to hit one of nine buttons, reacting as quickly as they can to whichever of the buttons lights up at random. The finding suggests that both men and women have evolved special responses to the sound of a crying infant. Professor Morten Kringelbach, who together with Professor Alan Stein led the work in the Department of Psychiatry, says: ‘The improvements in speed and dexterity may reflect an evolved response that kicks in when an immediate reaction to a baby in distress is required. Neither adult cries nor birdsong produce the same response.’

A new type of particle accelerator called EMMA heralds the dawn of smaller, cheaper accelerators – with implications not just for curious physicists, but also for medical treatment, where accelerators are used in radiation therapy and X-ray machines. EMMA (Electron Model for Many Applications) was designed by an international team including Oxford researchers and is based on a ring of magnets which use their combined magnetic field simultaneously to steer and focus the electron beam around the machine. The strength of this magnetic field increases steeply as the beam spirals outwards while it is accelerated to 20 million electron-volts around the ring. The strength of the magnetic focusing means the displacement of the beam as it accelerates and spirals around the ring is much smaller than in any equivalent accelerator, making EMMA much more compact. The first experiments confirm proof of principle and open the door to new uses of accelerators where size, complexity and cost were previously barriers.

For more University news, visit [www.ox.ac.uk/news](http://www.ox.ac.uk/news) and [www.ox.ac.uk/staffnews](http://www.ox.ac.uk/staffnews)
People & prizes

Dr Richard Katz of the Department of Earth Sciences has won the Outstanding Young Scientist Award of the Geodynamics Division of the European Geosciences Union.

Dr Lucy King of the Department of Zoology won the 2011 United Nations Environment Programme/Convention on Migratory Species thesis award for showing how beehive ‘fences’ can keep elephants out of African farmers’ fields (www.elephantsandbees.com). The prize is given every three years to a particularly outstanding PhD thesis in the conservation field.

The Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey of the Faculty of Theology has been awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of Winchester in recognition of his work in animal theology.

Dr Eamonn Molloy, tutorial fellow in Management Studies at Pembroke College, has been awarded the Diana Forsythe prize of the American Medical Informatics Association jointly with Dr Maja Korica, then a DPhil candidate at the Said Business School, for their paper ‘Making sense of professional identities: stories of medical professionals and new technologies’.

Joseph Silk, Savilian Professor of Astronomy 1999–2010 and fellow of New College, has been awarded a 2011 Balzan Prize for his work on the early universe.

Jennifer Star, who is studying for an MSc in Comparative and International Education and is a member of Linacre College, has been named New South Wales Young Australian of the Year. She has founded her own charity in India and has also represented Australia at judo.

Richard Thorpe, a senior member of Brasenose and fellow of St Antony’s, has won the Marsh Biography Prize for his book Supermac: The Life of Harold Macmillan.

Sir Edwin Southern, Emeritus Whiteley Professor of Biochemistry and a fellow of Trinity College, has been awarded the 2011 Medical Research Council Millennium Medal in recognition of his outstanding impact on genetic analysis and his invention of both the Southern blotting technique and DNA microarray technology.

Dr Edwin Southern

Royal Society Fellowships

The Royal Society has announced a number of fellowships. Five Oxford researchers are among those awarded University Research Fellowships, which aim to provide outstanding scientists who have the potential to become leaders in their chosen fields with the opportunity to build an independent research career. This year’s Oxford recipients are (left to right) Dr Martin Cohn (mechanisms of DNA repair); Dr Radek Erban (stochastic and multiscale modelling in biology and related areas); Dr Eva Gluenzie (host–parasite interactions: the role of the Leishmania flagellum in infection); Dr Natalia Gromak (transcription and RNA processing defects in pathology of neurological diseases); and Dr Tom Sanders (robust structure: algebra, analysis and arithmetic). In addition, Dr Hanna Sykulski-Lawrence (far right) has been awarded a Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship to fund her work on a miniature wide-band radiometer for terrestrial and space applications.

These fellowships support outstanding young scientists and engineers who require a flexible working pattern as they progress to permanent academic positions.

New Year Honours

Four Oxford University academics have been recognised in the New Year Honours.

Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch of the Theology Faculty and St Cross College was knighted (KB) for services to scholarship. Professor of the History of the Church, his research interests include the European Reformation 1490–1700 and Christian history in general. His prize-winning books include Thomas Cranmer: a Life, Reformation: Europe’s House Divided 1490–1700; and most recently A History of Christianity: the First Three Thousand Years. The latter is linked to his award-winning TV series on BBC4 and BBC2.

Oxford’s current Professor of Poetry, Geoffrey Hill, was knighted (KB) for services to literature. He is considered to be among the most distinguished living poets and has had a long and prolific career. A graduate of Keble College, Professor Hill was elected Professor of Poetry in 2010.

Professor Lionel Tarassenko of the Department of Engineering Science and St John’s College, and director of the Institute for Biomedical Engineering, was made a CBE for services to engineering. He holds the Chair of Electrical Engineering and his research focuses on signal processing techniques and their application to diagnostic systems, especially in the context of medical problems. He has won many awards for his work.

Professor Robert Walker, Professor of Social Policy and deputy head of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, was made an MBE for services to social policy research. He is a fellow of Green Templeton College and a member of the government’s Social Security Advisory Committee, as well as holding other advisory roles. He focuses on research relevant to the development of welfare policies in Britain and other societies, in particular poverty, social exclusion, family dynamics and budgeting strategies, employment instability and progression, and children’s aspirations.
EP Abraham Professor of Mechanistic Cell Biology

Francis Barr, North West Cancer Research Chair of Molecular Oncology, University of Liverpool Cancer Research Centre, took up this post in the Department of Biochemistry on 1 September. He also became a fellow of Trinity College.

Following a degree in biochemistry at Imperial College London and a PhD in cell biology at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg, Germany, Francis Barr held research posts in locations including the Imperial Cancer Research Fund (now CRUK) London Research Institute and the University of Glasgow, before joining the Max Plank Institute for Biochemistry in Martinsried, Germany, and subsequently the University of Liverpool.

His research interests centre on the regulation of protein transport by membrane-bound proteins known as GTPases and the intricate processes that control cell division.

Professor of Psychology

David Clark, Professor of Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London took up this post in the Department of Experimental Psychology on 1 September.

He is also a fellow of Magdalen College.

David Clark followed his MA in experimental psychology at the University of Oxford by an MPhil in clinical psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, returning to Oxford to gain a DPhil. Appointed as a New Blood lecturer at Oxford in 1993, he was subsequently appointed as a Wellcome Principal Research Fellow and Professor before moving to London in 2000.

Professor Clark has been voted a world leader in anxiety disorders and their treatment by the Anxiety Disorders of America Association and recently received the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Scientist Award, with the citation describing his work as ‘pure genius with a real world application’. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and of the British Academy. He is the National Clinical Advisor to the Department of Health’s Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Programme, which is transforming the treatment of depression and anxiety disorders.

Watts Professor of Psychology

Glyn Humphreys, Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Director of Research, College of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, and Scientific Director of the Birmingham University Imaging Centre, took up this post in the Department of Experimental Psychology on 1 October. He also became a fellow of Wolfson College.

Glyn Humphreys was educated at the University of Bristol. His research interests cover many aspects of visual object recognition and attention, spanning both cognitive and social neuroscience, and he has defined subcategories of visual recognition deficits that are now used standardly for patient diagnosis in neuropsychology. Recent studies have included the interaction between working memory, action and attention and the investigation of a wide range of neuropsychological disorders; his work has included the development of new clinical screening instruments for detecting cognitive problems after brain injury.

WildCRU wins Queen’s Anniversary Prize

The University’s Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) has been awarded a Queen’s Anniversary Prize in acknowledgement of its outstanding work in wildlife and environmental conservation.

WildCRU was founded in 1986 to apply original scientific research to achieve practical solutions to conservation problems. Based within the Department of Zoology and Lady Margaret Hall, it was the first university-based institute in Europe to focus on wildlife conservation research.

The organisation’s headquarters at the Recanati–Kaplan Centre at Tubney House just outside Oxford are home to a team of around 50 graduate and postdoctoral researchers who travel the world studying endangered species (see www.wildcru.org). Its postgraduate diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice, launched in 2009, allows conservation practitioners in developing countries to access world-class training.

Oxford has now won eight Queen’s Anniversary Prizes for Higher Education, more than any other university.

WildCRU director Professor David Macdonald and deputy director Professor Claudio Sillero have also been nominated for the 2012 Indianapolis Prize, a $100,000 award for animal conservation.
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Blackfoot Shirts Project wins award

The American Anthropological Association has awarded the 2011 Michael M Ames Prize for Innovative Museum Anthropology jointly to Dr Laura Peers, Curator of the Americas at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and Heather Richardson, Head of Conservation at the Pitt Rivers, together with their collaborator Dr Alison Brown of the University of Aberdeen.

The award recognises their collaborative ‘Blackfoot Shirts Project’ which brings together historic collections in the UK with Blackfoot people in Canada and the US. Five historic hairlock shirts from the Pitt Rivers Museum have been lent to the Glenbow Museum in Calgary and the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta, both of which are in traditional Blackfoot territory.

The shirts were collected in 1841 by Sir George Simpson, the governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and given to his secretary, Edward Hopkins. They have been in the Pitt Rivers Museum since 1893. Blackfoot people are keen to access these materials to study the skills and techniques used by their ancestors. The shirts are made from elk and deer hide and are adorned with porcupine quill embroidery, hide fringe, and strands of horse and human hair.

What’s on

Exhibitions
Persecution and Survival: a Wartime Refugee’s story
Until 10 March
Oxford Town Hall

An exhibition based on the life of Professor Paul Jacobsthal, a Celtic archaeologist who fled Nazi Germany in 1936. Compiled by the University’s Institute of Archaeology, it tells Jacobsthal’s story through internment and the war, portraying life in Oxford as a refugee, as well as featuring Celtic art, archaeology, and Jacobsthal’s life’s work. A family-friendly event with children’s activities.

Talks
What can I say? Secrets in fiction and biography
Tuesday 7 February, 5.30pm
Wolston College
www.wolston.ox.ac.uk/content/786-weinrebe-life-writing-lectures

Author of The Swimming Pool Library and The Line of Beauty, the novelist Alan Hollinghurst will be in conversation with Professor Hermione Lee as part of the Weinrebe Lectures in Life-Writing. Seats on a first-come, first-served basis.

Richard Hillary Memorial Lecture: War Poetry
Monday 20 February, 5pm
Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre, St Cross Building
www.trinity.ox.ac.uk

Sir Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate 1999–2009, will talk about war poetry and literature, including Richard Hillary’s book, The Last Enemy.

Oxford London Lecture 2012 in association with the Guardian: The 21st century – the last century of youth?
Tuesday 13 March, 6.45pm
The Assembly Hall, Church House, Westminster
www.ox.ac.uk/oxfordlondonlecture

Professor Sarah Harper, Director of the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, will look at the rapidly declining percentage of young people across the world and examine what implications this will have for societies, their economies and political structures.

Science stars

Dr Kylie Vincent, RCUK Fellow and lecturer in Chemistry, has won the 2011 Science and Technology ‘Woman of the Future’ award. The Women of the Future awards celebrate the next generation of British female talent (aged 35 and under) across business, the professions, the arts, media, and science and technology. Dr Vincent leads a research team developing energy technologies inspired by microbes that live on hydrogen, and has patented applications of enzymes for chemical synthesis.

Also shortlisted for the Science and Technology category award was Dr Emily Flashman, a Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow in the Department of Chemistry, who is looking at how oxygen-sensing systems in our bodies work and how these systems are damaged in cancer.

Film screening
Italo Svevo Film Festival
Wednesdays until 7 March, 7.30pm
Rewley House, Wellington Square
https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/access/content/user/5076/FILM%20projections_LOCANDINA.pdf

To mark the 150th anniversary of Italo Svevo’s birth, a number of films based on the life and work of the Triestine writer will be screened every Wednesday, including La coscienza di Zeno and Un marito. Admission free.

Special events
Japanese Tea Ceremony
Friday 10 February, 1pm and 3pm
Ashmolean Museum
www.ashmolean.org/assets/docs/WhatsOnCurrent.pdf

An introduction to the art of tea in Japan, with a demonstration by Kyoko Regan and a tour of the Japanese tea house. £6.50/£6 concessions (including tea and sweets). Booking essential.

For more events, visit www.ox.ac.uk/staff/events
Living up to the spires

Altering Oxford’s architecture is a dangerous game, so great care is taken to ensure new buildings combine innovative design with meeting academic needs, as Matt Pickles explains.

The University’s historic buildings provide the city with a skyline that is known and celebrated around the world, but new and changing academic demands at Oxford often require existing buildings to be refurbished or replaced altogether. On each project, academics from the department which will occupy the new space work with building and architecture experts to design attractive buildings that are specifically designed to meet academic needs.

One requirement of any new building, then, is that it continues the University’s proud tradition of attractive buildings with cutting-edge architecture. The University can no longer replicate Oxford’s famous medieval buildings but must instead look ahead to innovative designs of the future. Lord Norman Foster spoke on this theme in November 2011 in his lecture as the University’s Humanitas Visiting Professor for Architecture. ‘Imagine how differently we might understand the modern world if we could travel back in time,’ he said. ‘We would discover that cathedrals, the castles and the viaducts that form our “heritage” were once new themselves and were seen as quite alien at the time. Given the need to upgrade Britain’s infrastructure for the 21st century, and in the absence of a time machine, we have to try to recapture the foresight and political courage of our 19th-century forebears.’

Time will tell whether recent University developments can live up to this but the early signs seem positive. The new Biochemistry building won a prestigious RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Award in 2009, the refurbishment of the Ashmolean Museum picked up a RIBA award in 2010 and the Earth Sciences building won an award at the ICE Thames Valley Engineering Excellence Awards in July last year. Developments in the collegiate University received four award plaques, eight certificates and two letters of commendation in the 2011 Oxford Preservation Trust Awards.

Architectural beauty is not the only consideration, as new buildings need to be functional and support research and teaching as subjects change and techniques modernise. ‘There are two main elements which are key to designing a successful and sustainable building,’ says Mike Wigg, acting head of the University’s Estates Directorate. ‘Firstly, the short-term needs of the particular department which will occupy the building need to be addressed. Secondly, the design needs to be flexible and able to cope with changes of use as academic approaches shift. People’s needs grow and retract within a building and when one group of researchers retract, the space they occupied needs to be usable by another group. There is a delicate balance in building for the future.’

Flexibility was particularly important when designing the Old Road Campus Research Building, which opened in 2008, because the building is used by multiple departments in more than one division. ‘We responded to this challenge by placing offices at one side, laboratories on another side and a central area...’
which can be converted to one or the other depending on requirements,’ says Mike Wigg.

Similar flexibility was shown when building the Oxford Molecular Pathology Institute (OMPI), which opened on the Dunn School of Pathology site in 2011. Professor William James, the academic lead on this project and now the University’s Pro-Vice-Chancellor for planning and resources, says: ‘In order that OMPI was generic enough for future users, we decided to limit the building’s use to a particular range of biomedical research: “wet” cellular and molecular biology work, rather than computational work or high-level containment work which happens elsewhere. This means that the building provides a vital space for important research but would also be able to accommodate a different department if our descendants decide to move out of the building.’

This consideration is balanced against the short-term particular requirements of the department which will use each building. Nowhere is this clearer than in the new Earth Sciences building, designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects in close collaboration with the department, whose academic requirements included bespoke metal-free labs. Philip England, Professor of Geology, explains: ‘In the 1960s and 1970s the study of Geology underwent a huge transformation from an observational science to a physical science. Oxford kept pace with these developments, steadily adding staff and equipment until, by the middle of the last decade, the department was bulging with a score of mass spectrometers, a hundred computers and myriad other instruments. With each year that passed, it became increasingly clear that we were unable to carry out modern science in our idiosyncratic agglomeration of buildings – which had been built in five separate phases, dating back to the 1850s.’

He adds: ‘The new Earth Sciences building preserved key aspects of our much-loved former quarters but has been specially designed to further teaching and research in Earth Sciences. The contribution of academic staff was vital in designing the building and not only has it won architectural awards, but the very walls can be used as geological study materials.’

The collaboration of academics and building experts has also meant that the new buildings encourage a less tangible good – increased collaboration between academics. This can occur both within and between disciplines. ‘Building design can encourage formal and informal collaboration while also allowing academics places of quiet study and reflection,’ says Professor James. The new Mathematical Institute, currently under construction in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, is designed so that academics should not be able to reach their offices unobserved. ‘It’s intended to be much more than a location where lectures are held,’ says Nicholas Woodhouse, Professor of Mathematics. ‘The area around the lecture theatres will be a place where students will linger, talk amongst themselves and with their lecturers, get coffee, and write up lecture notes or work quietly between lectures.’ The proposed Physics building in the Science Area, which received planning permission last year, would bring together a number of physicists who are currently scattered across the ‘Keble triangle’.

Early indications suggest that attempts to foster interaction and collaboration are working – and research is not the only topic of conversation which is encouraged. As DPhil student Jim Fouracre says of the refurbished Plant Sciences building: ‘The open-plan labs are really productive working environments and make it much easier to get feedback on your work from other members of the research group – and to occasionally subject the rest of the lab to your music tastes.’

Further information about University buildings and the Estates Directorate at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/estates
The shelving of the seven millionth book in the Bodleian's book storage facility at the end of December marked the completion of a major project for the Bodleian Libraries, with the new facility creating much-needed storage for the Libraries' growing collections. But alongside physical depositories, digital repositories also play an important role for the Bodleian, both in the preservation of material and in the expansion of access to its collections.

One of the building blocks in the Libraries’ digital infrastructure is the Oxford University Research Archive (ORA), an online archive of research outputs which is part of Bodleian Digital Library Systems and Services. A collection of over 14,000 items, ORA contains a wide range of research material by Oxford scholars, from journal articles and book chapters to conference papers and posters. It functions, according to Sally Rumsey, ORA’s manager, as ‘the shop window of Oxford research’, providing electronic bookshelves for research publications, a large proportion of which can be freely accessed by the public.

‘ORA is a great tool for academics and researchers’, says Sally. ‘It provides a quick and efficient means to archive your research securely and makes it available to a wide audience.’ The fact that ORA is open access, with no barriers such as passwords or payment, means it can assist researchers in meeting the requirements of major funding bodies, many of which ask for research output to be available open-access; it also helps improve the visibility of research material, which can lead to greater numbers of citations. Hits to the site currently average 15,000 per month, while links from social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn are rapidly boosting usage figures and the number of references from Wikipedia is rising steadily.

Of particular value to the research community is the ability to preserve and make accessible ‘grey literature’ – unpublished material which is notoriously difficult to find, such as discussion papers, conference papers and DPhil theses. As well as receiving a digital copy of all research theses as required by University regulations, the ORA team is actively encouraging Oxford alumni to deposit their theses in the digital archive as funding has been made available to digitise Oxford research theses thanks to a donation by Dr Leonard Polonsky (contact thesis-digitisation@bodleian.ox.ac.uk for details).

The archive is designed to be as user–friendly as possible. To deposit material, all you need is your single sign-on and then follow the online instructions. If you need help, archive assistant Catherine Goudie is on hand to guide you through the deposit process, check submissions before they are made available in ORA, and answer queries about copyright permissions. An alternative method of adding items to ORA is via Symplectic, the software tool that helps record bibliographic information about research outputs. Using ORA’s Symplectic connector, the bibliographic data held in Symplectic can be attached to the full text file of the publication, and both can be deposited in ORA without the need for more forms to be filled in.

So what future developments are in store for ORA? In the short-term, a new user search interface will launch shortly at www.ora.ox.ac.uk. ORA’s software developer Anusha Ranganathan is also working with a couple of the academic divisions to streamline data-gathering processes so that information held in different systems can be fed from one to another. For example, a feed has been set up between ORA and the Social Sciences Department Activity Information System (DAISY), enabling information to be submitted only once.

Finally, there is the question of storage of and access to research data. The JISC-funded Data Management Rollout at Oxford (DaMaRO) project, a joint collaboration between the Bodleian, OUCS and Research Services, will bring together disparate parts of the University’s research data management digital infrastructure. As part of this project, the Bodleian is developing an online data repository and ‘DataFinder,’ a tool to make Oxford research data easier to discover, locate and retrieve.

Further information about ORA at www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ora and DaMaRO at http://damaro.oucs.ox.ac.uk. First-time users of the Symplectic connector should contact symplectic@admin.ox.ac.uk
For many academics, career progression involves a gradual narrowing of their field of research. But there’s also a new breed of researcher in today’s universities: one that instead hops between projects to keep their thinking fresh and their work relevant to the outside world. Dr Susanne Shultz, a Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Fellow at Oxford’s Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, is a perfect example.

‘I arrived in my current position via a slightly circuitous path,’ explains Shultz. As an undergraduate, she majored in anthropology at the University of California, before undertaking a Master’s in Ecology and Evolution at the University of Stony Brook. Time passed and, as it did, her research focus began to shift. ‘I became more interested in looking at the evolution of social behaviour,’ she explains. As a result, she spent the three years of her PhD, nominally based at Liverpool University, undertaking research in Africa studying Crowned Eagles to understand how predators respond to social behaviour in their prey.

Inspired by working so closely with these birds, Shultz became fascinated by the conservation problems associated with large birds of prey – and soon found herself working with the RSPB on a vulture conservation project in India. ‘Working in conservation was nice because it was useful work. It was rewarding,’ she says. ‘But I started to miss academia, and the intellectual freedom it provides.’ After returning to Liverpool for five years as a lecturer, Shultz arrived in Oxford in 2009.

‘For the last five years I’ve been working on trying to understand social evolution,’ she explains. With some success, too. One of her most recent publications, for instance, was published by the prestigious journal *Nature* in November 2011. It tackles a long-held anthropological belief: that all primates are extremely flexible in how they form social structures. By creating statistical models, Shultz and her colleagues have been able to analyse the ancestral social systems of different groups of primates over the past 50 million years.

‘What our research suggests is that there’s fairly limited social flexibility amongst many species of primates,’ explains Shultz. That seemingly simple finding is starting to have profound effects on how researchers think about primate social groups. ‘In the past, we’ve thought of all primates as being clever and flexible, but we need to realise there are strong constraints on behaviour.’ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most flexible of all the primates are the great apes: orangutans, chimpanzees, gorillas and humans. According to Shultz, it is the peculiarly flexible social nature of these apes that sets them apart from the rest – something that has provided the framework for human social evolution, ultimately being wrapped up in human society.

But while much of her work deals with high-level anthropological thinking, she maintains an interest in conservation inspired by her work with the RSPB. Currently, she is working on projects that look to measure how sensitive different species are to change. One project looks into how song birds in the UK cope with changes in climate and land use, for instance, while another considers how the breeding of captive Black Rhinos is affected by the stresses introduced by their new surroundings.

Though they sound worlds apart, the projects share a common goal. ‘In both cases, what we're trying to understand is the impact of environmental stress on mortality and reproduction,’ she explains. In the long term, her findings will help shape the ways in which we think about conservation and captivity, helping keep species alive for as long as possible.

Of course, it’s the very same freedom that brought Shultz back to academia that allows her to work in this way, dividing her time between theoretical and practical problems. ‘For me, it’s important to feel I’m doing something that has potentially impact on policy as well as working on purely academic research areas, too,’ she says. ‘I just hope I can continue to pursue both alongside each other for as long possible.’

More information at www.icea.ox.ac.uk/about-us/staff/dr-susanne-shultz/
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February in the Arctic Circle can be cold, very cold. It can be minus 20 degrees, with a heavy wind chill factor. Twenty minutes on deck is the maximum.’ So says Roger Davies, Oxford’s Philip Wetton Professor of Astrophysics, referring to the Northern Lights tour, one of a wide range of holidays organised by the Oxford Alumni Travel Programme.

The programme offers Oxonians, their family and friends the opportunity to visit fascinating destinations in the company of like-minded people. Each group is led by a trip scholar, many of them Oxford academics. This is where Roger Davies comes in: he gives lectures on the ship (in fact a commercial ferry) that plies its trade up the sheltered waters of the coast of Norway. He meets fascinating people, but also admits that being a trip scholar can be exhausting: ‘You’re always on call.’

The requirements for a trip scholar are relatively simple: a congenial personality and the ability to give talks to a well-educated lay audience, either theatre-style with slides or during a field experience or site tour (a reading list should also be provided). The benefits include a free trip with a companion, the chance to present research to those interested in links with the University and the opportunity to extend trips for private research in the region.

Dr Elizabeth Frood, University lecturer in Egyptology, understands the benefits. She recalls a cruise from the Red Sea to Luxor, also taking in travel to Egypt’s western desert, with its amazing oases – an area that she had never visited. She found herself trip scholar ‘to a wonderful group, including geographers and mathematicians. I learnt so much from others’.

The 2012 programme is typically wide and varied. February offers the chance to follow in David Livingstone’s footsteps, exploring Mosi-oa-Tunya, ‘the Smoke that Thunders’ (or, as he named it, Victoria Falls). Alternatively, there’s a comprehensive tour in and around the Bay of Naples, taking in Pompeii and Herculaneum as well as the less famous but wonderful site at Paestum – ‘impossibly grand’ in the words of the poet Shelley. As the year unfolds, so does the travel programme, with tours all over Europe, from Albania with its rich mosaic of Illyrian fortifications and Greek and Roman cities, to the Bach festival in Leipzig, where Bach spent nearly three decades as Kapellmeister at the Thomaskirche. Further afield, ‘The Cradle of Mankind’ visits South Africa and concentrates on the physical evidence, the sites, the scholars and the skeletal remains that have shaped our understanding of evolution. Other destinations include the Galapagos Islands, China and Central Asia and Peru.

Dr Maria Misra, a University lecturer and fellow of Keble College, has led three tours to India, using her specialist knowledge of its culture, architecture and art history. As she explains: ‘Many of the visitors on the trips are new to India, so this is an opportunity to explain the context of the country.’

If the range of trips is always enticing and sometimes exotic, the atmosphere is invariably friendly. In the words of Dr Peter Collins, Senior Research Fellow at St Edmund Hall and a trip scholar for several years (he leads barge cruises in Europe): ‘The occasions have always been like a gregarious house party.’ And although he makes the point that the Burgundy holidays are not especially cheap, and that accommodation is in cabins rather than hotel rooms, he talks about a ‘charming experience’ where good French food and wine (which are included) are combined with walks along the towpath, talks and visits to local towns, castles and vineyards – and lots of conversation! The aim, he says, ‘is not gourmet luxury but great delight’.

Cathy Spinage (cathy.spinage@alumni.ox.ac.uk), who runs the Alumni Travel Programme, is always keen to hear from Oxford academics interested in becoming trip scholars. The 2012 programme can be downloaded from www.alumni.ox.ac.uk (or hard copies from Cathy)
Magic at the museums

Do you enjoy meeting people, playing with custard or handling Roman coins? Then why not join the small army of volunteers that makes visiting the University’s museums and collections a magical experience, asks Sally Croft

‘Perfectobrilliantastic!’ Not a word you come across every day, perhaps, but not untypical of the response from a child who’s spent the day attending one of the family-friendly events at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH). The University has seven museums and collections – the others are the Ashmolean, the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, the Botanic Garden, Harcourt Arboretum, the Museum of the History of Science and the Pitt Rivers Museum – and in 2010–11 they supported nearly 400 public and community events, in addition to welcoming the many thousands of visitors who come to visit their treasures.

‘Our visitors really appreciate the things we do, but this level of activity is only possible because staff are supported by a small army of volunteers,’ says Joy Todd, the University Museums Head of Volunteering. ‘Volunteers help at a wide range of activities across all the museums and collections, including helping with schools visits and family-friendly activities, staffing the Ashmolean information desk, assisting at launch events, leading highlight tours and object-handling sessions, and coming out “on the road” when we take objects to shopping centres or other locations.’

For most volunteer activities, specialised knowledge is not a prerequisite. ‘For some roles, we do ask people to come on short training sessions,’ says Joy. ‘If they’re interested in being a tour guide or handling objects, for example.’ Her colleague, Dr Caroline Cheeseman, who also trains volunteers, emphasises that while a certain amount of knowledge has to be learned, training focuses on communications skills: ‘It’s about being an engaging presenter, using language that people will understand – someone guiding a family tour will do it quite differently from an adults’ tour, for example.’

Ufuk Yilmaz, who has volunteered since retiring from the Physics Department, is one of an award-winning group of tour guides at the Museum of the History of Science. ‘The training was extremely supportive,’ he says. ‘We got shown around by the Director, Professor Jim Bennett. He made the place come alive. At the end of the tour I remember thinking “Was there life before this?” – it was all so interesting, absorbing and all made readily available for us to learn.’

Ufuk is also a veteran of Wow!How?, the museums’ annual science fair. The event has been highly commended by the British Science Association for the most outstanding contribution to National Science and Engineering Week. Staff and students are asked to present a favourite science demonstration or activity. Last year 140 volunteers staffed 36 stalls.

‘Wow!How? is hugely popular, but we can only manage it once a year, so last November we started Science Saturdays, a mini version in which activities are designed by museum staff and focus on the collections but are run by volunteer scientists,’ says Scott Billings, a Heritage Lottery Fund trainee in museum and outreach activities, who organises these popular events.

‘Anyone keen to volunteer should register their interest on our website,’ says Joy. ‘Fill in the form and provide referees, and when we next recruit – in late spring – we’ll invite you in for a chat about the kind of opportunities we offer. Once you’re an active volunteer, we’ll send you regular lists of events that need help and you can opt for as many or as few as you like.’

And what’s in it for the volunteers? ‘Seeing visitors going away happy after a fun afternoon is exceptionally rewarding,’ says Lindsay Campbell, who works in the Department for Continuing Education. ‘My fellow volunteers are also a diverse, talented bunch and I enjoy meeting and talking with them.’

Alice Wilby, Schools Liaison Officer at St Peter’s, adds: ‘I enjoy the family-friendly craft activities and playing with glitter, but my favourite thing is doing museum tours for children. I get to learn about a huge variety of objects in the museum, and handle some really amazing things – the narwhal tusk is my favourite!’

For more information about volunteering, or to register interest, visit www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers. There is a briefing for potential helpers at Wow!How? 2012 (Sat 10 March) at 5pm on 1 February at OUMNH; if possible, please email volunteers@oum.ox.ac.uk in advance
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Why am I here?

Martin Humm

Laboratory Infrastructure Manager, Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art

How long has Oxford had an archaeology lab?
The Research Lab was established in 1955 as a result of discussions between physicist Professor Frederick Lindemann (later Lord Cherwell) and archaeologist Professor Christopher Hawkes. Today it’s part of the University’s School of Archaeology, alongside the Institute of Archaeology (which was founded in 1962). The Lab’s Radiocarbon Unit came into being in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

What does it actually do?
The Lab was set up to develop a new method of carbon dating, using a (particle) accelerator mass spectrometer (AMS) – previous dating methods had to use large samples, and this meant that many small artefacts could not be dated. It started out with facilities in what was then Nuclear Physics but became the Denys Wilkinson Building, where a new AMS system was installed in 2000. We moved most of the Lab to the Dyson Perrins Building around five years ago.

What started out as a small group of about six people has over the years more than doubled in size, comprising technicians and support staff. Our main aim is to provide archaeological dates from all sorts of organic materials to many different submitters from all over the world. We can measure around 2,000 dates a year (when our systems are operating satisfactorily!) and many of these are for commercial clients. Dating a sample involves many procedures (and people): sampling, cleaning and then chemistry. We combust the sample to collect the carbon dioxide, which we turn into graphite before it can be measured in the AMS. More than half of the samples we date are bone, and these can range in date from ‘early humans’ around 40,000 years ago to the occasional forensic bone of near–modern times. We can also date wood, shell, seeds, charcoal – in fact more or less anything that has ‘lived’. We also date the odd painting (the canvas) and a few antiques.

What does your own job entail?
As Infrastructure Manager my job is to make sure that all the systems we have are running properly. That means looking after services, arranging maintenance and generally fixing almost anything that goes wrong. Every day is different – there is always something that needs fixing! The biggest challenge is probably trying to mend something that’s never gone wrong before.

What’s the most interesting or unexpected things the Lab has worked on?
We’ve dated many thousands of things in the 30 years I’ve worked there. The most famous was the Shroud of Turin, which we dated in the early 1980s and turned out to be 12th century. We were also asked to date an alleged skull from the investigation at the children’s home at the centre of the Jersey care home scandal a few years ago. This was, in fact, a piece of coconut shell!

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
A Fleet Air Arm pilot. My legs didn’t grow long enough.

So how do you come to be doing this?
I’m Oxford born and bred. When I left Cheney School I went to work as a chemistry technician at the Oxford College of Technology (now Oxford Brookes University). I worked there for eight years and then came to Oxford University’s Department of Geology (now Earth Sciences) to date rocks. Five years later I joined the Research Lab for Archaeology and the History of Art to help start the radiocarbon lab.

What’s changed most since you started work at the Lab?
The way we use computers – they went from big things that did very little to little tiny things that do everything!

What are you planning for your retirement?
I used to play a lot of squash, but now I can only manage racket ball! I also enjoy gardening and birdwatching, and look forward to doing more when I retire later this year.

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