



# CONNECTIONS

OxRSS provides Oxford research staff with a voice and networking opportunities

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">Great Turnout at OxRSS Events</a>	1
<a href="#">Forthcoming Events</a>	1
<a href="#">Leadership and Management Skills</a>	2
<a href="#">New to Oxford?</a>	2
<a href="#">Featured Profile</a>	3
<a href="#">Useful Links</a>	4
<a href="#">Contact Us</a>	4

## WHAT'S NEW

Recent surveys conducted across the UK identified leadership and management as two key skills in which early career researchers and PIs said they would benefit from more support. Read more on page 2.

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

April 2014

## GREAT TURNOUT AT OXRSS EVENTS

An essential aim for the Oxford Research Staff Society (OxRSS) within the Oxford community has been to provide more opportunities for research staff to meet informally. Over the past few months, we have organized several events to cater to the different interests of our diverse community.

In November, we kicked off our first event at the University Club, which was attended by 42 members and featured a speed networking session. In December, over a dozen research staff met for the first 'OxRSS pub lunch' at The Butcher's Arms in Headington. More recently, in January, eight OxRSS families met for brunch and children's activities at Barefoot Books in Summertown (pictured). The last event provided an opportunity for families to meet each other and exchange experiences of working and bringing up children in Oxford. Conversations were lively and many people stayed beyond the scheduled time to continue talking.

OxRSS plans to host various events at different locations around



Oxford. In addition to these events, we will be starting smaller clubs with a specific interest. One example is the Film Club, which will organise cinema outings beginning in March. Later this spring, OxRSS will also launch a LinkedIn group to facilitate communication between staff members. Please keep an eye out for [future OxRSS events!](#)

Feedback from these events has overall been very positive, but we strive to improve these events. If you have any suggestions for future events or input from past events, we would love to hear from you at [committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk](mailto:committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk).

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 27 February, 09:30-13:00, Managing your time, book [here](#)
- 28 February, 09:30-12:30, Welcome event for research staff, book [here](#)
- 5 March, 14:30-17:00, Interview Skills, book [here](#)

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

### Surveys identify key areas for development among junior and senior researchers

Two UK-wide surveys, the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and the Principal Investigators' and Research Leaders' Survey (PIRLS), were conducted in 2013 to find out more about the development needs of early career researchers and principal investigators.

Early career researchers identified that they would like to receive training in three key areas: 1) research impact, 2) leadership and management skills, and 3) teaching. Among Oxford respondents, some other key areas were the desire to obtain support in managing budgets, managing DPhil students, and greater awareness of responsibilities beyond research.

Principal investigators (PIs) responded that the following two areas were most important for good research leadership: 1) significant research progress and 2) nurturing researchers' careers. Some PIs and leaders within the Oxford cohort felt undervalued for their efforts in helping early researchers' careers. Some PIs also mentioned that they would like to receive more support in developing their management and supervision skills.

### Involvement of OxRSS

Both early career researchers and PIs identified training in management and leadership as desirable. Members of the OxRSS committee have used these survey

results and those from OxRSS's own consultation from summer 2013 in contributing to University committees and working groups looking into what the University can do to support researchers in these areas. The Research Staff Working Group has designated management and leadership as a priority area for researcher development over the coming year (the other area is personal development reviews for research staff), so look out for news over the next few months about what is going on to support you in these important areas.

### How could you improve your management and leadership skills?

The [Oxford Learning Institute](#) offers courses in management, such as the 'Introductory Certificate in Management' for junior management roles and the 'Developing Leadership and Management Practice' for more senior positions. Research staff can also take the online course 'Managing People'. If you do not currently have the opportunity to develop these skills, consider whether any aspect of your current role could develop. Online resources, such as those provided by [Vitae](#), may also help you think about what developing leadership in your career might mean for you.

If you have any suggestions about what the University could do to support you in developing as a manager or leader, please contact us at [committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk](mailto:committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk).

## ARE YOU NEW TO OXFORD?



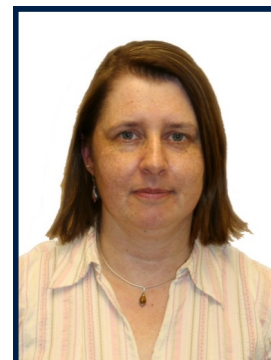
If you have recently joined Oxford as research staff, you may find useful information regarding the University, welcome events, accommodation, and other general information [here](#). You can also sign up to the research staff list by sending a blank email to [researchstaff\\_subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk](mailto:researchstaff_subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk)

## FEATURED PROFILE

**Louise Appleton**

**Research Technician, Botnar Research Centre, Headington**

*In this edition of Featured Profile, we interviewed Louise Appleton, a staff member who has over 20 years of experience working at the University. She explained to us how the research environment in the UK has changed and the ways in which she has coped with increasingly shorter contracts for research staff.*



### Career overview

Louise began her career at Oxford University in the 1980s to train as a Research Technician. After obtaining the Ordinary National Certificate in Laboratory Technology, she worked in the Departments of Sir William Dunn School of Pathology and Biochemistry for several years. During that time, Louise also completed a Higher National Certificate in Applied Biology. After a short career break to start a family, she obtained a competitive technical position for six years in the Dunn School. Although she then left science to work as an administrator, she eventually returned after obtaining her current position at the Botnar Research Centre. In addition to working full-time, she is enrolled in the Open University and hopes to obtain her BSc in Life Science by next year.

### Current research work

Louise processes samples from patients with Ankylosing Spondylitis, a chronic inflammatory disease of the spine that leads to the vertebrae fusing together. Since the disease is not easily diagnosed, Louise and her colleagues are working to find genetic information that could be used in earlier diagnosis and better treatments. Apart from playing a vital role in this research endeavour, Louise liaises with staff in administration and finance to handle any research-related matters. She takes great care in cultivating relationships with other staff members who work with her.

### Changes in research have affected the careers of research technicians

During her tenure as a research technician, Louise has been directly impacted by changes in the research environment. She mentioned that jobs for technicians have become harder to obtain since the early 2000s, when funding started to get tighter. Technology advanced so much that laboratory kits almost eliminated the need to hire a technician, and short-term contracts of 3-12 months became the norm. Because the uncertainties have been stressful, Louise decided to assess her career and personal development through [Springboard](#)—a women's development programme offered at Oxford. She meets regularly with 20 people to evaluate personal and work life issues. The programme has given her access to great mentors and helped her form a more solid network.

### Exploring the Milky Way

In her free time, Louise enjoys astronomy, photography, horse-back riding, and spending time with her family. As the current events secretary for the Chipping Norton Astronomical Society (CNAAG), Louise organises speakers and helps with public viewing events at the Rollright Stones, where one can see the Milky Way! If you would like to find out more about local astronomy or would like to organise an event with other research staff based on similar interests, please contact the OxRSS committee.

## USEFUL LINKS

### Career development, workshops, fairs and personal development

#### [Careers Service](#)

For one-on-one meetings with a Careers Adviser, and workshops and events specifically designed for research staff.

#### [Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff](#)

The University's commitment to supporting the careers of researchers.

#### [Oxford Learning Institute](#)

Obtain support for personal and professional development via courses and seminars on management, teaching, and personal development.

#### [Support for researchers](#)

This website contains information on support available to research staff from across the University.

#### [Vitae](#)

The national researcher development organisation.

### Other resources

#### [IT services](#)

For technological and computing assistance

#### [New research staff](#)

This website provides information for research staff who recently joined Oxford.

### Social opportunities

#### [Oxford University Club](#)

Members and staff of the University are welcome to this sports and social Club.

#### [Oxford Research Staff Society Events](#)

Track upcoming social and professional events organised by the Committee

## CONTACT US

### Call for Research Staff Profiles

We are very keen to hear from Oxford University Research staff about the work that they are involved in and would like to share these experiences through OxRSS with our audience. If you would like to feature in our profile section this can be organised as follows;

- > *You can e-mail us your article (maximum 1 page A4 Size) as a word document and attach upto 2 photographs for inclusion.*
- > *Contact us if you would like to be interviewed about the work that you are involved with.*

We would also be interested to hear from you about any hobbies or interests that you have. Please e-mail us using the contact address given below. We look forward to hearing from you.

E-Mail: [committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk](mailto:committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk)