



CONNECTIONS

OxRSS provides Oxford research staff with a voice and networking opportunities

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WHAT'S NEW

Are you struggling to write? If so, you may find useful tips on academic writing (page 2) from our very own Cheryl Hunter!

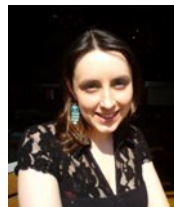
NEXT NEWSLETTER

September 2014

WELCOME TO OUR NEW CO-CHAIRS!

In May, we said goodbye to the outgoing co-chairs, Joana Lopes and Nikki Luke, who worked incredibly hard to establish OxRSS. The committee would like to thank them for their achievements.

Meet our new chairs, Cheryl Hunter and Steven Chance!



Cheryl Hunter is a post-doctoral researcher in the Nuffield Department of Population Health, who is looking forward to helping OxRSS develop further in the coming year. Her main responsibility on the committee will be in organising and running events with the events team.



Steven Chance is a University Research Lecturer in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences who is excited about developing links between researchers across the University. His main responsibility is to build representation of the OxRSS collective voice within the University.

If you have any issues that you think may be shared with others and could be addressed by OxRSS, please let us know: committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk.

JOIN OUR NEW LINKEDIN GROUP

Current and former research staff of Oxford are invited to join our new LinkedIn group—[OxRSS Connections](#). Research staff can use it to network with each other and keep in touch during their time at Oxford and beyond.

If you want to find someone with similar research interests, or share

information about events or networking opportunities for research staff, this group is for you! Job and funding-related postings relevant to research staff are also welcome.

We hope that you will find this group useful and welcome your feedback

-The OxRSS committee

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 28 August, 17:30-21:00, Curry night, University Club, email [OxRSS](#)
- 19 September, [Naturejobs Career Expo](#)

ACADEMIC WRITING

Are you struggling to write? Below is some advice on academic writing that other people have found useful.

- Write the description of your method and your sample first, i.e., the bits that won't change in the writing and re-writing process
- Write an outline of the paper in bullet points – this is unlikely to translate straight into a written paper, but can help you identify key points you want to discuss. It may also be of help to talk through your outline with your co-authors.
- Set yourself targets and deadlines – and if you need it, ask someone else to hold you accountable to them. One of the strategies recommended on [Thesiswhisperer](#) is to form “Shut up and write!” groups online or face-to-face, so that you have someone else to report back to on your success (or failure) to meet your targets
- Write in short discrete chunks of time and content – it can be very hard to find a clear day for writing, but if you set aside 30 minutes to write section x or section y, you will find yourself slowly accreting words. Some people advise using the [Pomodoro](#) technique; others use devices like [Writtenkitten](#) to reward themselves for a certain word count per session
- Create a space where you can write without disturbances – this could be as simple as closing your office door or putting a “do not disturb” sign up next to your desk and writing on a laptop with no enabled internet.

(Re-) writing well

Most people stress that the key to success lies in re-writing, editing, and re-writing again. Advice on how to render your writing more stylish, can be found in two excellent YouTube presentations by [Helen Sword](#) and [Steven Pinker](#). Academic writing is, in fact, about clarity and precision – which is not just a matter of style but a matter of content. In the

editing and re-writing process, we are clarifying and polishing up our ideas and findings until the reader can be in no doubt as to their meaning and importance. Below are some tips to get you started on the re-writing journey:

- Try to de-familiarize yourself from your work by putting the paper in a drawer for a week and then coming back to it,
- Editing section by section out of order and only editing as a whole at the end (each section should ideally be internally consistent)
- Pretending to peer review your paper, drawing on guidance for peer review from relevant journals or ask a colleague to be a “critical friend” and go through it for you
- Interrogate each sentence and paragraph with the following questions in mind:
 - Are there any extraneous or ambiguous words in this sentence/paragraph? Remove or re-phrase!
 - What's the key idea in each paragraph? If you can't identify it, try writing out what you want to say with that paragraph.
 - Do you need this sentence? Is it working with the key idea of the paragraph? If it's not, take it out.

Good luck with your stylish academic writing!

For further reading and sources for advice

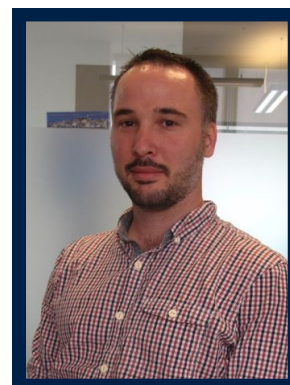
- Rowena Murray's *Writing for Academic Journals*, 3rd edition (2013). Open University Press: Maidenhead, UK
- Gardiner, M and Kearns, H (2011) “Turbo-charge your writing today”, *Nature*, 475, 129-130.
- Wolcott, H (2009) *Writing up Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- [Reflective articles](#) on writing from leading researchers, hosted by Durham University
- Helen Sword's *Stylish Academic Writing* (2012) Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

FEATURED PROFILE

Dr. Garrick Taylor

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Biochemistry

Garrick is the Oxford University and College Union Representative for Researchers. He is tasked with improving the lives of researchers within the union, especially early career researchers, and can arrange 'skills exchanges' for union members within the labs of other members (you can join [here](#)). He can be reached at garrick.taylor@bioch.ox.ac.uk



What is your research background?

I'm based within the Department of Biochemistry, where I'm a post-doctoral researcher using nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) to study membrane proteins, especially 7 transmembrane proteins, which comprise hugely important drug targets. Before Oxford I did my PhD at Southampton where I studied amyloidogenic proteins by NMR.

What do you do as a postdoc on a typical day?

There are no typical days! I start at about 6am in the morning so that I can get plenty of work done but still get home to see my baby daughter before she goes to bed! I'm based at 2 sites, Biochemistry at Oxford but also Rutherford Appleton labs (RAL) at Harwell, because this is where our magnets are. I spend a lot of time growing bacteria and purifying protein, and lots of time sat in front of a console trying to get physics to work in my favour... When not doing experiments I prepare grant applications and deal with any issues my union members may be having.

What are three things you would recommend for researchers in early career development?

1. Think about what you are going to do when your contract ends. Do you want to stay at Oxford? Do you want to go elsewhere? A different field? Jump up a grade?

2. Take charge of your own development; sign up for training courses that fit in with your future career plans. If you want to change fields slightly or significantly then arrange with a colleague to spend some time in their lab and learn some basic techniques off of them. It's okay going to lectures out of your field but nothing beats hands-on experience and a one to one tutorial in a technique from an expert.

3. Network! Get to know as many people as you can; it's amazing what collaborations you can form with people outside of your department, or even just gaining some advice from a different perspective on your own research. All this contributes to your research output and improves your chances of a successful move/promotion.

What is your favourite place in Oxford and why?

My favourite place is Magdalen Bridge during May Morning. It's a truly amazing sight seeing thousands of people up and about at 6am to listen to a choir. Plus all the pubs are open!

DID YOU MISS IT? A LOOK BACK AT OXRSS EVENTS

Effective Communication in the Workplace

OxRSS organised two events in May and June around the theme of “effective communication in the workplace”. The first event, on 29 May, was held in the evening at the Medical Sciences Teaching Centre. Sharon Neal, Head of Professional Development at the Oxford Learning Institute (OLI), gave an informal introduction to some of the principles of good communication, and facilitated a discussion between the researchers present about how they had managed situations at work. The event was well-attended and the networking session afterwards was lively.

The second event, on 12 June, took place at lunchtime in Zoology. This session was hosted by

Clare Wakeham, Professional Development Advisor at OLI. 25 people attended this session – a great turnout over lunch - and feedback was positive about the event. Some researchers who attended were interested in further sessions in this area – the OLI currently offer similar sessions, which can be found [here](#).

OxRSS will organise more professional-themed events in the future, with the same format – a choice of evening or afternoon session to make them open to as many people as possible. If you have an idea of an event you would like to see, please get in touch at committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk.

Discovery Walking Tour of Oxford

On Saturday 19 July, we ran a walking tour of Oxford. This event was incredibly popular, with over 60 people interested in attending!

25 researchers and their family/friends came along, and we spent an hour and a half exploring the streets of Oxford, followed by a relaxed lunch at Fernando’s Café, next to Carfax Tower. Feedback was positive, with people commenting on how enjoyable the event was and that they learnt a lot of weird and wonderful facts about Oxford and its colourful past.

Due to the popularity of this event, we will be running it again over the summer. You can watch

the mailing list for further announcements or visit the [OxRSS Events Page](#) for more information.



WELCOME EVENT FOR NEW RESEARCH STAFF



The University hosts a welcome event for research staff three times per year, and the next event will be in Autumn 2014. If you are new to Oxford, this event will give you the opportunity to meet other researchers, and get information on support and career development for staff. You may also find useful information regarding the University, welcome events, accommodation, and other general information [here](#).

To receive up to date information on staff events, sign up to the research staff list by sending a blank email to researchstaff-subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk

USEFUL LINKS

Career development, workshops, fairs and personal development

[Careers Service](#)

For one-on-one meetings with a Careers Adviser, and workshops and events specific 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.

[Research staff groups by department](#)

This website contains information on research staff groups in each department.

[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.

CONTACT US

Questions or suggestions? We'd love to hear from you! Contact us at committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk

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