

# Committed to research:

## The Research Assessment Exercise and beyond.

The University recognises that improved research performance is critical to its ambition to move forward. As a result, research has been given a high priority over recent years with considerable investment targeted at areas where the University can realistically be expected to improve its performance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

Much of this has focused on the further development of the existing research base and on supporting new researchers. Initiatives include the provision of bridging funds to contract researchers; a programme of research training and support through 'Your First Three Years'; Promising Researcher and sabbatical schemes; support for developing inter-disciplinary projects and grant proposals; and the funding of overseas research trips, conference organisation and periods of study leave. There has also been considerable investment by the University and Schools in research studentships and academic posts which have increased critical mass and sustainability in key areas.



Professor Diana Woodhouse  
Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research

These initiatives have helped to increase the volume and quality of research undertaken. However, the main driver of this improvement has been our researchers whose hard work and commitment is much appreciated. This applies not only to those returned in the RAE but also to the many 1\* researchers who, for tactical reasons, will not be submitted. It is therefore important to put the RAE in context and to recognise it as a snapshot of research activity which does not by any means capture all the research being undertaken at Brookes nor the contribution that those not submitted make to the University's research culture.

While the recent concentration has been on the RAE, the University's commitment to research and the development of research excellence in all Schools is long term.

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This is evident in its policy of, wherever possible, only appointing research active staff or those with research potential; the introduction of a Readership scheme which recognises the contribution of researchers and provides them with a career path towards a professorship; and the investment in areas which are seen as having considerable research potential but lack research leadership - hence the appointment in 2007 of Professors in Education, International Relations, Psychology and Engineering. These posts are funded by the University for two years and thereafter by the School, thus demonstrating a joint commitment, and while they will obviously contribute to the RAE, their main purpose is to help develop research potential, a much longer term objective.

It is the University's commitment to research in the longer term which is also behind the current review of its Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy. The outcome of the RAE will not be known until December 2008 and we cannot wait until then to plan for the future. The external research environment is changing and we must ensure we have a strategy in place that recognises and responds to these changes and supports our research aspirations. We therefore need to consider three basic questions: What should our research aims and objectives be beyond 2008? What is our strategy for realising these aims? How should this strategy be implemented? A discussion document on the Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy is available at <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/research/rktc/R&KTstrategy.pdf> and is, I hope, currently being discussed in Schools. Research Directors will provide feedback from these discussions at a Research Strategy day on 27 June but I also welcome individual feedback, so please feel free to email me with your comments and ideas.

Whatever the results of the RAE, we have seen a substantial improvement in our research profile and as part of the University's ambition for the future, it is vital that the development of research excellence continues.

# Institute for Historical and Cultural Research



The Buckley building

## Professor Elisabeth Jay, Director of the Institute for Historical and Cultural Research.

Funding bodies increasingly favour 'interdisciplinarity' and 'collaboration'. In response to this development, Oxford Brookes has established the Institute for Historical and Cultural Research (IHCR) whose remit is to develop and nurture groups that, within the terms provided by this very broad umbrella, want to forge links with colleagues in other departments or schools to undertake collaborative and interdisciplinary research. One way in which the Institute effects these introductions is by holding twice-yearly research presentations where researchers new to the University describe their area of expertise. The March 2007 session included presentations from Architecture, Modern Languages, Film Studies and English.

The IHCR also hosts regular seminar programmes in 'Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies' and 'The Cultures of Modernism' and in 2006-07 adopted two themes, reflecting the strategic programmes supported by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) and ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), for its series of workshops and lectures: 'Religion and the Public Sphere', and 'Beyond Text: Sounds, Voices, Images, Objects' The final public lecture was given by the well-known writer and broadcaster, Karen Armstrong who chose for her subject, 'Judaism; Christianity; Islam: One Religion or Three?' The purpose of such themed programmes is to ensure that Brookes' researchers are aware of colleagues' interests and are thus well-positioned to respond when the funding councils' detailed call for bids are posted. The Institute's interest in providing help for colleagues who want to secure external funding for collaborative and inter-, or multi-disciplinary projects, is further reflected in a twice-yearly

bidding round for assistance with workshops etc.

The Institute is also working with the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development. A recent lunchtime meeting, entitled, 'The Hidden Treasures of the Buckley Building', which brought together all the occupants of our flagship research building, revealed hitherto unsuspected synergies between the two institutes and has led to the advance planning for themed workshops and training sessions to take these mutual interests forward.

In addition to working with researchers in Brookes, the IHCR seeks to ensure that Brookes' interest in interdisciplinarity is recognised externally and the invitation to the Director of the IHCR to sit on the commissioning panel for the major project bids to the AHRC/ESRC 8.5 million 'Religion and Society' strategic theme is a measure of this recognition. Our national and international research networks are also enhanced by her membership of the Advisory Boards of the Institute of English Studies (London University) and Scientific Board of the Research Centre in Linguistics and Literatures at the University of Évora (Portugal), and by the Institute's presence at the meeting, hosted by the British Academy in February 2007, of sixteen such Institutes for Advanced Study to discuss how we might ensure that our expertise contributes to the formation of government and research council policy, and how the institutes could be mutually supportive.

All events are included on the Institute's website <http://ah.brookes.ac.uk/ihcr>. If there are researchers the institute has not managed to contact who feel that they would benefit from a partnership, or at least a conversation with others researching in historical and cultural studies please contact the IHCR Administrator, Louise Durning, on [ldurning@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ldurning@brookes.ac.uk)

# Research degree provision

## - a rapidly changing environment

Dr David E Evans, Head of the Graduate School

There are nearly 500 research students at Oxford Brookes – making up 6% of the total number of students; nearly 30% are international and half are part-time. They are therefore a very significant part of the life of the University.

The last five years have seen rapid changes in expectations for the environment in which research students study. Led by reviews from the major funders of research studentships, the Research Councils, the Higher Education Funding Council and by the Quality Assurance Agency, the operation of research degree programmes has seen an explosion of regulation and exemplars of good practice, frequently driven by the perceived needs of employers. The Bologna process has also had a major effect - though here, the British 'standard' of a 3-year PhD with a significant training element has driven the agenda, with continental European nations quickly joining up to offer three year PhDs often through the medium of English.

Oxford Brookes University was in a good position to meet the new requirements, as it was already committed to high standards and its existing regulations fit well with the new environment. Work by the Research Degrees Committee, the Graduate Office and the Research Training Coordinator have all resulted in significant developments. This work was reviewed in 2006 when the Quality Assurance Agency commended the University on good practice and indicated that its standards met or exceeded its expectations.

Research students benefit from this Graduate School provision in a number of ways. They are able, in association with their supervisors, to develop their own training agenda and can access a wide range of training activities. They have a structured programme with clear reference points for achievement and they receive support from supervisory teams and school postgraduate research tutors who are well informed both about their subjects and about good practice in the design and running of research degrees.

### Student achievement

90% of PhD theses submitted by Brookes students in 2005/6 academic year were

awarded either outright or subject to minor amendments – a very impressive achievement for the students concerned. In addition, Brookes' research students regularly demonstrate a wide variety of additional achievement. These include peer-reviewed publications, winning funding and awards, making invited contributions to public events like those run by the House of Commons Science and Technology committee, making presentations at national and international conferences and having internships in leading research units. All are indicators that the quality of students – and of work undertaken here – is equal to that in many more prestigious institutions. Many Brookes research students go on to careers in research and academia, indicating that they have been well prepared for – and motivated to continue with – a research career.

### The way ahead – developing postgraduate research

There are significant challenges to increasing the research student activity of the University. Changes to the HEFCE allocation of funding for research students based on the RAE, changes in funding mechanisms and other external pressures are tending towards concentrating research students into fewer highly research active universities. Brookes, however, has so far succeeded in meeting all the standards required to compete for this kind of funding and will continue to do so; clearly the outcome of the next RAE will be significant. Recent changes to fund research studentships via a block grant or doctoral training accounts also provide new opportunities; the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for instance, is introducing a new funding model called the Block Grant Partnerships Scheme that will give stability and flexibility to the University for future awards.

It is important to note that the University has never depended on 'mainstream' funding for its research students and it plays a very significant role in enabling mature students achieve a higher degree. Funding for these students comes from many sources; self-funding may mean working part time to pay for study; employers may sponsor the student directly or indirectly (through day release); studentships may be linked to work being undertaken in external employment and international students are supported by a wide variety of means. There are opportunities to develop all these areas – by advertising to the region, by encouraging students to continue to PhD, by seeking

additional employer support and by identifying sponsorship. Another significant opportunity lies in developing links with local employers; in the Life Sciences, for instance, staff from local laboratories and research institutes register with the University and are co-supervised at their place of work and by a Brookes supervisor.

A further opportunity for development comes from recognising the value of research students in supporting teaching in the University. Combining opportunities to teach and to complete the Associate Teachers Course, run by OCSLD, provides an attractive package for students interested in a career in HE and, by recognising and formalising their contribution to small group teaching provides an alternative, if partial, funding stream. A model adopted by other leading Universities, in which University funded students are expected to engage in some teaching in return for the bursary has recently been approved by the Research Degrees Committee for implementation in 2007.

### The importance of research students to Oxford Brookes

Research degrees provide very important personal and career development opportunities for individuals. It has already been noted that Brookes meets the needs of a wide range of home, EU and international students in a wide range of subjects, who carry out their degrees either full or part-time, often directly linked with employment, their success rate is high – reflecting their ability and commitment to study and their subsequent achievements indicate that the experience was hugely worthwhile. Research students are also essential to the University's future. Leading Universities offer a progression of qualification; bachelors, masters, doctorates, higher degrees; failure to do so signals a withdrawal from the highest level of study and scholarship. League tables include research student numbers in calculating rankings, immediately impacting undergraduate and international recruitment. Perhaps most importantly, research students contribute directly to research development and enrich the academic culture of the University. Providing for research students may well be challenging; but it is clear that it is essential for the development of the University as well as the good of many individual students and the Graduate School is committed to supporting Schools and students in the years ahead.



# The grassroots realities project

*“A little bit of help at the appropriate time would make all the difference”*

An innovative research project based in the Department of International Relations, Politics and Sociology is drawing to a close after 3 years.

The Grassroots Realities Project, a collaboration between older people, Age Concern Oxfordshire and Oxford Brookes University has been funded by the Big Lottery Fund for £168,000. Dr Margaret Godel, Senior Research Fellow in the School of Social Sciences and Law, trained and supported a team of seven volunteer researchers who themselves were over 65 years old, to help other older people record their day to day lives through pictures and interviews, with the aim of helping policy makers improve support services. The volunteer researchers, and Margaret's colleague from Age Concern Oxfordshire, Penny Thewlis, have been intimately involved in all aspects of the research including ethical approval. Indeed the innovative participatory and visual methodology ensures that it is not only the project findings that are of interest, but also the unusual research process.

The research shows older people working

actively to contribute to their communities, maintain their independence, and look after their health and wellbeing. Key messages for policy makers are that older people want greater emphasis on preventative interventions and that they want to be involved in planning policy and practice that help them maintain and develop their own strategies for satisfying and socially inclusive lives.

Using volunteer researchers to help other older people record their day-to-day lives through pictures and interviews means that it is possible to produce new and exciting ways of communicating research findings to policy makers who need to understand the day to day lives of rurally based older people: the contributions they make to their communities, and the challenges that living in rural areas brings as one gets older. The combination of images and words directly from older participants provide powerful and unique insights that can help root policy decisions and practice in the reality of people's lives. The policy making process is often remote with little reference to real people. An archive of 1500 images and over 100 hours of interviews offers rich and varied reflections of older people's lives: the things, past and present that are important to them and their well-being.

This work shows how resilient and resourceful older people in rural communities are, and how relatively small changes in policy can make a big difference to people's lives. Volunteers have given three years to this project and helped to bring together a rich archive of material documenting older people's lives at the beginning of the 21st century. This has the potential to inform policy and practice in completely new ways. Age Concern Oxfordshire has already made a commitment to make sure that it does.

This archive is an extraordinary resource, not only for policy makers and service providers but also for academics. It has already been used to develop a variety of outputs: workshop and training materials for policy makers and service providers, an exhibition of over 50 images with words has also been designed; audio visual animations in which older participants talk about growing older; and a short video in which the volunteer researchers reflect on their experience of their role and their hopes for future change. The material offers possibilities for generating new and exciting ways of disseminating the research.

**For more information about the Grassroots Project, and the Archive contact [mgodel@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:mgodel@brookes.ac.uk)**

## UK-India Symposium

7-8 February, British Council Delhi, India



The first UK-India symposium on 'Greening Events and Energy-Efficient Cities for Lasting Legacies', co-organised by Dr Rajat Gupta of the Department of Architecture in the School of the Built Environment and Professor Susan Roaf with the British Council, closed in Delhi on 8 February 2007 with a route-map for

future action in greening events, energy-efficient cities and lasting legacies. It called for cities to adopt renewable and sustainable energy strategies, and to consider major international events, like the Delhi Commonwealth Games in 2010, as an opportunity for reducing the environmental impact of the event and the city through the sustainable design and construction of sports venues and infrastructure.

The event was opened by the Chief Minister of Delhi, Mrs Sheila Dikshit, on 7 February 2007, and attended by about 400 delegates from the worlds of architecture, science, business and policy-making, including 150 students from the schools of architecture and engineering. The symposium programme included specific sessions in areas of sustainable architecture, infrastructure development for greening games, sustainable transport, resource efficiency in planning. It also explored positive action for a lasting

legacy. Representatives from about 20 Indian cities participated and six Mayors declared their support for greening cities and events. Meetings were held between the UK speakers and the Delhi Mayor and planning authorities on 9 February to discuss how the concepts of greening events and cities could be put into practice.

"Delhi is witnessing rapid urban growth to meet the demands of an increasing urban population, and the forthcoming 2010 Commonwealth games. This UK-India symposium has shown how environmental and sustainable strategies could be infused in both new and existing buildings and infrastructure to work towards a credible sustainable future and significantly improve the quality of life for all involved."

Dr Rajat Gupta, Conference Co-chair

# Vernacular architecture and the future

Professor Paul Oliver

Professor Paul Oliver, who celebrates his 80th birthday this year (on the exact day that the Department of Architecture, in which he worked for some 30 years, celebrates its 80th anniversary), is Visiting Professor at the International Vernacular Architecture Unit of the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD).

*Commonly acknowledged as the world's leading authority on the study of vernacular architecture, his publications on what he refers to as 'the architecture of the people' include the award-winning Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World (1997) and, most recently, Built to Meet Needs: Cultural Aspects of Vernacular Architecture (2006). Professor Oliver's continued advocacy of an interdisciplinary approach that emphasises the importance of its study to issues such as low-income housing, rural development and post-emergency shelter, continues to inspire students and scholars from around the world to engage in research in a field that has long been ignored in architectural education and research. His many accolades include an MBE for his contributions to architectural education, as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments.*

I'm often asked for an explanation of my interest and research in the field of vernacular architecture, especially, as some argue, it's "architecture without architects". Employed in 1964 by Bernard Rudofsky for his book and exhibition catalogue, the phrase was neat. With its images largely drawn from Tourist organisations and their brief captions, for many architects it summarised the romantic image of indigenous building traditions. How dwellings and other buildings related to their cultures was barely indicated and, as I feared, in terms of neglect, it did more harm than good. This, and my studies of West African peoples, their settlements and their architecture, prompted me to compile my first book on the subject, *Shelter and Society*, largely written by members of the Architectural Association and my former students in the Architectural Association Graduate School.

Since then, I was motivated to edit other collections and to devote as much time as I could to studying, teaching and building a library on the subject.

Most writing on 'vernacular architecture', a term which dates from the mid-nineteenth century, is locally or nationally focused, with materials, structures and plans dominating. Comparative studies are rare and sufficient consideration is seldom given to the environmental contexts of indigenous building traditions, and to the needs of the cultures that produced them. Research into the buildings of many cultures throughout the world would be demanding, but clearly it was necessary.

When I joined Architecture at Oxford Polytechnic I established a "Shelter and Settlements Unit" in which Ian Davis initiated studies in post-disaster housing. We studied the post-disaster housing in Turkey that had been rejected by the homeless after the Gediz earthquake. Other projects followed in different parts of the world, although the lack of information on cultures and their building was often frustrating, indicating the need for a comprehensive resource.

My intention to compile a world encyclopedia of the subject took ten years to achieve with the combined efforts of Lindsay Asquith, my wife Val, and a small but devoted team based at Oxford Brookes. With entries by 750 contributors from over 80 countries, the three-volume work was eventually produced in 1997 by the publisher of some of my music books, Cambridge University Press. The first edition sold out in six months, indicating that the need was recognised. But by whom? Not by politicians or even by many architects and planners. A Master's course in International Studies in Vernacular Architecture seemed important and, once established, ran for eight years with the help of Rosemary Latter and many past and subsequent students. Regrettably, the fees and cost of living in Oxford meant that many potential students from overseas who would benefit by it could not afford to come. Of those who did, several from each year have since obtained significant appointments, some teaching their own courses in vernacular studies.

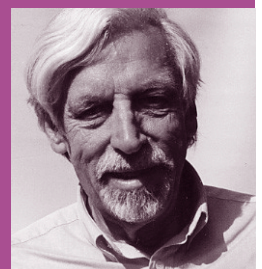
It is true that vernacular buildings are not designed by architects, who are responsible for the design of a minute proportion of the world's buildings of which many are contractor-designed, such as the suburbs of Great Britain. Most are vernacular, self-built and community-built. If half the world's population now lives in cities, the corollary is that half does not, which does not accord with estimates that vernacular buildings

represent 80 per cent of all housing. The missing factor is the number of people who live in the self-built *barriadas*, *gecekondus*, *favelas* and many other "informal" or "squatter" settlements that constitute the majority of housing in the cities of the developing world. As ignored in conferences on "the City" as indigenous vernaculars of the rural areas are disregarded, they reflect a rapidly growing world problem. In the year 2000 the global population was estimated to be six billion and expected to grow by fifty per cent by mid-century - already regarded by many population experts as an underestimate. The implications of housing a further three billion people within the next forty years are scarcely considered, although the problems of diminishing skilled labour, material resources and essential services, such as fresh water and sanitation are immense.

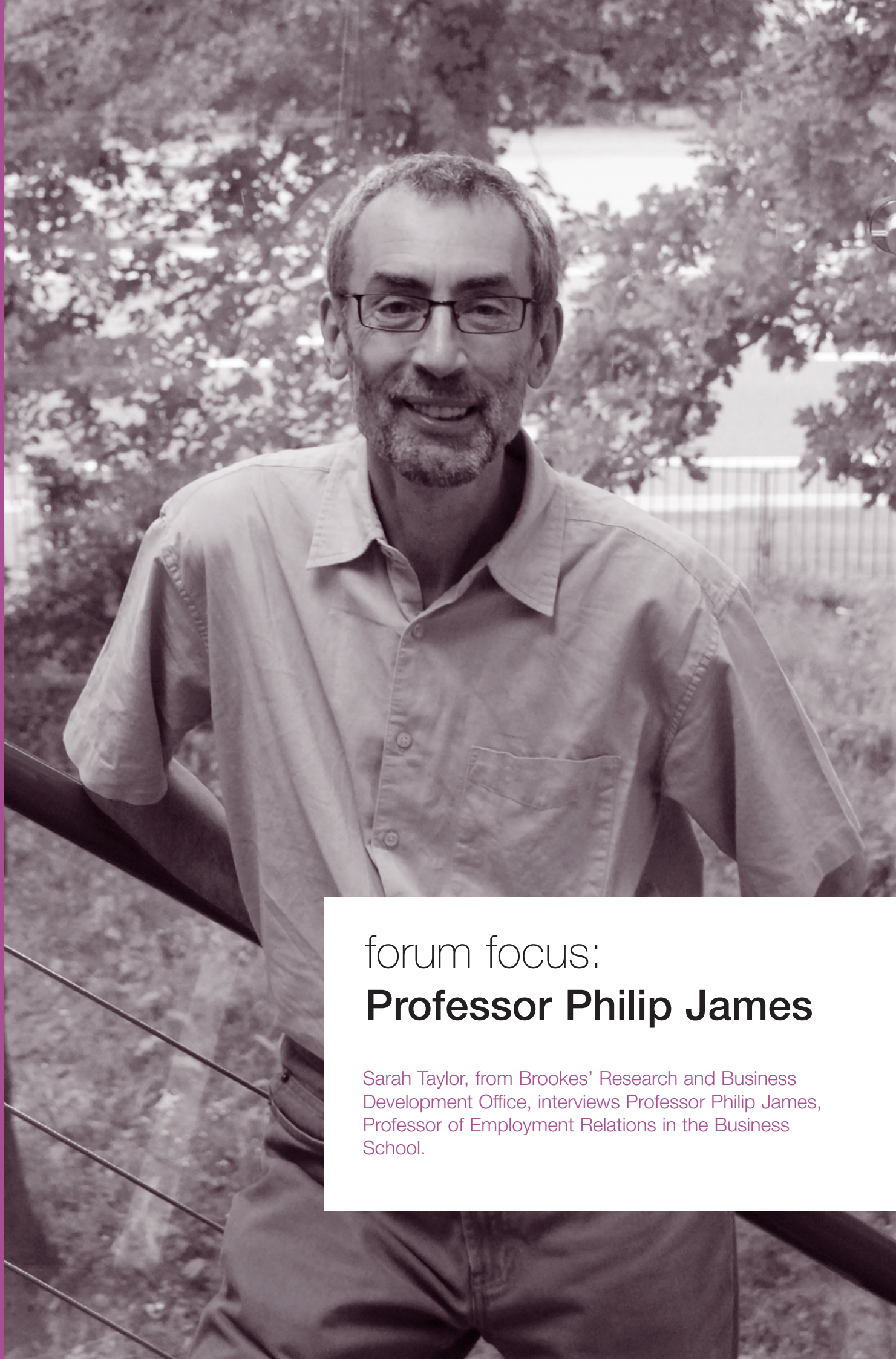
With the Encyclopedia the field was summarised, but much remained to be done; not least, a complementary Atlas of Vernacular Architecture of the World. This was principally researched by Dr Marcel Vellinga, mapped by Alex Bridge, and is shortly to be published by Taylor and Francis.

For many years my own research has been on cultural factors, specific and comparative, in the construction, forms, functions, expression of values, and transmission of skills in rural and peri-urban vernacular architecture traditions. In diverse environments across the world, I seek to ascertain how these are also reflected in cultural responses to external housing design or provision, as it is evident that many architect-designed housing projects are based on little awareness of such cultural factors. Considering the scale of housing needed now and in the immediate and long-term future, I believe that it can only be satisfactorily attained with the appropriate servicing of aided vernacular. This is the substance of much of my writing, lecturing and teaching in architecture, which is especially relevant in a school of all "the built environment".

Professor Paul Oliver







forum focus:

## **Professor Philip James**

Sarah Taylor, from Brookes' Research and Business Development Office, interviews Professor Philip James, Professor of Employment Relations in the Business School.



Phil James was appointed as Professor of Employment Relations at Oxford Brookes last August. Prior to this he had been employed at Middlesex University for 16 years, ten years of which were in a professorial capacity, worked as an editor and research journalist, and been a lecturer at the University of Birmingham. Phil's research interests span the fields of employment relations and occupational health and safety. Recent areas of research have included the human resource strategies of multinationals, the service quality and employment implications of outsourcing in the social care sector, absence and disability management, health and safety management within SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and the way in which legal reform can be utilised to improve worker representation with regard to workplace health and safety. Phil has published extensively through monographs, chapters in edited volumes and articles in academic and professional journals. He has been a Visiting Fellow at Cornell University, a Visiting Professor at the University of New South Wales and a specialist adviser to the Work and Pensions Select Committee. Currently, he is a member of the Executive Committee of the Institute of Employment Rights and Deputy Editor of the refereed journal *Policy and Practice in Health and Safety*.

**Q: What was the first piece of research with which you were involved?**

I was employed in the late 1970s as a Research Assistant at Middlesex Polytechnic to work on a Health and Safety Executive funded project concerned with exploring how companies had responded to the management responsibilities imposed on them under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. My work involved conducting interviews with managerial personnel and union representatives, undertaking questionnaires and surveys and observing joint consultative meetings.

**Q: What did you learn from that initial experience and has your focus been affected by it?**

I suppose at a practical level the most important lessons related to the strategies useful in terms of gaining access to research sites and, once access has been obtained, establishing co-operative relationships with key organisational actors in order to maximise data collection. At a deeper and more profound level, the study acted to prompt a long-standing and continuing interest in both socio-legal studies and the issue of occupational health and safety.

**Q: What has been your most recent project and what particularly interested you about the work?**

Invariably, I find myself juggling a number of different things at the same time, with the result that it's not possible for me to simply say 'at the moment I'm working on X'. Of my recent work, I would particularly mention two pieces. The first has been the production of a co-edited book, entitled *Institutions, Production and Working Life*, that was published at the end of last year by Oxford University Press and which sought to bring together contributors from two rather different analytical, but potentially complementary, schools of thought, namely regulation theorists and those working in the labour process tradition. The second is a project funded by Unison which focussed on examining the way in which current trends to outsource public funded social care to the voluntary sector are impacting on service quality and the work experiences of those delivering services. I mention these because between them they neatly capture key aspects of my theoretical and empirical interests.

**Q: What book/article has most inspired your work?**

This is a difficult question to answer because what I do is the product of so many influences. I suppose, intellectually, where I am now can be traced back most fundamentally to my exposure, as a result of a wonderful economics teacher at school, to two books written by J.K Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* and the *New Industrial State*, and the interest this stimulated in political economy. Indeed, the teacher in question is also more fundamentally responsible for my presence in academia since he had the effect of transforming someone who had obtained just three 'O levels', and failed those in English and Maths, into a person attracted to the idea of study. More direct and later sources of influence were the wonderful workplace based studies of employment relations undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s by sociologists like Alvin Gouldner, John Goldthorpe, Huw Beynon and Theo Nichols, as well as the more general analytical writings on industrial relations during this period produced by Alan Fox and Richard Hyman.

**Q: Who would you most like to have worked with in your field? And why? (Don't be restricted to the current era!)**

I'm not keen to mention anyone alive in case I get an email back saying you have got to be joking. As to those not in this category, there are clearly many people that I could list and sound appropriately pompous. Karl Marx is a clear case in point. On grounds of credibility, I'm consequently also not keen to mention the dead. Perhaps the best and safest response is to say that I would never say no to working with people of the quality already mentioned.

**Q: What outcomes from your research are you most proud of?**

I would prefer to leave it to recipients or victims of my work to comment on its value. If pushed, however, I would say the way in which my research relating to the regulation of workplace health and safety, absence management and the links between job retention and vocational rehabilitation has both provided a platform for engagement with relevant policy debates and also, more indirectly, contributed to such debates. I'm chuffed, for example, that official guidance on sickness absence mirrors an analytical framework I and colleagues developed and also pleased that the work in these areas has enabled me to speak at conferences and seminars organised by such organisations as the Trades Union Congress, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Health and Safety Executive, the manufacturers organisation (EEF) and Confederation of British Industry.

**Q: If time and/or money was no restriction, what areas/issues would you most like to investigate?**

I would say a major comparative study on the links between the nature of workplace governance and the extent of work-related ill health and the way in which these vary between countries as a result of national differences in regulatory regimes and factors like the degree of union power, managerial attitudes, and the dynamics of management-worker relations. It seems to me that such a study could do much to help assist in the development of progressive policy agendas aimed at creating conditions at the workplace level that are much more supportive of work-related well being.

# New Research

**Dr Tom Betteridge**, Reader in the School of Arts and Humanities has won an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) grant to assist with ongoing research at Hampton Court Palace as part of his research project 'Henrician Court Drama'. The project began two years ago when Tom visited the Great Hall at Hampton Court and realised the extent to which it was set up as a theatrical space. It is the only existing Renaissance building in England for which there is unambiguous evidence of it being used for performances throughout the period c.1525 - 1658. In particular, the Great Hall at Hampton Court is largely the same space today as it was when William Shakespeare staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in front of James I or when Oliver Cromwell sang to celebrate the marriage of his daughter.

Henrician Court Drama is a research project into the plays and interludes that were staged at the court of Henry VIII. Its most immediate aim is to undertake research into John Heywood's work, *The Play of the Weather* in which Henry VIII, thinly disguised as Jupiter, comes to earth fed up with people complaining about the weather. He decides to listen to all the different classes, hear the kind of weather they want and then fix it for ever. In a workshop held at the beginning of May two scenes from *The Play of the Weather* were staged using Holbein's drawings as a basis for the costume and set design. On the basis of the results of the workshop Tom will be putting together a grant application to the AHRC to do a full production of *The Play of the Weather* in 2009 – the anniversary of Henry VIII's succession in 1509.

**Dr Andrew Spicer**, Senior Lecturer in History in the School of Arts and Humanities has been awarded nearly £481,000 from the AHRC for his study 'The Early Modern Parish Church and the Religious Landscape'.

Parish churches remain readily identifiable (and often popular) landmarks within both rural and urban environment across Europe; their towers and spires serve as nodal points identifying sacred space within the landscape. This was even more so during the early modern period when the parish church was frequently the only stone building and often the tallest and most substantial structure within any given community. While parish churches have been the subject of individual case studies or national surveys, there has been no single attempt to assess the importance of these buildings within the wider landscape and from a trans-European perspective.

The project will examine the role of the parish church within the wider religious landscape, which itself was full of other focal points of the holy, such as wells, shrines, crosses and pilgrimage sites. But this was also a period of religious conflict during which the confessional landscape was redrawn as the

tenets of the Reformation and Counter Reformation were implemented, often violently. It was not only confessional conflict that affected the parish church: the religious landscape evolved during the early modern period as the development and exploitation of the environment left their mark. This project will therefore assess the parish church against the background of not only religious upheaval but also profound economic and environmental change during the early modern period.

The research will concentrate on case studies looking at the parish churches in dioceses in Denmark, England, France and the Low Countries, thereby reflecting the confessional diversity of early modern Europe. This interdisciplinary study will draw not only on historical techniques but through the expertise of Dr Louise Dunning (Oxford Brookes) and Dr Margit Thöfner (UEA) will also consider architectural and art history perspectives. As well as a co-authored monograph, this project will host a major international conference on the 'Early Modern Parish Church and the Religious Landscape' as well as a series of public lectures.

**Dr Glauco De Vita**, Reader in the Business School was recently awarded an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grant for £40,899 for a study with Dr Andrew Abbott, Senior Lecturer in Economics of the University of Bath. Entitled 'How do different exchange rate regimes affect foreign direct investment flows?'. The project, intends to fill the gap about how the choice of exchange rate regimes affects the foreign direct investment (FDI) flow between countries. Drawing from several exchange rate regime classification schemes and using a thoroughly documented panel data model that includes a comprehensive set of theory-based variables expected to have explanatory power in the determination of FDI, the study aims to empirically investigate the impact of a wide menu of exchange rate regimes on bilateral FDI flows between country-pairs. Researchers in the fields of international economics and monetary economics will benefit from increased understanding of the FDI response to different exchange rate regimes and the findings should also prove very useful in highlighting the inward investment implications of different exchange rate regime policy options and in shaping the policy dialogue with government departments, central banks and international policy makers.

**Dr Katherine Watson**, Department of History in the School of Arts and Humanities has been awarded £85,245 over two years under the Wellcome Trust Research Leave Scheme, for a new project on 'Medicine and justice: medico-legal practice in England and Wales, 1700-1914'. This project will study the history of the expert medical testimony

given in provincial English and Welsh criminal courts, and looks at the doctors and midwives who provided it. The focus will be on cases of criminal violence, and comparisons with London (which so far has been the subject of much of the existing research) will be made, in order to open up an important area of intersection between medicine and the law to historical scrutiny.

**Dr Rajat Gupta**, Department of Architecture in the School of the Built Environment has received an Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Case award for New Academics (CNA) of £81,153 for a three and a half-year research project. The overall aim of the project is to assess the potential of ground source heat pumps in reducing energy-related carbon dioxide emissions from UK housing in a changing climate. There is also a PhD studentship attached to this project, which runs in collaboration with an industrial partner, Ice Energy (installers of ground source heat pumps).

**Dr Jim Barnes**, School of Social Sciences and Law has secured funding of £53,138 from the British Academy to support his study investigating brain activity in Parkinson's patients to observe whether abnormal neuronal synchronization may serve as a physiological marker for hallucinations.

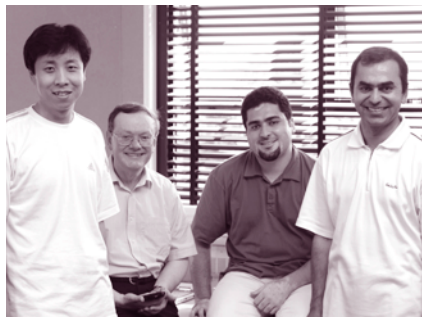
**Professor Paul Weindling and Dr Marius Turda**, both of the History Department and Centre for Health, Medicine and Society in the School of Arts and Humanities, have been awarded £403,232 to carry out a detailed, Europe-wide study on the victims of Nazi medical experiments. Although coercive human experiments are among the most notorious features of Nazism, there is no overview as to their extent, or guide to the fragmented literature and sources. Estimates of the overall numbers of experiments vary greatly. Recent historical opinion that the number of victims was relatively few is contradicted by the unexpectedly high number of compensation claimants by victims of experiments over the past five years.

The project, entitled 'Human Experiments under National Socialism: Victims, Perpetrators, and Post-war Trials', aims to provide a biographical analysis of the persons who were experimented on or otherwise abused for medical research in National Socialist Germany and in territories under German occupation 1938-45. The outputs of the project will be a comprehensive database, a monograph on the perpetrators and victims of Nazi coerced experiments, and a biographical dictionary concerning the victims, and the reasons why they were experimented on or otherwise abused.



# Open Overlays:

## Component-based Communication Support for the Grid



Professor David Duce in the School of Technology has recently completed a three year EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) - funded joint project with Lancaster University. A major issue in computer science is how to support large-scale heterogeneous collaborative applications which employ multiple media-types in a form suitable for deployment over the world-wide Grid. The Grid is a recent paradigm for harnessing world-wide distributed resources dynamically to work on large-scale problems. Some of the underlying software technology is closely related to the web services architecture used in industry. The 'Open Overlay' concept enables

complex applications to adapt to changes in either the quality of service provided by Grid resources or to the changing requirements of an operating application.

Professor Duce and his team have developed an application scenario based on wildfire management; firefighters are organised into groups whose composition may change dynamically as the scenario evolves. Fires are extinguished by firebreaks, so the main activity of the firefighters is to construct new firebreaks or clear old ones. In the scenario, firefighters communicate with each other and with controllers through mobile computing devices, which present information to firefighters as graphical overlays on maps. They have constructed a collaborative workspace tool (called svgCWE) using advanced Web technologies along with a fire simulator based on a probabilistic model of fire spread that takes account of wind direction and different kinds of combustible material. Fire modelling was not a research objective of the project, so the simplest kind of model that would enable the team to demonstrate the concept was used. The fire simulator is an example of the kind of application that can consume substantial amounts of computing power and whose

resource requirements increase significantly as finer details of the terrain are taken into account.

A demonstrator was constructed in which users can play the roles of firefighters or controllers and shows how the tool can be reconfigured. Networking provision in such a scenario includes both fixed (wired) and mobile (wireless) networks; the project has demonstrated how the provision of networking services could adapt to changing requirements, developing a middleware toolkit called **Gridkit**. The application can be reconfigured as firefighters and controllers join and leave groups and resource requirements change.

Gridkit was also used in another project at Lancaster that demonstrates the reconfiguration of sensor networks in a flood-monitoring application.

The real research outcomes of the project are the techniques used to construct the collaborative workspace tool, the mechanisms to support reconfiguration and the middleware framework on which it is based.

## The Implications of the protection of freedom of religion in the context of employment

Dr Lucy Vickers, Reader in Law, has undertaken a project on 'The Implications of the Protection on Freedom of Religion in the Context of Employment', funded by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council). The project will result in the publication of a monograph in 2008.

Discrimination on grounds of religion and belief within the workplace raises many complex and contested issues. Discrimination can occur where secular employers refuse to employ or accommodate religious employees, as well as where religious groups refuse to employ those of a different religion, or those of the same religion whose interpretation or practice of the faith differs. Where an employer discriminates on religious grounds, indirect discrimination may occur on grounds such as sex, sexual orientation, or marital status. Moreover, freedom of religion is protected as a fundamental, though not absolute, human right which may be enjoyed by both religious individuals and religious groups. This, and its importance to individuals means that religious freedom

may warrant a degree of protection in the work context.

Dr Vickers considers the extent to which religious interests are protected in the workplace, with reference to the protection provided by the Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003. She seeks to establish a principled basis for determining the proper scope of religious freedom at work, in particular considering how religious discrimination interacts with rights such as gender and sexual orientation equality.

The key to establishing some form of equilibrium between conflicting rights is for courts to assess in light of the need to uphold equality, to protect freedom of religion, and to protect other human rights such as privacy and freedom of speech. The assessment of proportionality should take into account the interests of service users, members of staff, customers and employers. Where the balance lies may depend in part on the status of the employer (for example, whether it has a religious ethos and whether

it is part of the public or private sector) and whether it has a monopoly on providing particular types of employment.

Predicting outcomes using this approach in any particular case can be difficult. However, its advantage is that it can provide consistency in terms of clear procedural safeguards, to ensure that restrictions on religious freedom, and exceptions to the non-discrimination principle are only imposed after proper consideration of the varied interests at stake.

Dr Lucy Vickers



# The Economic Ecology of Small Businesses: the case of Oxfordshire

An influential report has recently been completed on the Economic Ecology of Small Businesses by the Oxfordshire Economic Observatory – a joint research unit of Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford. This project was primarily undertaken by Brookes staff, led by Professor John Glasson, with Lesley Downing and Andrew Chadwick, all based in the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD). The research was funded by the UK Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and sought to test, using the case of Oxfordshire, the extent to which small businesses had a local ecology – buying and selling locally, interacting with the local community and operating in an environmentally sustainable fashion.

The research included a representative sample survey of the 25,000 small businesses in the county, plus detailed case

studies. It showed the vital importance of small businesses in the county, accounting for over 99% of businesses and 57% of private sector employment. It also found that, for example, 50% of the businesses derive more than 50% of their annual turnover from local (county) sales. Small businesses also make very good use of local services - banks, shops and the currently threatened post offices. They also bring wider value to the community – for example via work experience and involvement with local schools, charities and sponsorship of various kinds. In this age of ever more commuting, it is notable that small businesses provide predominantly local employment, with 75% reporting at least half their staff living within 5 miles of their business premises. The study also reveals growing environmental awareness and attention to waste recycling and energy conservation.

But the research also revealed a host of issues confronting small businesses. The major issues were more national in nature, especially red tape and taxation. Others were more local, including housing and premises supply, transport, environmental issues and, in particular, skill shortages when recruiting new staff. The report, and the issues and possible ways forward, were discussed at a conference at the Kassam Stadium on the 16th March 2007, attended by over 120 delegates from small businesses and from key national, regional and local agencies. The conference was opened by Andrew Smith, MP for Oxford East, who also took the opportunity on the 28th March 2007 to make a substantial presentation of the research in a debate on small businesses in the House of Commons.

## New staff

**Professor Kathryn Ecclestone**, Reader in Assessment for Lifelong Learning and Deputy Director of the Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning in the Westminster Institute of Education.

Professor Ecclestone has worked in the field of post compulsory education for the past 20 years and has published a number of books and a range of articles on assessment and, more recently, on the rise of a 'therapeutic ethos' in education and assessment. Kathryn is currently directing a project on Formative Assessment in vocational education and adult literacy and numeracy programmes.

**Professor Marlene Morrison**, Professor in Education in the Westminster Institute of Education

Professor Morrison is a sociologist of education who specialises in diversity, social justice and inclusion. Previously a social worker, she began her teaching and research

career in further education with an interest both in opportunities for and the challenges faced by non-traditional learners.

Previously working at three Research Institutes in the University of Lincoln, University of Leicester, and the University of Warwick, Marlene has also taught widely on undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral programmes in the UK and internationally.

**Dr Robert Beckford**, Reader in Black Theology and Popular Culture in the Westminster Institute of Education

Dr Beckford is an interdisciplinary scholar working within the disciplines of theology and cultural studies. He has published five books exploring the relationship between ethnicity, popular culture and religious expression. Robert has made over a dozen documentary films with the BBC and Channel 4 and won several awards including a BAFTA in 2001. His current written research explores the

interface between religion, documentary and the public sphere. His current visual research is an exploration of neo-colonial economics in West Africa - a one hour film for Channel 4 to be broadcast in June 07.

**Professor Michael Todinov**, Professor of Mechanical/Electronic Engineering in the School of Technology

Professor Todinov is an international specialist in quantitative reliability and risk analysis. His background is in mechanical engineering and engineering mathematics, and he works closely with the nuclear, automotive, manufacturing, oil, gas and utility sectors. Michael has published over 80 publications in modelling, simulation and quantitative risk analysis. He joins us from Cranfield University where he led research and teaching in this area, and his name is associated with the creation of the theoretical foundations of risk-based reliability analysis.



pictures left to right:

Kathryn Ecclestone  
Marlene Morrison  
Robert Beckford  
Michael Todinov





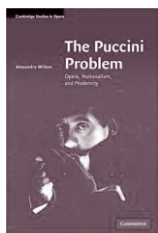
# New publications

## The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism, and Modernity

**Dr Alexandra Wilson**, Senior Lecturer in Musicology in the School of Arts and Humanities

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

ISBN: 0521856884



This book is the first detailed investigation of the reception and cultural contexts of Puccini's music and offers a fresh view of this historically important but frequently overlooked composer. It explores the ways in which Puccini's music

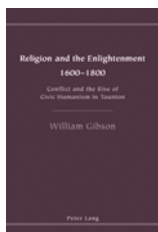
and persona were held up as both the antidote to and the embodiment of the decadence widely felt to be afflicting late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Italy, a nation which although politically unified remained culturally divided. The book focuses upon two central, related questions which were debated throughout Puccini's career: his status as a national or international composer, and his status as a traditionalist or modernist. This book makes a major contribution to our understanding of both the history of opera and of the wider artistic and intellectual life of turn-of-the-century Italy.

## Religion and the Enlightenment 1600-1800

**Professor William Gibson**, Academic Director for Lifelong Learning in the Westminster Institute of Education

Publisher: Peter Lang Publishing Group

ISBN: 9783039109227



This book considers how Early Modern England was transformed from a turbulent and rebellious kingdom into a peaceable land. It challenges the usual historical view that religion could make people militant but only

secularism made people peaceable. It argues that while religion was a primary motivator for the violence and rebellions of the seventeenth century, moderate rational and enlightened Christianity made people less militant and violent in the eighteenth century. This book contributes to our understanding of England's transformation and of the religious factors that stimulated it.

# News in brief

Following the Professorial Promotions Committee held in March we offer our congratulations for the following awards:

## Professor Emeritus

**Professor Graham Upton**, Pro Vice-Chancellor

**Professor Nabeel Hamdi**, School of the Built Environment

## Professorships

**Professor Elizabeth Burton**, School of the Built Environment

**Professor Geoff Goddard**, School of Technology

**Professor Wolfgang Weiss**, School of Social Sciences and Law

**Professor Katie Williams**, School of the Built Environment

**Dr Pritam Singh**, Senior Lecturer in Economics at the Business School has been elected as a Research Associate of the Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House), University of Oxford. The Department confers this status (valid for two years) occasionally to a small group of development studies scholars in recognition of their contribution to the field of international development studies.

**Professor Peter Harris**, Department of Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism Management in the Business School has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Council for Hospitality Management Education at a recent meeting for his "... invaluable contribution to hospitality management education, financial management in the hospitality industry and to CHME over many years".

**Professor Diana Woodhouse**, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), has been successfully nominated to become an Academician of the Academy of Learned Societies for the Social Sciences. The Academy is composed of Individual Academicians and Learned Societies. Academicians are distinguished scholars and practitioners from academia and the public and private sectors. Most of the Learned Societies in the Social Sciences in the United Kingdom are represented within the Academy. The Academy responds to Government and other consultations on behalf of the social science community, organises meetings about social science and seminars on topics that span social science disciplines, and sponsors a number of schemes that promote social science and enhance its value to society.

On 22 February the Belgian Ministry of Culture awarded **Dr Nathalie Aubert**, Department of French Studies in the School of Arts and Humanities, its prestigious annual prize (4000 euros) for the 'Rayonnement de la littérature belge à l'étranger', in Brussels. The award recognised her important role as the main organiser of two conferences and principal editor of two co-edited books dedicated to Belgian literature: *La Belgique entre deux siècles: laboratoire de la modernité* (Peter Lang, 2007) and *From Art Nouveau to Surrealism: Belgian Modernity in the Making* (Legenda, 2007).

**Craig Richardson**, Department of Art in the School of Arts and Humanities has been appointed an Honorary Research Fellow at the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee, for three years from 1 January 2007. The fellowship will help to facilitate research in Scotland on the development of the avant-garde in Scottish art during the 1960s (part of a monograph on Scottish Art Since 1960), research for which he has been awarded a grant of £1160 by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

## Diary

may – august 2007

Details of research training events throughout the year are available on the Research and Business Development Office website:

[www.brookes.ac.uk/res/news/training](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/res/news/training)

For details of research seminars taking place in each of the Schools during the year please visit the website at:

[www.brookes.ac.uk/res/news/seminars](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/res/news/seminars)

**Research Forum**, the research magazine of Oxford Brookes University, is published three times a year.

Contributions are welcomed from all sections of the University and should be sent to The Editor, **Research Forum**, The Research and Business Development Office, Oxford Brookes University, Buckley Building, Headington Campus, Gypsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP or by email to [researchforum@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:researchforum@brookes.ac.uk)

The University accepts no responsibility for the content of any material in **Research Forum**. Readers should note in particular that the inclusion of news and editorial items does not imply endorsement by the University of the matters reported or the views expressed. The Editor reserves the right to edit contributions before publication and to refuse editorial items.

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Oxford Brookes promotes an inclusive and supportive environment, enabling all members of the University (staff and students) to reach their potential and celebrate their diversity. We embrace the spirit of all equalities legislation and are committed to tackling all forms of unfair discrimination and to the development of policies and practices to ensure these objectives. We seek to make our courses as inclusive as possible and welcome applications from all sections of the community and from people at all stages of their life. For further information on the University's commitment to equal opportunities and diversity, please refer to the Equal Opportunities Policy for Students, the University's Race Equality Policy and the Students' Charter – available from [www.brookes.ac.uk](http://www.brookes.ac.uk) or on request from the University's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Manager +44 (0)1865 485929.

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