Welcome! to the first issue of the Hums Newsletter. The Hums Newsletter succeeds the Hums Digest and will continue to be edited by Rosanne Jacks but with what we hope will be a more lively format. It will appear monthly instead of weekly, include pictures, notices of forthcoming events and useful information, and help to celebrate staff and student achievements. It is a great pleasure to be here in the beautiful city of Bristol and to serve as your new Head of School. I am grateful to my predecessors Ronald Hutton and Roger Middleton who have placed the School in an excellent position both academically and administratively, and to all the senior management team, especially Beth Williamson, James Thompson, Tom Begbie and Rosanne Jacks, who have made me so welcome.

Visit of the VC
Among the highlights of this busy time was the visit to the School by Vice Chancellor Sir Eric Thomas on 5 February, an event which was followed by a full School meeting. In his remarks to both SPARC and the School forum, Sir Eric commented on the transformation that he felt had happened in the interval since his last visit to the School in 2008 and today. He suggested that there was a confident, energetic and outgoing feel to the School that was testimony to the benefits that have flowed from the expansion program and a mature engagement with the national and international research agenda. At the same time, questions from students and staff alerted him to a range of issues, including access to the library, the status of contract teaching staff, and rising staff workloads which rightly concern us.

New lectureships
This is an exciting time for the School as we continue to expand. In the last few weeks we have appointed no less than eight new lecturers, four in History and four in English, and will be appointing a new Professor of Medieval Studies this spring. Building on the appointments made over the last two years, these new staff will help consolidate the strength and reputation of the Humanities at the University and beyond.

Looking ahead
What do I see ahead for the School of Humanities? As I said in the School meeting, I have not been here long enough to feel in any way qualified to make predictions. However, looking around with the fresh perspective of a recent arrival and benefitting from speaking with many of you, I think there are one or two important issues which are likely to concern us in the near future:

1. Widening participation
Firstly, I see the need to continue various programs aimed at widening participation so that our student body comes to represent more fully the social and economic mix of the city and communities we serve.

2. Internationalisation
Secondly, looking beyond these shores, I see the need for a greater internationalization of both our students and curriculum, particularly at postgraduate level. This will be a challenge because currently there is a gap between our undergraduates, who are about 9% of the University of Bristol total, and our postgraduate taught and postgraduate research numbers, which are only 4% and 5% respectively. It would be good to bridge this gap.

All this must be accomplished in a sound financial framework, something which will be more challenge as we consolidate our overall numbers and the growth of student income necessarily slows.

I look forward to working with you and facing these challenges over the next four years.

Hilary Carey
March 2014

New lectureship appointments
We are very pleased to announce the following new lectureship appointments for September 2014:

Emily Baughan will be joining the School as Lecturer in 19th/20th c. British History.

Emily will submit her University of Bristol PhD thesis ‘Saving the Children: Humanitarian Action in Europe and Africa 1918-1945’ in the next month or so. She is currently a Fulbright Postgraduate Scholar at Columbia University and has been a WUN Visiting Fellow at UCT and a Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress.
Andrew Blades is currently a Stipendiary Lecturer in English at St Peter’s College in Oxford and will be joining the University of Bristol as the new Lecturer in English literature and Medicine. Andrew has recently completed his PhD thesis, on American AIDS literature of the 1980s, as a monograph for OUP, and is working on a new project on medical, philosophical, and cultural understandings of anxiety.

Josie Gill will be joining the School as Lecturer in Black British Writing of the 20th and 21st Centuries. Josie’s thesis examined the relationship between the new genetic sciences and the literary, exploring the interaction between them over the question of race. She is currently working on a project which will examine the literary and scientific contexts in which African and slave ancestry have been imagined in Britain and the US.

Daniel Haines is currently a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at Royal Holloway, University of London and will be joining the University of Bristol in September in the position of Lecturer in the History of Environment and Landscape. Daniel received his PhD in History from the Royal Holloway, University of London with the title “Building the Empire, Building the Nation: Water, land and the politics of river-development in Sind. ‘1898-1969’.

Rowena Kennedy-Epstein will be joining the University of Bristol as the new Lecturer in Gender and Women’s Writing of the 20th and 21st Centuries from her current position as Adjunct Assistant Professor at the City University of New York. Rowena achieved her PhD at the City University of New York with the title ‘Hybrid Aesthetics and the Politics of the Archive: Muriel Rukeyser’s Spanish Civil War’.

Su Lin Lewis will be joining us in September 2014 as the new Lecturer in 19th to 20th Century Transnational and Global History. Su received her PhD in History at the University of Cambridge, with the title of Asian Urbanites and Cosmopolitan Cultures in Bangkok, Penang and Rangoon, 1910-1940, and is joining us from her current post as a Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Birmingham.

Noah Millstone will be joining the School as Lecturer in History 1400-1700. Noah received his PhD from Stanford University in 2011. His dissertation was on ‘Plot’s Commonwealth: the Circulation of Manuscripts and the Practice of Politics in Early Stuart England, 1614-1641’. He is currently a Prize Fellow in Economics, History and Politics at Harvard University.

Sebastiaan Verweij will be joining the University of Bristol as the new Lecturer in Late Medieval and Early Modern English. Sebastiaan achieved his PhD in Early Modern English from the University of Glasgow, with the thesis title ‘The Inlegibill Scribling of my Impromptu pen: Production and Circulation of Literary Miscellany Manuscripts in Jacobean Scotland, c. 1580-1620’, and is currently teaching at the University of Oxford.

A very warm welcome to all!

Next month: Meet our new PDRAs!

DHR report

Impact

As I indicated at the School meeting, the School and Faculty are thinking at the moment about Impact, especially in the light of our experiences in the run-up to REF2014. While the University does not think about impact exclusively to do with REF, nonetheless we will need to plan carefully for the Impact part of REF2020, which people are currently assuming will be at least as important, if not more important, than it was in REF2014.

The Faculty has asked us to begin thinking about areas of our research that might generate Engagement and Impact over the next few years, and to that end I have been discussing with Subject Leads and Heads of Subject their perceptions of strong areas of research with Impact/Engagement potential. As I indicated at the School Meeting, we would like to hear from individuals also, especially if you think that you have a research project that might eventually form an Impact Case Study for the next REF. (If you were not involved in a Case Study in REF2014 and would like to know more about what that entails, please get in touch.) John Lee, our Impact Director, will shortly be commencing a series of meetings with Subject groups and Research Cluster members, to begin to map out our draft Impact Strategy so if you have ideas and suggestions you want to discuss, please feel free to contact him.

Research Grant income

The School has done well in
raising the amount of grant income that it has generated in recent years. However, over the near to medium term we will need to continue to strive towards stretched targets for research income. We must start to plan for grant applications more strategically. Grant income strategy will be added to our emerging School Research Strategy. As part of SRD and ARR, we all need to look at research leave plans, and grant application plans, earlier. The University expects more and larger grants with indirects, especially on the part of senior and mid-career staff.

Research Leave funding
Those who are hoping to be on leave in 2015-16 and beyond should already be thinking about grant applications to help cover their projected leaves. We should be thinking not just of individual Fellowships, but larger grants, with indirects attached. Your HSU can help you begin to plan what is most appropriate, and you should then take the advice of the Research Development Managers, keeping the DHR in the loop about your plans.

Early career scholars who will wish to apply for AHRC Early Career Fellowships should note that the terms of the scheme have just changed. Please see the email sent by Valerie Aspin on 7th March, and this link: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-Events/News/Pages/AHRC-Fellowships-Scheme-to-be-renamed-the-Leadership-Fellows-Scheme.aspx. HSUs should ensure that early career colleagues who may be being slotted into the research leave cycle are aware of the timelines, processes and deadlines relating to research grant schemes to which they can apply (AHRC, Leverhulme, etc).

Did you know…?

English at Bristol was ranked 40th in the world in the 2014 QS Worldwide University Rankings and 11th in the UK in the Times and Sunday Times Good Universities Guide.
Conference and event successes

Canton Camera at the BAMG

The Chinese New Year galloped in at the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery over the weekend of 1st and 2nd February. The Historical Photographs of China team exhibited Canton Camera, among many other celebrations. The pop-up exhibition consists of ten banners, showcasing images of Canton (Guangzhou), one of Bristol’s twin cities. The atmosphere was great (there were over 9,000 visitors to the museum), although the capacity of the building was stretched and many people could not get in. Mayor George Ferguson announced his intention to hold the event in the streets of Bristol next year. We plan to exhibit Canton Camera in Bristol again. There are some snaps by Jamie of the Chinese New Year event up at:

http://visualisingchina.net/blog/2014/02/03/year-of-the-horse-at-bmag/

UoB news item:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2014/january/10106.html

Visualising China:

http://visualisingchina.net/

Jamie Carstairs

Digitisation Officer

Historical Photographs of

Spiritual exercises postgraduate conference

Religion and Theology (RETH) held its 19th annual Joint Postgraduate Conference on the theme of ‘spiritual exercises’ on 7-8 March. It welcomed approximately 130 participants from universities from 12 different countries (UK, US, Korea, Morocco, Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, France) from four continents (America, Europe, Asia, Africa). More than 70 papers were read on subjects from Buddhism to Christianity, Islam, asceticism, mysticism, cultural religious phenomena, witchcraft and spell-making, ecology, material culture, Marxism, communal experience, education, and philosophy. One panel consisted of papers read by undergraduates. Friday featured a round table on approaches to the researching of spiritual exercises. The conference’s keynote address was given by Professor Rupert Gethin and entitled, ‘Emptiness and unknowing: comparing Buddhist and Christian spiritual practices.’

Jon Balserak

Faculty of Arts Research Cluster: Religion, Culture and the Imagination

Another very successful conference for RETH, this time on Thursday 6 March. This was a half-day conference which consisted of ten-minute ‘flash papers’. Participants included undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff with an interest in any aspect of the study of religion. The event was organised by Rita Langer and key speakers included Timothy Allen, RETH, Ruth Coates, Russian, Jon Balserak, RETH, Elsa de Luca, Music and Hester Jones, English. The event was followed by an open discussion of future cluster activities.

Centre for Medieval Studies postgraduate conference

On Friday 21 and Saturday 22 February postgraduate students from the Centre for Medieval Studies held the University of Bristol Centre for Medieval Studies Medieval Postgraduate Conference. Now in its 20th year, Centre for Medieval Studies Medieval Postgraduate Conference is proudly run by postgraduate students for postgraduate students and early career scholars, although anyone with a keen interest in the medieval world is very welcome. In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the conference, this year’s organising committee was made up of students from across the Arts and Social Sciences, including representatives from the Departments of Drama: Theatre, Film and Television, French and History (Historical Studies).

This year the conference was very pleased to welcome Professor Ronald Hutton (University of Bristol) as the keynote speaker. Professor Hutton kicked-off proceedings on Friday morning with a thoroughly engaging and thought provoking paper entitled When did the Middle Ages End in Britain? The lively question and answer session following this paper was a testament to the breadth and depth of Professor Hutton’s research and it set the scene for stimulating discussions after each panel and in the session breaks throughout the weekend.

The conference was attended by 32 people ranging from current early career scholars and postgraduate students, through to Alumni from the University of Bristol and University of the West of England history departments and also interested members of the general public. The theme of this year’s conference was Dependence/Independence, which featured a diverse array of truly interdisciplinary and international papers. From discussions about Byzantine influence in Lombard Jewellery production, delivered by a speaker from Italy, through to discussions of chivalric and tournament literature delivered by one of Bristol’s own postgraduate students. This conference had something for everyone with an interest in the medieval world.

Feed back from this year’s conference indicates that it was a highly beneficial experience for those who attended. Here is a flavour of just some of the comments received: ‘good wide variety of topics’, ‘a very lively and entertaining conference, with a nice diverse array of speakers’ and ‘most enjoyable and well organised’.

This year’s conference was kindly supported by the Alumni Foundation, the Centre for Medieval Studies, as well as the Departments of English and History.

Emma Croker, Centre for Medieval Studies Postgraduate Conference Committee 2014
Laura Jansen’s (Classics) edited book has just been published by Cambridge University Press. This is the first synoptic study of Roman paratextuality and its exegesis within the broad sphere of Roman studies. Its contributions, which span literary, epigraphic and visual culture, focus on a wide variety of paratextual features - e.g. titles and inter-titles, prefaces, indices, inscriptions, closing statements, decorative and formalistic details - and other paratextual phenomena, such as the implicit frames that can be plotted at various intersections of a text’s formal organization. For more information see: www.bristol.ac.uk/classics/research/bookshelf/15.html. Well done, Laura!

Well done to Danny Karlin (English), Jonathan Saha (Historical Studies—History) and Carolyn Muessig (RETH) for their success in securing University Research Fellowships worth £10k each. Danny, our Winterstoke Professor of English, will be working to produce an edition of Henry James’s novel The Bostonians (1886) which will form part of a major new edition of Henry James’s complete fiction (novels and short stories). Jonathan, who specialises in the history of nineteenth and twentieth-century colonialism in South and Southeast Asia, will be working on a project entitled Animal History of Colonial Burma. Carolyn, a medievalist whose speciality is the devotional practices and beliefs expressed in late medieval Europe, will be working on a project called The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.

Silvie Kilgallon (Classics PhD candidate) has created a magnificent piece of embroidered art called Iliad Book One. In her words: ‘The Iliad was conceived as a response to the task of trying to share my love and appreciation for an ancient text with people whose knowledge of ancient Greek language and culture was very limited. The piece is part of an on-going project to create a translation of a text which allows it to be appreciated without the traditional framework of textual understanding. Each letter of the ancient Greek alphabet was assigned a colour and the text was then used as a pattern wherein each separate stitch represents an individual letter. Ultimately the project will include ‘translation’ of all 24 books of the Iliad.’ Silvie’s art will be hung in the Student Common Room. A very talented Silvie indeed!

Many congratulations to Carmody Grey (Gavin D’Costa’s doctoral student, RETH) who has won first prize in the prestigious Uses and Abuses of Biology Essay Competition, awarded by the Faraday Institute at the University of Cambridge. Carmody was awarded the prize of £1000 for an outstanding essay entitled ‘How is contemporary biology used for ideological purposes?’ Carmody’s essay examined the politics of ecology, looking at both the political use of ecological sciences, and the presence of covert ideological agendas within ecology itself.

One-day ‘pop-up’ university: What does it mean to be human?
15 November 2014, 10am
Josie McLellan (Historical Studies—History) is organising this event along with Tom Sperlinger, (English) and Richard Pettigrew (Philosophy) with funding from BIRTHA. More details to come but put this date in your Calendars! http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/research/events/2014/2378.html

Stephen Kelman, Booker prize shortlisted author of Pigeon English, will be visiting the University in November 2014 as part of the Booker Prize Foundation’s Universities Initiative. Madhu Krishnan (English) will be bringing you the full story in next month’s newsletter!

Newsflash!

I hope you have enjoyed reading the ‘new-styled’ HUMS Digest! The next issue will be coming out just before we break up for Easter. If you have any stories or suggestions, please send them my way at r.jacks@bristol.ac.uk, by Monday 31 March 2014.