

RAE 2008: A recognition of research excellence



The 2008 RAE results verify our growing research strength across a range of disciplines and are testament to the commitment and endeavour of staff across all schools. More than three-quarters of our research activity was judged 'international' and one third was graded 'internationally excellent/world leading'. Nearly all academic staff are therefore located in departments of international repute. Indeed, 15 of the 19 Units of Assessments submitted had some research classified 'world leading'.

While there has been a general upgrading in research quality across the sector, the league tables confirm that we have improved on our 2001 performance. *Times Higher Education* puts us at 72nd, a very pleasing improvement of 13 places on 2001, while the *Guardian* lists us at 67th. League tables that factor in the percentage of staff submitted, place us even higher, at 62nd, as many of our competitors made comparatively small submissions. We will not know our funding allocation until March.

However, it has been confirmed that 4, 3 and 2 stars will be funded which should be good news for us.

It can be misleading to make comparisons between different disciplines because of variation across panels in grading and the weight accorded to the various elements within the research environment sub-profile.

That said, History continues to be our flagship discipline, with an impressive 25% of its research graded 'world leading' and 40% 'internationally excellent' – a commendable result which puts it in the company of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Queen Mary and Sussex and above universities such as Kings, Durham and Manchester. History of Art (15% and 40%) and Computing (15% and 35%) also achieved notable success.

In addition, Computing, Business, Law, Art and Design, Education, and Allied Health all improved significantly, advancing up their subject league tables – Art and Design by 35 places. Other Units of Assessment consolidated their position (see page 2 for Unit of Assessment results).

Whatever the league table positions, the RAE results are not only excellent in their own right but provide a solid basis on which to build, particularly given the number of relatively junior researchers included in our submission (early career researchers constituted over 13%).

Professor Diana Woodhouse
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research

continued from page 1

2008 RAE Results

Quality Profile and Grade Point Average (GPA)

NB: FTE numbers are for 2008 with 2001 numbers in parenthesis. The predicted GPA comes from the Mock Exercise of 2006-07.

Unit of Assessment	FTE 2008 (2001)	Grade 2001	4* %	3* %	2* %	1* %	0 %	GPA
History	23.04 (12.00)	5*	25	40	25	10	0	2.80
History of Art	4.00 (6.50)	3a	15	40	30	15	0	2.55
Computer Science	10.67 (11.00)	3b	15	35	35	15	0	2.50
Art and Design	4.25 (7.90)	3b	15	15	70	0	0	2.45
Law	13.20 (6.00)	4	10	35	40	15	0	2.40
English	15.00 (8.80)	5	5	35	55	5	0	2.40
Music	5.50 (5.50)	3a	15	20	40	25	0	2.25
General Engineering	11.60 (10.40)	3b	5	40	25	30	0	2.20
Town and Country Planning	32.80 (49.70)	4	5	35	40	15	5	2.20
French	4.45 (7.60)	5	5	30	40	20	5	2.10
Allied Health	14.30 (10.40)	3b	10	20	40	25	5	2.05
Anthropology	12.20 (6.80)	4	5	30	35	25	5	2.05
Psychology	13.20 (10.0)	3a	0	25	50	25	0	2.0
Education	11.00 (14.20)	3b	5	25	40	25	5	2.0
Business and Management Studies	18.0 (20.40)	2	5	20	45	25	5	1.95
Politics and International Studies	10.50 (5.00)	3a	0	20	55	25	0	1.95
Biological Sciences	12.00 (16.20)	3a	5	15	45	30	5	1.85
Applied Maths	5.71 (6.00)	3a	0	10	55	35	0	1.75
Philosophy	4.80 n/a	n/a	0	0	75	25	0	1.75

Brookes research on the radar

An initiative to create a blended research and learning objects repository for Brookes has now moved into its next stage of development and will help provide a showcase to the world's scholarly community for the work of Brookes' research staff and students.



Initially the Circle Project, funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and located within the Directorate of Learning Resources, set out to test the feasibility of developing for Brookes a single repository of:

- Research papers and other outputs (and associated datasets)
- Teaching and Learning materials ('learning objects').

Whilst the primary audience for the learning objects is staff within Brookes, the research repository will provide an open access archive freely available over the web.

Now, helped by additional funding from the Brookes Student Learning Experience Strategy and with the project renamed Brookes RADAR (Research Archive and Digital Asset Repository), a demonstrator system is currently being developed in partnership with research staff from the School of Technology.

Through RADAR, Brookes' research papers and other outputs will be made more visible to a wider external audience, with free online availability helping to increase their impact – vital with a view to the REF in years ahead. Integration within Brookes Virtual will enable material to be easily incorporated to support a research based approach to the curriculum. Having a fully developed research repository means Brookes will readily comply with the archiving mandates of the various research funding bodies.

Using Equella software the project team has been working with Technology staff on the design and feel of the public search facility as well as defining metadata and taxonomies to describe the content and ensure that material conforms to standards and is easily discovered by external search engines. Also being explored is how to draw content dynamically from the repository across into the research profile web pages of staff in the school. The team is, of course, busy uploading content with the aim of launching the repository service later this year.

Jan Haines
Head of Library Services

Brookes' first GRADSchool creates a buzz

'The sense of genuine achievement was very tangible. I can honestly say that the course has changed my attitude to work, research and work colleagues quite fundamentally.'



Thirty brave and open-minded, or perhaps foolhardy! PhD students took a big leap into the unknown and signed up for the first Oxford Brookes University GRADSchool, which took place in September 2008. The event was advertised as 'a three day, action packed and fun event' and 'a unique opportunity for researchers to assess and develop personal effectiveness, team-working, communication and career management skills'. This brought together a diverse group of researchers from every school in the university and a mix of ages, nationalities, personalities and research interests. The willingness of the participants to accept every challenge set, to enjoy every minute and to get as much benefit as possible out of this unique opportunity was apparent from the word go and made for an exhausting and exhilarating three days. As one participant remarked in their feedback, 'My main objective was to have fun – and I ticked that box!'

Whilst being great fun, the GRADSchool had a serious intent. Its vision was to 'create an inspirational, challenging and experiential learning environment in which all participants will learn something new about themselves and take away skills, tools or information which will motivate them to complete their studies, further realise their potential, and enable them to make more informed choices about their future careers'. With increasing

focus on the PhD not simply as specialist training in a narrow academic research area, but rather broader training to enhance future life and career choices through acquisition of personal and generic skills, the idea of a GRADSchool is to create a space – in this case a three day 'holiday' both from the familiar and from the research project – and, crucially, a safe and supportive environment where everyone is encouraged to experiment, be adventurous, try new things and push their own boundaries. There was also time for participants to reflect, discuss and to set objectives for their research, their career and their life aspirations and to take the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their strengths and skills.

Each of the three days had an interlinking theme. Day 1, 'You and your research', was about research interests and skills, communicating with different types of audiences, and time management. Day 2, 'Teams, tasks and processes', covered working in teams, team roles, aptitudes, strengths and challenges, and networking and collaboration. Day 3, 'New brand', focused on CVs, job interviews, selling 'your brand' and careers. Participants worked in small teams supported by a tutor and the entire focus was on experiential learning – or learning by doing.

It was clear right from the start from the tremendous 'buzz' about the GRADSchool that it was going to be a great success and participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive with praise for the tutors, 'Supportive, communicative and friendly', and their fellow participants, 'An opportunity to network with students from different disciplines'. Furthermore, everyone clearly got a great deal from the experience, 'The tasks filled me with confidence and made me feel good about myself'.

While this was a new experience for Brookes researchers it was run in collaboration with the organisation UKGrad, recently rebranded Vitae (www.vitae.ac.uk), who have more than forty years' experience in running this type of event. Participant feedback shows consistently that it is a winning formula, 'An entirely new world of possibilities opened up to me and allowed me to follow a career path which I feel will be more rewarding than my original choice'.

Planning for the second GRADSchool is well underway and it is hoped it will become a regular series. As one participant said, 'Don't listen if you are told you can't afford the time: you can't afford to miss this course'.

Details of the second Oxford Brookes University GRADSchool can be obtained from Susan Brooks, Research Training Co-ordinator, sbrooks@brookes.ac.uk.

Foreign direct investment flows – how influential are exchange rate regimes?

Dr Glauco De Vita, Professor of International Business Economics in the Business School, and Dr Andrew Abbott, University of Bath, have recently completed a study, with just over £50,000 funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), on how different exchange rate regimes can affect foreign direct investment (FDI) flows.

Using data from 27 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and non-OECD high income countries for the period 1980 to 2003, Drs De Vita and Abbott produced the first set of estimates of the impact of a wide menu of exchange rate

regime combinations on bilateral FDI flows between country-pairs from a relatively large panel. This broad range of regime policy options allowed them to compare the specific effect of each country-pair regime combination against the single case of a floating currency country-pair. For example:

- One country being in a currency union (CU) and the other country floating its currency (FLT).
- One country being in a currency union and the other adopting a fixed exchange rate (FIX).
- One country adopting a fixed exchange rate and the other floating (FIX-FLT).
- Both countries fixing their exchange rate (FIX-FIX).

- Common membership of a currency union is the regime framework most conducive to FDI flows. However, this effect is not solely attributable to the elimination of exchange rate risk.
- European Monetary Union (EMU) membership appears to spur greater FDI flows with extra-EMU countries floating their currencies vis-à-vis the level of FDI occurring between country-pairs with flexible exchange rates.
- FDI flows between country-pairs fixing or pegging their currency are found to be lower than those occurring between floating currency country-pairs, though this effect is the least consistent across alternative model specifications.
- The other exchange rate regime combinations examined (FIX-FLT and FIX-CU) are found not to be more pro-FDI than the default regime of a 'double-float'.

Key findings from the study show that:

- In assessing the impact of exchange rate regime combinations on FDI flows, it is important to consider which specific alternative regime combination to benchmark against.
- A common monetary union is the most conducive framework for cross-border investment.

A copy of the full report is available at www.esrc.ac.uk



Dr Glauco De Vita

Judging global best practices for the living environment



Dr Beacon Mbiba (left) with some of the jury colleagues: Eng. Abdulla Mohammed Rafia, Assistant Director-General of Dubai Municipality for Environment and Public Health Services, Ms Wandia Seaforth Acting Chief, UN-HABITAT Best Practices Programme and Dr Paolo Saldiva, Professor at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Dr Beacon Mbiba, Senior Lecturer in Developing Countries, School of the Built Environment, was in Dubai during November 2008 as jury member for the 7th cycle of the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment (DIABP).

This is a global initiative jointly managed by the United Nations and the Dubai government with the objective of identifying and publicising initiatives that are contributing towards sustainable living environments. Dr Mbiba was joined by four other jury members from India, Italy, Brazil and Dubai and the secretariat from UN-HABIAT and Dubai Municipality.

Of the 456 submissions from 68 countries, 102 were judged to be best practices from which twelve were selected for awards.

Participating as a DIABP jury member has generated new global contacts, opportunities for collaborative research and insights into how to broaden and market the postgraduate programme. Further details about the award proceedings, winning projects and programme database of best practices, are available at www.dubaiaward.ae

Dr Mbiba was also one of the experts to contribute inputs to the *State of the African Cities Report 2008*; a report of the United Nations (Habitat). The report launched at the World Urban Forum in November 2008 sheds light on the emerging key topics that need African policy-makers', mayors' and urban managers' attention and will act as a benchmark for successive issues of State of the African Cities Reports.

Sickness, poverty and medical relief in England 1750-1851

Professor Steven King in the School of Arts and Humanities has recently completed a study, funded by the Wellcome Trust, that was initially conceived as a comparative analysis of how sickness was defined and treated in different English counties in the period between 1750, when a recognisably modern welfare system was in place, and 1851, the date of the first reliable census.

The project branched out to include matters such as how the poor thought about sickness and how they used it in negotiating with officials over their entitlement to welfare. Some of the core findings have already been outlined by Professor King in the form of book chapters and articles, including:

'Accessing drugs in the eighteenth-century regions', in L.Curth (ed.), *From Physick to Pharmacology: Five Hundred Years of British Drug Retailing* (Ashgate, 2006), 49-78;

"It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here": managing the distance dimensions of poor relief under the old poor Law', *Rural History*, 16, 2 (2005), 161-189;

'Regional patterns in the experiences and treatment of the sick poor, 1800-40: Rights, obligations and duties in the rhetoric of paupers', *Family and Community History*, 10 (2007), 61-75;

'Friendship, kinship and belonging in the letters of urban paupers 1800-1840', *Historical Social Research*, 33 (2008), 249-77.

The results of the project will be included in a monograph to be published by Palgrave in 2009 or early 2010.

Judged in the round, the project will evidence five core conclusions:

- That sickness came to be a major preoccupation for the welfare system in most English counties and regions post-1750, and that some of them (for instance Lancashire) committed very considerable proportions of all welfare spending to the relief of sickness.

- That the standards of medical care were, notwithstanding occasional medical scandals, relatively high. Indeed, it can be argued and evidenced that the dependent poor had access to a wider range of medical care than was the case for those who retained their independence and even some of the lower levels of the middling classes.

- That doctors gradually established themselves as the cornerstone of medical care for the poor. In 1750 most 'medical relief' was in the form of cash allowances, food and subsidised rents. By 1851, the doctor had garnered a much bigger share of spending and a much larger slice of the 'ill-health lives' of individual paupers.

- That the dependent poor used the rhetoric and actuality of sickness to establish their deservingness in the eyes of communities and officials. Whereas officials found it relatively easy to turn down the mothers of illegitimate children, old people or the unemployed, sickness posed all sorts of moral and practical dilemmas, making it easier for the officials to fund relief than to turn down applications by the sick.

- That the advent of the 'New Poor Law' and the workhouse in the period between 1834 and 1840 had little or no effect on the way that sickness was treated or experienced.

Now that the project is concluded, Professor King is seeking further funding for two related projects. The first is on 'Narratives of sickness', which will look at the way in which paupers wrote about sickness (which they did, and in considerable numbers!) and understood the welfare system with which they were engaged. Initially focused on England the project will, funding permitting, branch out to make European comparisons. The second project looks at how patients understood their rights and doctors understood their duties in an English and Welsh medical system that was not regulated in any functional way until the mid and later 19th century.

Professor Steven King





Dr Elizabeth T Hurren

Sarah Taylor from Brookes' Research and Business Development Office interviews Dr Elizabeth Hurren, Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

Dr Elizabeth T Hurren, Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee, is a senior lecturer in the history of medicine. She joined Oxford Brookes University in 2005 after ten years working in international banking before retraining as an academic at Leicester University. She was awarded her PhD in 2000 and since then her research expertise has developed five themes: the history of 19th century poverty; the history of the body and the brain; the trade in dead bodies for medical research in the Victorian age; and the history of death and dying in the British Isles. In 2007, the Royal Historical Society published her latest monograph on the experience of being poor in late-Victorian England. In 2009, she will publish *Dying for Victorian Medicine: English Anatomy and its Trade in the Dead Poor, 1832 to 1929* with Palgrave Macmillan. She has also published in major academic journals, notably *Social History*, *the Social History of Medicine*, *Medical History* and the *Bulletin of the*

History of Medicine. Elizabeth is a regular contributor to Radio 4's *Making History* series and is currently producing a television programme on the history of the body funded by the Wellcome Trust.

Q: You have recently taken over as Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee. Can you describe the work of the committee in general and the post of the Chair in particular?

The role of the University Research Ethics Committee is to oversee the ethical dimensions of research studies involving human participants by colleagues in the Oxford Brookes academic community. The committee has a wide range of expertise drawn from each school and includes a postgraduate representative, as well as two lay members with ethics expertise. Its profile

reflects the diverse nature of current research. Committee members advocate for those taking part in various studies whose research ethics interests need careful consideration. On a monthly basis they review each research-design to ensure that protocols conform to the university's academic code of practice for research. Members also oversee research from the perspective of the researcher. A key responsibility is to ensure that funded research, whether internal or externally won, is legal. Overall committee members bring a fresh perspective, take a common sense view, and work with researchers to facilitate quality research activity. The Chair and committee members have a fascinating perspective of the bigger picture of research and the innovative nature of the latest thinking across all disciplines.

Q: How does the development of research ethics affect how research is undertaken?

Research ethics are now at the forefront of university life in Britain. All the major funding bodies – Arts and Humanities Research Council, Economic and Social Research Council, Medical Research Council, NHS, Wellcome Trust and so on – have strict guidelines on ethics procedures. It has been one of the major disciplinary growth areas in the last twenty years. The organ retention scandals in the NHS, for instance, highlighted just how important ethical standards are for the wider community. Sir Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer at the time, led a powerful campaign to improve dignity for the patient, in life and death. Such fundamental ethical questions are intrinsic to ethics and research today.

The genome project, funded by the Wellcome Trust in collaboration with American scientists, which has unlocked the DNA code of life has also raised difficult ethical dilemmas about embryology, cloning technology, stem cell research, and so on. This and other developments which involve human participants have, more generally, resulted in most major funding bodies now having strict guidelines about research with ethical implications, whether internally or externally funded. The codes of practice have been tightened in recent years and are likely to be more exacting in the future. The Quality Assurance Agency has also codified its views this year by recommending that all universities have a UREC committee that is independent of research activity. There is now a consensus throughout the academic sector that the principle of an objective review process protects the rights of study-participants and researchers.

Q: Turning to your own research, what first sparked your interest in your current field of study?

In 1998, I was working in the National Archives at Kew in London and came across a dossier of letters written by the poor objecting to their bodies being used for medical research purposes after death, during the late-19th century. I was fascinated by the depth of feeling, the way that the poor turned powerlessness into agency, and how some human predicaments endure. Although times change, dignity and respect for the dead have always been fundamental human impulses. I never suspected though, just how much the contents of that file would shape my future research career. That is what is so fascinating about being an historian of medicine. You can never predict what the past will bring back to life and its historical relevance today.

Q: What is the most recent/current project (research project, book, article etc) you are involved in and what particularly interested you about the work?

Currently I am writing a book called *Dying for Victorian Medicine: English Anatomy and its Trade in the Dead Poor, 1832 to 1929*, which is contracted to Palgrave Macmillan for publication in 2009. It explores the impact of the Anatomy Act (1832) in Britain. This

legislation legalised the use of the dead poor for medical research and training in human anatomy. Research elaborates how the poor became the staple dissection subjects of a 19th and early 20th century medical education. The study has a unique dataset of around 20,000 bodies. It has been possible for the first time to analyse the body trade by age, gender, location and financial transactions to show how the business of anatomy was organised in the provinces and London. Oxford anatomists, for instance, trained medical students with body parts. The local poor refused to sell their loved ones' cadavers. Another key finding is that the railway was pivotal to supply chains transporting bodies across Britain. The book has strong historical resonances with body-trafficking activities today. A recent article in the *New Scientist* exposed how the poor are still exploited for their body parts, bones, hair, organs, teeth, and so on.

Q: Multi-and interdisciplinary work is increasingly important these days – what other disciplines/subject areas would you like to work with and why?

My most recent research focuses on the history of the body and brain. One of the fascinating aspects of this broader approach is the way that it reaches out to other disciplines. Working with artists, anthropologists, drama and literary studies scholars, musicians and biologists deepens historical perspectives. It is possible in teaching and research activities to revisit old ways of thinking to test their relevance. Music is the best example of this trend. In the past, music was medicine for the body. It was used to treat lovesickness and melancholy, and rebalance the mind. The body was viewed as a musical instrument that could be retuned. Today that musical therapy is once more a respected discipline, as the work of the brain researcher Oliver Sacks attests. His new book *MusicoLOGY* is a fascinating insight into the brain's latent musical abilities. It is conversations across disciplines that bring together our shared body history.

Q: What are your research plans for the next five years and how does applying for research funding fit within these plans?

The Centre for Health Medicine and Society in the School of Arts and Humanities last year won a large Strategic Award from the Wellcome Trust for £675,000. The theme of the research grant is *Public and Private Healthcare in the Past*. My contribution will be to focus on the care and treatment of the sick poor at St Bartholomew's hospital in London. This was one of the main charitable healthcare institutions in the city. Since the time of Henry VIII its medical services have undergone rapid expansion. The project traces the transition from private provision to a publicly funded NHS system.

Q: How do you see your research career developing over the next ten years?

In the next ten years I want to make the transition to a Readership and produce the sort of top quality research outputs that engage the general public. One of my key

career goals is to develop better public engagement skills. This summer the Wellcome Trust granted me a broadcast award to work with Pier Productions Ltd, a BBC provider, to produce a television series about the history of the body. I have always believed that research should not exist in an academic vacuum. In ten years time, my aim is to be at the forefront of knowledge transfer in publications, outreach and public relations.

Q: Who do you think has most shaped your research career and why?

The person that has most shaped my research career is my former PhD supervisor, Professor Peter King, a leading crime historian, now at the Open University. When I was thinking about doing a PhD he worked at Leicester University. He asked a question that motivated me to become an academic, 'Elizabeth, it comes down to one simple issue. Do you want to make a contribution or not? If you do, then you have no choice.' Good question I thought and of course the answer was a resounding yes. It still is and that is what makes me an academic. It's the opportunity to make a contribution to the larger pool of knowledge that has shaped my entire research career.

Q: If you did not have a job in a university, where would you like to work and why?

Before I retrained as an academic, I worked for ten years in international banking, so I have already experienced life in the commercial world. It was valuable training, not least because I learned how to manage a wide variety of people to achieve a profitable and successful team effort. I have always believed that all experiences and skills are transferable. But now I would want to use them in a more constructive context. My aspirations are to gain more experience in public engagement, to sit on the Human Tissue Authority, and to develop professional links in the wider medical humanities community. My ideal job would be the first historian of medicine to be a government consultant and to lobby for legislation that takes into account ethical issues that are always central to the human condition. I also would like to be in a position to focus on more popular writing for the media. Having the financial freedom to be freelance would enable me to put together the type of academic career that would realise my skills as an advocate and communicator to make the sort of contribution that first motivated me to become an historian of medicine. Last year, for instance, I wrote a novel about a woman in the 16th century who had a rare medical skill which, in a superstitious age, was very dangerous. She was an expert in childbirth and pain relief. Her obstetric instruments made from whalebone are among the earliest types of forceps, designed two centuries before they were documented in England. Although there have been lots of television programmes about modern childbirth and the contribution of science to biomedicine, a secret female history has been neglected too. Out of that hidden silence emerges a fascinating story about the common ways that women experienced pregnancy down the centuries.

Answer to the airbag problem – The safe deployment and recycling of vehicle pyrotechnic devices

Dr Pat Winfield, Deputy Head of the Sustainable Vehicle Engineering Centre, School of Technology, in collaboration with Airbag Disposal & Recycling Services Ltd (ADORS), has received an Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council Industrial CASE award to investigate the safe deployment and recycling of vehicle pyrotechnic devices. Pyrotechnic devices (PTDs) are the deployment agents for airbags and seat belt pretensioners. They work through the detonation of explosive chemicals which cause rapid deployment of the actuating mechanism. This allows passengers to be protected during a crash in vulnerable regions such as chest, head etc.

The EU End-of-Life Vehicles Directive (2000/53/EC), states that at end of life all PTDs must be deployed, usually in situ, before the vehicle is sent for dismantling and shredding. Dismantlers may then enter the vehicle to remove further components from the interior, or reset PTDs that fail to detonate.

After deployment smoke and an odour are present, but there is little information in the public domain on the composition of the detonation residue and gases, nor standardised safety protocols for the dismantlers. Consequently entering a vehicle repeatedly could be hazardous to health. A further complication is that the detonators

used in PTDs vary depending on the type of airbag and vehicle manufacturer, so the gas and residue from deployment can differ considerably.

The majority of cars being dismantled now at end of life only contain one or at most four airbags. However, with the number of devices increasing to up to 20 or more on the modern car, the problem of PTD deployment and disposal is growing at an alarming rate. It is estimated that in 2007, in the EU alone, 78 million devices were detonated and this figure is set to rise to over 180 million by 2025. The work at Oxford Brookes University will ensure safe compliance with the ELV Directive and the development of protocols that will allow the 1,200 plus Authorised Treatment Facilities (ATF) currently dealing with this problem in the UK to introduce safer working practices, reducing accidents and environmental damage. Safe detonation will also provide greater opportunity for the maximum reuse and recycling of components and materials.



Dr Pat Winfield



At what age do infants first understand words?

Dr Gert Westermann, Reader in Psychology, School of Social Sciences and Law, has been awarded a grant of £100,000 from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to investigate the effect of object names and how ten-month-old infants form them into categories.

This project will be run in the new Brookes Babylab which is located in the Buckley Building. The Babylab is equipped with a state-of-the-art eye tracker that allows the researcher to see where on a computer screen an infant (or indeed, an adult) is looking when images or film clips are presented.

The study will employ a familiarisation-novelty-preference technique to investigate if language has an effect on category formation in infants even before the infants use language themselves. 10-month-olds will be presented with pictures of cartoon animals to test their category formation. Other infants will be shown the same pictures, but this time the animals will each be named.

The research question is if, when objects from two categories all share the same name, infants will form a single category for all objects. Likewise, when different objects from the same category are given different names, will infants form two categories as a result? This work will provide an insight into the role of language in the early development of categorisation, which is a fundamental process of human cognition. The project will employ a post-doctoral researcher, Loukia Taxitari who is just finishing her DPhil at the University of Oxford.

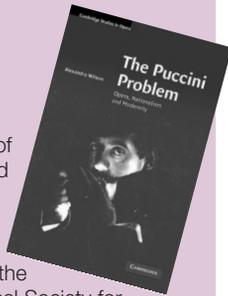
The study aims to test 120 ten-month-old babies over the duration of the project – so if you have a baby and would be interested in participating, please do get in touch (babylab@brookes.ac.uk).



Gert Westermann, right, talks to David Lammy MP, Minister for Higher Education, when he visited the Babylab last October.

Puccini monograph attracts top American award

Dr Alexandra Wilson of the School of Arts and Humanities has been awarded the prestigious Lewis Lockwood Award by the American Musicological Society for her monograph *The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism, and Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).



The Lewis Lockwood Award honours a musicological book of exceptional merit by a scholar in the early stages of his or her career (defined as being within ten years of completion of the PhD). This is the first time that it has been awarded to a scholar from outside North America. The award was presented to Dr Wilson on 8 November 2008 at the 74th Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society (AMS), held in Nashville, Tennessee.

Dr Wilson's book is the first detailed investigation of the critical reception of Puccini's music during the composer's lifetime, and draws upon hundreds of late-19th and early 20th century reviews. 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 turn-of-the-century Italy, a nation which although politically unified remained culturally divided.

The book focuses on questions that were debated throughout Puccini's career, his status as a national or international composer and his status as a traditionalist or modernist. In addition, Dr Wilson situates Puccini's operas in a variety of cultural contexts, exploring how they became caught up in a wide range of extra-musical controversies concerning such issues as gender and class.

Alexandra Wilson's research on Puccini is ongoing: recent work includes an article on *Manon Lescaut* (forthcoming in *Opera Quarterly*) and a paper presented at the 2008 AMS meeting on the topic of 'Puccini the Modernist'. *The Puccini Problem* has also recently been translated into Greek.

New study on mother-infant interaction

Dr Jane Appleton, Reader in Primary and Community Care in the School of Health and Social Care and Professor Margaret Harris, Head of the Department of Psychology in the School of Social Sciences and Law, together with John Oates from the Open University have been awarded a research grant from the Burdett Trust for Nursing for £40,489, to undertake a pilot study to evaluate health visitor assessments of the quality of mother-infant interactions in the post-natal period.

Given the significance of reliably detecting cases where mother-infant relationships are not developing successfully, it is important that the initial assessment processes are as sensitive and specific as possible. An assessment that correctly identifies, at an early stage, emerging problems in the relationship between mother and infant will enable mothers to be referred for appropriate support that is best matched to their needs. This collaborative study between the Schools of Health and Social Care and Social Sciences and Law will focus on improving the accuracy of health visitor assessments around infant and family mental health, to develop the evidence base for public health nursing in this area.

The research team is working collaboratively on this project with two Primary Care Trusts. The study will incorporate two phases of data collection. In Phase 1, a detailed observation and analysis of mother-infant interactions will take place. The observations of mothers and their six week old infants will take place in the Brookes Babylab, a purpose-built video observation laboratory in the Buckley Building. Mothers will also be asked to complete a set of psychometric questionnaires and to provide demographic data. The video-recordings will then be analysed to derive a number of objective measures of the quality of the interactions. Laboratory-based observation using video is a well established and reliable technique in psychological research for studying mother-infant interactions; and there is good evidence that it captures behaviours that occur in naturalistic settings.

In Phase 2, health visitors' rating and assessments of the video-recorded mother-infant interactions will be examined through in-depth interviews and compared with the measures derived in Phase 1.

The main outputs of the study will be published research papers and evidence-based practice guidance for health visitors' post-natal assessments of mother-infant relationships. It is intended that this research will lead to the production of training materials that will inform future health visitor/public health nurse training nationally to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of early intervention public health nursing services. The team also intends this inter-disciplinary study to provide important ground work for further research study in this area.

Dr Jane Appleton



Professor Margaret Harris



News in brief

Dr Brad Blitz, School of Social Sciences and Law, has been successful in a collaborative bid to the Leverhulme Trust with Professor Phil Leach and Dr Svetlana Stephenson of London Metropolitan University. The one-year study commenced in October 2008 and £5,902 has been awarded to Brookes. The proposed research will analyse and critically evaluate the novel European Court of Human Rights 'pilot judgement' procedure. By examining the nature and context of these judgements, and by assessing to what extent they lead to systemic changes at the national level, the research will identify strengths and weaknesses of the procedure, and make recommendations for reform. The research will focus on Italy, Poland and Slovenia with field visits to each country and to the Court in Strasbourg. Dr Blitz will be undertaking the research on Slovenia.

Professor Linda King, Dean in the School of Life Sciences, has been appointed to the strategy and peer review committee for the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council Research Institutes.

Professor William Gibson and Doctors Martin Groves and Peter Forsaith, Westminster Institute of Education, are to be panellists at the Pacific Coast Conference on British Studies in California. The three are giving papers on aspects of 18th century Methodism at a conference to be held at the Kroc Institute of Peace and Social Justice at the University of San Diego in March. The papers will be introduced and commented on by academics from Ohio University and Baylor University. Professor William Gibson said, 'This conference will be an excellent opportunity for our research to engage with international scholars working in the field of religious history'.

Professor Michael Todinov, School of Technology, has been awarded the degree Doctor of Engineering (DEng) at the University of Birmingham in recognition of his research in the area of risk and reliability.

Professor Angus Gellatly, School of Social Sciences and Law, has successfully secured an Economic and Social Research Council grant of £80,271 for his research into 'Visual Representations in Object Substitution Masking'. The aim of this work is to understand the processes involved in deriving a representation of the environment in terms of objects and background, and how these processes influence and are influenced by different forms of visual attention.

Professor Chris Hawes, School of Life Sciences, has been appointed as a core member of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's new Molecules, Cells and Industrial Biotechnology peer review committee.

Dr Tim Shreeve, School of Life Sciences, has been appointed editor of the *Journal of Insect Conservation*.

Dr Mingzhu Wang, Sandra Einig and Professor Laura Spira from the Business School were awarded a grant of £15,808 by HM Treasury to undertake a literature review regarding the effectiveness of intervention in the investment chain. The Treasury is seeking evidence on the results of previous interventions to inform the development of regulatory policy in a range of areas including director effectiveness and accountability, shareholder engagement and activism, pension fund trustee decision making, the transparency of investment transaction costs and the transparency and competitiveness of retail saving products.

Dr Brad Blitz, School of Social Sciences and Law, was invited by the Swiss government to participate in the official launch of the report *Enhancing Human Dignity: An Agenda for Human Rights* in Geneva in December 2008, to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Professor Jeya Henry, School of Life Sciences, has been nominated as a member of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations/World Health Organisation Expert Committee on Fat and Fatty acids.

As part of a team led by **Dr Simonetta Manfredi** from the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, **Professor Lucy Vickers** has been awarded £4,941 as part of overall funding of £47,500 from the Equality Challenge Unit/HEFCE for a Review of the Impact of the Processes to Promote Equality and Diversity in the RAE 2008. The project will run from November 2008 through to March 2009.

The Department of Psychology, in the School of Social Sciences and Law, hosted the British Psychological Society (BPS) Development Section Conference in September 2008. The conference was a success and has placed Brookes 'on the map' in terms of national and international recognition of the department's growing reputation in areas of developmental psychology. 240 delegates participated from 15 countries and 216 presentations were made. International keynote speakers came from Israel, Sweden and Australia and included **Professor Peter Bryant** from the department.

The Department of Architecture hosted a very successful 20th anniversary conference of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) on 12-15 December 2008, opened and attended by HRH the Duke of Gloucester. Organised by **Dr Marcel Vellinga**, it brought together 260 delegates from around the world. The conference entitled 'Interrogating Tradition: Epistemologies, Fundamentalisms, Regeneration and Practices' was organised in collaboration with the University of California, Berkeley. Keynote speakers came from Canada and the United States and included **Dr Brigitte Piquard** from the department. The conference is held bi-annually in locations around the world. It was the first time the conference has been hosted in the UK.

New Publications

Reporting on Internal Control in the UK and the US: Insights from the Turnbull and Sarbanes-Oxley Consultations

Professor Laura Spira, Business School and Catherine Gowthorpe

Publisher: Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland
ISBN: 978-1-904574-31-6

This study explores the background to the increasing demands for disclosures on internal control by corporate boards and the different responses to these demands in the UK and the US. The objective of the study is to seek an improved understanding of the rationale for these increasing demands and the responses of disclosers and their audiences to the impact of the disclosure requirements which have been established in the two countries.

In an article by Robert Bruce on 'Corporate Governance: Playing Politics' in *Financial Director* on 27 October 2008, the work of Professor Laura Spira and Catherine Gowthorpe is held up as vital reading for those involved in regulation to ensure effectiveness is at the core of regulatory initiatives.

From Headwaters to the Ocean: Hydrological Change and Watershed Management

Professor Martin Haigh, School of Social Sciences and Law (co-editor)

Publisher: Taylor & Francis
ISBN: 978-0-415-47279-1

The vulnerability of water resources due to climate change and human activities is globally increasing. The phenomenon of hydrological change is complicated because of the combinations and interactions between natural climate fluctuation, global warming and human activities including changes in land utilisation. The impact areas of hydrological changes are also not only within the basin, but reach to the ocean through coastal water exchanges.

This book contains keynote lectures and papers presented at a conference which are focused on the integrated water management from headwater to the ocean in a time of climate change and increasing population.

Diary

March – June 2009

Wednesday 4 March 2009

Research methods and management training – I've won my award! Hurrah! What do I do next?

Room BG11, Buckley Building, Gipsy Lane 12.30 – 16.00
(lunch provided)

To book a place, please contact louise.wood@brookes.ac.uk

Public Lecture – Attention: a prerequisite for learning

Sir Christopher Ball, Honorary Fellow
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Monday 9 March 2009

'Standards will drop' and other fears about the equality agenda in higher education

Room BG10, Buckley Building, Gipsy Lane
Wednesday 11 March 2009 13.00 – 14.00

To book a place email: loveandjustice@brookes.ac.uk or contact Caroline Moughton on 01865 485929

Wednesday 11 March 2009

Public Lecture – The other side of nowhere

Professor Andrew Holmes, Department of Architecture, School of the Built Environment
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 25 March 2009

Public Lecture – Surfing the workplace tsunami

Dr Juliet Williams, Management Consultant and Honorary Graduate
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 1 April 2009

Public Lecture – Alumni Debate: successful women at work

Chair: Peninah Thomson, Alumna of Oxford Brookes
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 8 April 2009

Public Lecture – The privatisation of leading: wrestling education and social justice from 'bullet point' leadership

Professor Marlene Morrison, Westminster Institute of Education
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 22 April 2009

Public Lecture – Modern poetry: a way of making things happen, or a way of non-happening?

Professor Steven Matthews, School of Arts and Humanities
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 29 April 2009

Public Lecture – John Henry Brookes - an unsung hero - the spiritual founder of Oxford Brookes University

Bryan Brown, Honorary Fellow
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 13 May 2009

Public Lecture – The future of medical professionalism

Niall Dickson, Chief Executive of the King's Fund and Honorary Graduate
Lloyd Lecture Theatre, Gipsy Lane 18.00 – 19.30

For more details and to book online please visit www.brookes.ac.uk/publiclectures, or contact the Events Office on 01865 484864, email events@brookes.ac.uk

Wednesday 17 June 2009

Research methods and management training – Research induction and networking event

(re-run of event held in September 2008)
Room BG11, Buckley Building 12.30 – 16.00
(lunch provided)

To book a place, please contact louise.wood@brookes.ac.uk

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

Details of research supervisory and research student training are available on the Graduate Office website: www.brookes.ac.uk/research/Graduate/Graduate.html

Details of research seminars taking place in each of the schools are available at: 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

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.

Published by Oxford Brookes University Corporate Affairs Directorate.



To obtain a large-print copy of (or sections of) this publication or to enquire about other formats please contact +44 (0) 1865 484848 or email query@brookes.ac.uk.

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 or on request from the university's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Manager +44 (0) 1865 485929.