We’re University of the Year
The establishment of a Task Force concerned with generating non-government revenue is, I imagine, something that some of my colleagues here in Manchester regard as a travesty of what an authentic university stands for. I applaud their commitment to preserving the core values of higher learning that have evolved over many centuries. I am as concerned as they rightly are that this university must never be suborned by the power of the purse, whether exercised by Government officials or private business interests. Consequently, I have no doubt that institutional autonomy remains the foundation on which the idea of a university rests.

In certain crucial respects, a university is not at all like a commercial organisation. A university is not concerned with making a profit, either from tuition fees or anything else. Every penny, every pound, of this university’s income is spent, with varying degrees of wisdom and efficiency, on the wide-ranging scholarly purposes and priorities associated with achieving scholarly excellence, producing world-class research, educating superb graduates. There are serious and growing public funding gaps are never likely to come wholly from Government. The blunt reality, nevertheless, is that the resources required to run a world class university do not and cannot be provided in the areas where it is most needed. Albert McMenomy, who is heading it, wants input, ideas and commitment from as many people as possible.

The blunt reality, nevertheless, is that the resources required to run a world class university do not and are never likely to come wholly from Government. There are serious and growing public funding gaps facing any UK university serious about matching the best universities in the world.

The University of Manchester must, for the best of academic reasons, diversify and expand our revenue base, substantially and without delay. Otherwise we face the slow onset of mediocrity. It is as simple and difficult as that.

Every academic teacher and researcher in The University of Manchester needs to hear this message loudly and clearly.

Deans, Heads of Schools, Heads of Administrative Directories and, through them, the whole University community are in the front line of the challenge of resourcing academic excellence.

To help them, we have established a Task Force Project, led by Rod Coombs, to develop strategies for sustainable revenue generation in the years ahead. Its remit is to analyse emerging funding gaps across the whole spectrum of University activities, and design revenue strategies for growing the University’s income at a rate required to meet our strategic objectives.

Because resources will never be superabundant, we have established a second Task Force Project to focus on the practicalities of ensuring that the resources we can generate are used wisely and efficiently, that “re-work” is avoided, that redundant processes and procedures are eliminated, that bureaucracy never survives as an end in itself in The University of Manchester, and that administrative support is provided in the areas where it is most needed.

Albert McMenomy, who is heading it, wants input, ideas and commitment from as many people as possible.

Heads of Schools will be meeting with me and my other senior colleagues on 6 October to discuss how best to mobilise the whole University around these two related challenges. I hope colleagues around the University will recognise, in this “businesslike” approach, a single, unwavering focus on facilitating and funding academic excellence and ensuring world class research.

The President and Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Alan Gilbert, said: “This is a welcome follow-up to winning last year’s THES Institution of the Year award. It is also a reassuring indication of the extent to which our achievements and ranking continue to be impressed by the progress that the new University of Manchester, two years old this month, is making in many areas.

“Over the last twelve months we have launched the Dalton Nuclear Institute, opened the new £65 million Core Technology Facility; signed a potentially important strategic partnership agreement with the Open University; continued successfully to implement the biggest programme of capital investment ever seen in British higher education, attracted Nobel Laureate Joe Stiglitz to join the University on a part-time basis, continued to received more applications than any other university in the UK - and watched Manchester students win University Challenge. It has truly been a remarkable year.

“I am interpreting this award as a tribute to the efforts of all the staff and students who contributed to such achievements. Everyone at the University can feel justifiably proud of their hard work and commitment to Manchester.”

Manchester also climbed three places to 15th in the Sunday Times university league table. The Sunday Times University Guide is now in its ninth year and is seen by students and parents alike as an invaluable first reference point on the path to finding a university place.

This year’s league table also revealed that Manchester is well thought of by head teachers and academics who were canvassed by The

Professor Alan Gilbert
President and Vice-Chancellor

The President and Vice-Chancellor

The University of Manchester has won the coveted Sunday Times “University of the Year” title, beating four other shortlisted universities.

The Sunday Times about which universities they felt provide the best quality undergraduate provision.

Across a range of 50 subjects, Manchester was beaten by just seven universities in the view of academics. Official assessments of teaching quality show no university in the country has more subjects rated excellent for teaching - 36 in all.

Research is seen as similarly high class and the University earns more than £135m a year from its research work, although it has ambitious plans to be ranked world class in more subjects in the next round of research ratings to be published in 2008.
Head of State flies in for anniversary celebrations

The President of Trinidad and Tobago visited the University last month to attend celebrations at the School of Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science’s 50th Anniversary Reunion. His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards attended on both days and gave an after dinner speech.

Manchester was the first place in the UK, and arguably the world, to teach chemical engineering - in 1889 - in the Manchester Technical School. But it was not until 1956 and the arrival of Frank Morton, that the University was able to boast its own Department of Chemical Engineering.

The old department still resides in the same building. The Mill, that it began life in, 50 years ago, Head of School Professor Colin Webb said: “Our reunion is principally to celebrate this significant milestone but also to commemorate the growth and development of the discipline of Chemical Engineering in Manchester over the years.”

Former professors and graduates were able to hear about the plans for the future shape of chemical engineering at Manchester in the light of the profound changes in the industries and were shown the changing Campus and the Morton Lab, a pilot plant which was refurbished and relaunched in 2003 at a cost of £6.7M.

Jodrell Bank, the UK’s national radio astronomy observatory and part of the University’s School of Physics and Astronomy, has been named as the winner in a BBC online competition to find the UK’s greatest ‘Unsung Landmark’.

The contest asked visitors to the BBC website to choose their favourite from eight landmarks nominated by the public and Jodrell Bank came out on top.

The main telescope at Jodrell Bank measures 250 feet in diameter and weighs 3,200 tonnes and dominates the Cheshire landscape near Goostrey. The accolade is a fitting tribute to a piece of science which next year celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Jodrell Bank was the brainchild of physicist Sir Bernard Lovell who had worked on radar during the war and was fascinated by odd signals picked up by the equipment, which he believed might be echoes of cosmic rays.

He started work at The University of Manchester buildings in the centre of the city but was obstructed by interference from passing electric trams and decided he needed to get into the countryside and took up residence at Jodrell Bank, where the University’s botany department had its base.

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Since Ronald Lipman completed his PhD at Manchester at the age of 85, it looks like a new stage of his academic career is just beginning.

His thesis centred on the discovery of the black Jews of Ethiopia, their eventual transportation to Israel, and the problems of integration from mud huts to a modern western society. Now he is receiving requests for talks from historical societies and essays for journals on the subject of his thesis. There’s even the prospect of writing a book.

He said: “The boredom of retirement prompted me to start an academic career and was the best decision I ever made. All sorts of doors are opening at the moment and I don’t feel as though my age is a bar to anything!”

Dr Lipman, from Leeds, entered in 1944 as a wholesale jeweller. He qualified with a BA (Hons) in 1949 after three years of study at Leeds Metropolitan University, followed by a two year Masters in Jewish history in 1957 at the University of Leeds.

He recently completed the University of Manchester PhD which he started in 2000.
New facility will bridge the gap

Construction work on the £35 million Smith Extension development on a site between the Michael Smith Building and the Core Technology Facility is well under way.

The state-of-the-art facility, which will be connected to both neighbouring buildings by bridge links, will eventually house 40 research groups from the Faculties of Life Sciences and Medical and Human Sciences.

The building, due for completion by the end of 2008, will have a neuroscience research focus and includes dedicated electrophysiology and histology suites.

Pictured is project sponsor, Andrew Loudon, Professor of Animal Biology in the Faculty of Life Sciences, with others involved in the hi-tech development.

Museum showcase seminars

The Manchester Museum has recently appointed three ‘Museum-Academic Joint Appointments’ (MAJAs) with cognate subject areas within the faculties.

The MAJAs, Maria Kostoglou (humanities), Phil Manning (natural sciences) and Sam Alberti (museology) have set up a new seminar series, ‘SHOWCASE’, to provide a forum for a fundamental rethink of the way services are delivered.

The research, conducted by the University’s School of Education, was carried out for the Department for Education and Skills as part of its ongoing evaluation of the Every Child Matters (ECM) initiative for improving children’s services.

“However, the overwhelming view was that EPs have been too heavily involved in the statutory assessment of children with special educational needs and that this has not been a good use of their valuable time,” Professor Farrell said. “The review makes a number of key recommendations for improving educational psychology services, including the need for EPs to clarify whether an alternative provider might be available to carry out some of their work with the same impact.”

Educational psychologists an ‘underused resource’

A review of educational psychology provision in England and Wales commissioned by the Government has recommended a fundamental rethink of the way services are delivered.

The researchers analysed data from more than 1,000 respondents including teachers, local authority officers, parents, pupils, mental health professionals, youth offending teams and many others.

Professor Peter Farrell who led the project said: “88% of parents rated the contribution made by the Educational Psychologist (EP) who assessed their child to be ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’.

Professor Alistair Burns said: “There is a pressing need to find a simple and objective way, such as a blood test, of diagnosing Alzheimer’s disease and monitoring its progression, especially the effectiveness of treatments. By looking at so many chemicals simultaneously the chances of observing a true diagnostic marker for Alzheimer’s disease is very good.”

Robot scientist helps out in lab

A groundbreaking study into Alzheimer’s disease is to be launched at The University of Manchester with the help of a robot scientist.

The robot, which operates independently in the lab, will be used to analyse hundreds of blood samples taken from volunteers with and without diagnosed Alzheimer’s disease in the first ever study focusing on metabolites using this technology.

Alzheimer’s disease is very good.”

A technique known as GC×GC-MS, specially calibrated at Manchester University, will be used to measure accurately the concentration of thousands of the metabolites in the blood samples. This is the first study in the world to use them to improve diagnosis.

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The study will use blood samples taken from volunteers across the Greater Manchester and Stockport area consisting of Alzheimer’s patients and age-match controls. In total 1,000 volunteers will be recruited to the study.

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Sick patients ‘cannot afford’ vital medication – a survey carried out by The University of Manchester has found that most people view the current prescription charging system as illogical because people with some chronic diseases are exempt from charges but others – including heart disease and high-blood pressure patients – have to pay. Full price. Ellen Schaufele called for an urgent review of the charging system at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s national conference. This story was reported in the Manchester Evening News.

‘Cancer hope as vaccine trials start’ – this story was reported in The Manchester Evening News, which featured articles on One Central Manchester, The University of Manchester Incubator science parks and the launch of the Core Technology Facility in June 2015.

‘Super-light body fabrics on way to beat bullets’ – a super-lightweight fabric which can stop a bullet is being developed by scientists at the Daresbury Laboratory. The launch of the Core Technology Facility in June was also featured. This supplement was in The Times.

New genetic link to cot death

Babies born with specific variants of three key genes are 14 times more likely to die from cot death, new research has found. The findings - published in Human Immunology – build on earlier research by The University of Manchester team that had already associated one of these genes with the condition.

The discovery of two further risk genes, say the paper’s authors, is a major step forward in understanding the causes of cot death or ‘sudden infant death syndrome’ (SIDS).

“The first identified an association between SIDS and specific variants of a gene called Interleukin-10 five years ago,” said microbiologist Dr David Drucker, who led the research. “Quite simply, a baby who had particular variations of this gene was at greater risk of SIDS than other babies. Now, we have discovered two more genes implicated in SIDS and when a baby has certain genetic variants or ‘polymorphisms’ of all three of these genes he or she can be up to 14 times more likely to die from the condition.”

Dr Drucker, whose previous work has also explained why smoking and sleeping position are also risk factors in SIDS, says this latest research will help establish the cause of death in certain cases.

“This research greatly advances our understanding of the basic causes of SIDS, which is not a single disease but a collection of different causes of death,” said Dr Drucker, who carried out the work in collaboration with paediatric pathologist Dr Anthony Barson.

“Forensic scientists would be able to assess the likelihood of a baby dying from SIDS through genetic measurements and so help prevent the sort of tragic miscarriages of justice that have happened in the past. The research will also improve our ability to identify in advance which babies will be at risk of SIDS so their mothers can be personally advised to eliminate other risk factors such as dangerous sleeping position for their infant.”

More than 150 postdoctoral researchers attended the Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS) Fellowships for Researchers seminar last month. The aim was to raise awareness of prestigious Fellowship opportunities available to contract research staff and early-career colleagues. Speakers from the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the EPSRC were present. There were also presentations and a Q&A session from successful, experienced Research Fellows.

Professor Helen Gleeson, Associate Dean for Research (EPS) pictured: “We designed this successful event to improve our provision of career advice to a vital body of people within the University, our postdoctoral researchers. We hope that it provided both useful information to these researchers, showing them what opportunities there are for applying for Fellowship, and how to help the faculty offers, as well as providing an opportunity for researchers to network.”

This event also marked the launch of a 40 page Guide to Grantsmanship. This book, funded by the EPSRC on behalf of the Strategy Team, is a compilation of tips, dos and don’ts and some good general advice to optimise a researcher’s chances of writing a successful grant application.

If you wish to obtain a copy please email louise.nogens@manchester.ac.uk

A team of academics from the Faculty of Life Sciences may have discovered why certain people are hairier than others and why some men go bald prematurely.

The University team has laid bare the molecular processes that determine which embryonic skin cells will form into hair follicles and determine the body’s hair pattern.

The findings will be of interest to scientists looking at male-pattern baldness but have more direct implications for people who suffer from ectodermal dysplasia – a range of conditions where skin cells fail to develop into other tissue, including hair follicles.

“During human development, skin cells have the ability to turn into other types of cells to form hair follicles, sweat glands, teeth and nails,” said Dr Denis Headon, who led the research. “Which cells are transformed into hair follicles is determined by three proteins that are produced by our genes. Our research has identified how one of these proteins working outside of the cell interacts at a molecular level to determine an individual’s hair pattern as the embryonic skin spatially organises itself.”

The team found that cells given the genetic command to become hair follicles will send out signals to neighbouring cells to prevent them from doing likewise, i.e. producing a specific hair pattern. They also demonstrated that by hyperactivating the ‘hair protein’ in embryonic mice, young with considerably more fur than normal were produced.

“We were able to change the number of hair follicles in the embryonic mice while they were developing in the womb,” said Dr Headon. “The findings could have implications for sufferers from ectodermal dysplasia who are missing this particular protein and who are unable to develop hair follicles during embryonic development.”

In the face of the biodiversity crisis one scientist said: “On the face of it, we are more likely to lose the species of our planet: his primary interest is spiders.”

This challenge is exactly what Dr Dmitri Logunov, the Curator of Arthropods in the Manchester Museum and his colleagues try to address. Dmitri is a professional taxonomist, a specialist who discovers, describes and classifies the species of our planet’s primary interest is spiders.

Contemporary taxonomy is a large-scale international discipline requiring serious theoretical and empirical rigor. Molecular biologists offer ‘DNA-barcoding’ as a tool for species identification and classification. But Dmitri believes that DNA taxonomy will never be a substitute for the observations and collections made by naturalists in the field.

In October 2008, Dmitri is going to Turkistan University in Kazakhstan where he will carry out a collaborative research project supported by the Finnish Academy of Sciences. The project will use a Scanning Electron Microscope to examine the relationships between the Palaearctic genera of jumping spiders.
Hearing voices

Psychologists have launched a study to find out why some people who hear voices in their head consider it a positive experience while others find it distressing. The University of Manchester investigation comes after Dutch researchers found that many healthy members of the population regularly hear voices. Although hearing voices has traditionally been viewed as 'abnormal' and a symptom of mental illness, the Dutch findings suggest it is more widespread than previously thought, indicating that about 4% of the population hear voices. That would be equivalent to 100,000 people in Greater Manchester.

Researcher Aylish Campbell said: “We know that many members of the general population hear voices but have never felt the need to access mental health services; some experts even claim that more people hear voices and don’t seek psychiatric help than those who do. Many of those affected describe their voices as being a positive influence in their lives, comforting or inspiring them as they go about their daily business. We’re now keen to investigate why some people respond in this way while others are distressed and seek outside help.”

The team would like to hear from people in the northwest aged 16 years and over who have been hearing voices for at least six months. They can be both users of mental-health services or not. Discussions will be carried out at a location to suit the volunteer in complete privacy. Participants will also be asked to complete questionnaires about their experiences. In all, participation in the study will take about an hour and a half.

People interested in participating can call 0161 306 0405 or e-mail voicesresearch@hotmail.co.uk

HIV drug for cervical-cancer

Researchers at the University are developing a topical treatment against the human papilloma virus (HPV) which is responsible for pre-cancerous and cancerous disease of the cervix as well as other genital malignancies. In the UK many thousands of women undergo surgery to remove precancerous lesions every year instead they may be able to apply a simple cream or gel to the affected area. The discovery may be even more significant in developing countries which lack surgical facilities and where HPV-related cervical cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in women.

Dr Ian and Lynne Hampson at the School of Medicine’s Division of Human Development and Reproduction are developing the treatment from a type of drug that is given orally to treat HIV. This protease inhibitor can selectively kill cultured HPV-infected cervical cancer cells and, since it is already available as a liquid formulation, it is possible it may work by direct application to the cervix.

Group leader Dr Ian Hampson, who works at St Mary’s Hospital, Manchester, said: “It is very exciting to find such a significant new use for this HIV drug which is already licensed and FDA-approved for oral administration. We are currently exploring the means of delivering this drug directly to the affected tissue. We would then move to a clinical trial that would be supervised by our head of unit, Professor Kitchener. If this proves successful we could see the treatment available fairly rapidly.”

Professor Kitchener said: “The significance of this finding is that a simple medical treatment could be used in place of surgery which many women dislike and fully preserve the cervix. First we need to demonstrate that it can be effective.”

Learning about sustainable development

This semester will see the launch of an innovative cross-faculty initiative funded by HEFCE’s Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund. The aim is to enhance the quality of our students’ learning experience in the broad area of ‘environment and sustainable development’.

This will be achieved through activities ranging from student-led ‘greening the campus’ and ‘green community volunteering’ to curriculum innovation and international videoconferencing for postgraduate research students.

One key strand of activity will be to establish a cross-faculty portfolio of curricular and extra-curricular ‘topics, ideas and themes’ for undergraduate and Masters students.

There will be three overlapping approaches. The first is to encourage academic colleagues to contribute towards supervision of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary projects linked to current and potential (horizon scanning) scholarly interests.

The second is to work with non-academic colleagues, for example in the areas of estates management, services and procurement, to identify student projects which have the potential of contributing to progress in areas not usually linked with teaching and learning.

The third is to collaborate with external partners, for example in the areas of environmental sciences and policy, to establish links with external organisations, commercial, public and NGO sectors, in the development of projects by providing access to data and expertise and perhaps placements. The success of this initiative depends largely upon colleagues becoming involved in a ‘spirit of collegiality’, recognising the potential and value of working beyond the normal confines of the day job.

For more information contact Susan Stubbs susan.stubbs@manchester.ac.uk

Leading for 10 years

More than 700 students and their family and friends gathered in the Whitworth Hall to attend the Centre for Educational Leadership’s (CELS) thirteenth Awards Day and to mark the beginning of its 10th anniversary celebrations.

The Awards Day honours those who have completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), the Postgraduate Certificate and Masters in Process Consultancy, and the MEd in Educational Leadership.

Guest speaker at the ceremony was Steve Munby, Chief Executive of the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), who referred to CEL as “one of the College’s pre-eminent leadership centres”.

It is ten years since the University’s Centre for Educational Leadership (CELL) was awarded its first contract to provide training for aspiring headteachers.

Professor Bob Munn, the University’s Vice President for Teaching and Learning praised CEL at the Awards Day saying: “CEL has an outstanding reputation as a high quality integrated centre that can draw upon significant expertise across a number of diverse areas. The Centre’s mission is to achieve international excellence in leadership development and change management in public services.”

He also announced that CEL had been awarded a number of major new contracts for the development of school leaders and had formed a consortium, The Northern Partnership (TNP), to deliver these across the North of England. The photograph shows members of the platform party at the Awards Day.

Busy Year for TEAM

The cross-faculty active research network TEAM (The Environment at Manchester) has had a busy year. With funding from the Higher Education Innovation Fund and NWDA, numerous new contracts and potential collaborative links have been established with regional and national organisations.

Linked to this, an Environment Agency funded project has secured the establishment of a research-led regional network to maximise collaborative links between the Agency and the Region’s academic community.

Internationally, TEAM is working on an environment-focused higher education capacity building project in the developing world, the latest success being in Syria where the four national universities are collaborating with Manchester on the introduction of BSc programmes in Environmental Sciences and Studies. This includes junior teaching staff coming from Syria to study PhDs at Manchester.

On the wider international stage, TEAM network members are working with the World Universities Network on projects ranging from collaboration with the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at Nanjing University to the introduction of BSc programmes in Environmental Sciences and Studies. On the wider international stage, TEAM network partners are working with the World Universities Network on projects ranging from collaboration with the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at Nanjing University to the introduction of BSc programmes in Environmental Sciences and Studies. On the wider international stage, TEAM network partners are working with the World Universities Network on projects ranging from collaboration with the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at Nanjing University to the introduction of BSc programmes in Environmental Sciences and Studies.

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It is very fitting that a man who has long advocated, championed and practised interdisciplinary collaboration should now have a glass-walled office in the new Manchester Interdisciplinary Biocentre, which is a bit of a mouthful as a name for a building (hence it is known simply as MIB), but expresses the philosophy of its conception and activity. It operates at the interface between the physical sciences and the life sciences. Which is exactly where Simon Gaskell, Vice-President for Research and Professor of Mass Spectrometry, operates himself, using advanced analytical techniques to investigate the biochemistry of micro-organisms, which yield insights relevant to disease.

The MIB architecturally is the sort of Orwellian building now so fashionable - open plan, glass-walled, with exposed staircases and black metal slats. As you sit on one of the incongruous brown leather sofas in the waiting area, a nearby lift squeaking and cranking up and down, you can see people walking around on all levels sitting in meetings. But it is all part of the plan, conceived pre-squeaking and cranking up and down, you can see leather sofas in the waiting area, a nearby lift walled, with exposed staircases and black metal building now so fashionable - open plan, glass-walled office in the new building (hence it is known simply as MIB), Manchester Interdisciplinary Biocentre, hence the term post-disciplinary research. “Getting to grips with areas of research, for instance in Arts, in which he has no direct experience. At the centre of it all, however, is his understanding of and care for the individual researcher. He sees academic work on a spectrum - from the regimented at one end, which organisation demands, to free enquiry at the other. “Academics have to divide their time and efforts along that spectrum, usually in two places at once - and reconciliation of the two is quite a challenge. We develop a University research strategy and make sure Faculties and Schools fit in with that, whilst at the same time encouraging and facilitating the work they want to do. One of the things that distinguishes academic research is that, in essence, it has to be unstructured.”

“...we have the opportunity to lead, to influence national and international debate. It has significant implications for the way we facilitate our research.”

Simon’s strategy

Name
Simon Gaskell

Present Appointment:
2006-
Vice-President for Research,
The University of Manchester

Education
1971
B.Sc. (Hons), Chemistry, University of Bristol
1974
Ph.D, Chemistry, University of Bristol

Present Appointment:
1974-1977
Medical Research Council Post Doctoral Fellow, Department of Chemistry, University of Glasgow, Scotland
1977-1986
Principal Research Officer and Head of Mass Spectrometry Unit, Tenovus Institute for Cancer Research, University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff
1984-1985
(Sabbatical) Visiting Expert and Acting Group Leader, Mass Spectrometry Group, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, USA
1987-1993
Professor of Experimental Medicine, Department of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA; Adjunct Professor of Pharmacology and Chemistry (1989-1993), University of Houston, Texas, USA
1993-
Professor of Mass Spectrometry, UMIST
1999-2002
Head of Department, Department of Chemistry, UMIST
1999
Visiting Professor, Department of Preclinical Veterinary Medicine, University of Liverpool
2000-2004
Member, Board of Directors, Project Unity CLG (UMIST and the Victoria University of Manchester)
2004-
Associate Vice President for Research, The University of Manchester

Award
2004 Royal Society of Chemistry Award in Mass Spectrometry

Society memberships:
Royal Society of Chemistry (Fellow, 1991)
British Mass Spectrometry Society (Treasurer, 1982-4)
American Chemical Society
British Society for Proteome Research (Committee Member 2004- )

Profile

CV
During August, the University delivered a day of sport and activity for young people from local communities. The event, christened Game On!, is the first stage of a sustainable project set up by the University’s SPORT department and Directorate of Human Resources.

The initiative will provide sporting opportunities for young people living in the local area, and will continue with after school and school holiday coaching sessions. On the day, more than 500 young people from Moss Side, Ardwick and Longsight were given the opportunity to try out Thai boxing, street dance, speed, agility, quickness (SAQ) training, Hawk Cricket and participate in a football tournament. Transport and lunch was provided and the day was run by students and staff volunteers from the University’s prestigious Sport Volunteer Scheme.

Holly Howarth, one of the volunteer coaches said after the event: “I feel exhausted but you can see just how much the children have been enjoying themselves. One lad told me if he wasn’t here I’d be watching TV all day. Hearing that makes it all worth it.”

Clare Barrell, Sport Development Officer at the University organized the day. She said: “It was a mania but worthwhile day and I am absolutely thrilled with the attitude of the volunteers, they were amazing and dealt with everything thrown at them. I am looking forward to introducing more Sports Volunteers into the local community in the new academic year”.

Making maths at Manchester ran for the first time in July this year and saw bright Year 12 students tackling previously unseen unseen problems in the company of mathematicians, the thing that gives us a real buzz of the course, said in his opening address: “As mathematicians, the thing that gives us a real buzz is the thrill we want potential future mathematicians to share.”

The 110 students who attended were carefully selected from mainly state schools and sixth form colleges throughout England and Wales. They stayed at Chancellors Hall, but there was time to show them the central site highlights and how the new mathematics building is progressing!

John Begg, who devised the course and was the main organiser feels it was well worthwhile and is sure it will run again next coming year it is one of a wider programme of events that the School runs for schools and teachers.

“It was exhausting but exciting. I believe Manchester is the first British university to run this kind of course in Mathematics. The feedback has been very positive and although we can improve in some areas, I’m sure we have the basis of a winner – for mathematics and for Manchester.”

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The Museum’s Collective Conversations project has won the MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives) Inspire North West Culture Award, in the Improving and Innovating category. The awards are to celebrate outstanding examples of excellence in the region, and the Improving and Innovating category highlights projects and individuals that are instrumental in delivering on wider social and political agendas and that can provide powerful learning, inclusion and participation opportunities to the widest range of audiences.

The Collection Conversations project demonstrates that a modern museum needs to listen directly and work with its communities. Although many of its collections are of national significance, the museum realised that they had been relatively under-used by surrounding communities.

Collective Conversations creates new ways for the public to engage directly with museum objects by involving them in ‘conversations’ about collections. It has successfully established inter-cultural dialogue and debate, and by embracing alternative perspectives, has created new ways of reaching audiences.

The Times Higher Awards, now in their second year, aim to raise awareness and reward the huge contribution which British universities make to the economic and cultural health of the country. The University projects which are in with a chance of winning are the ‘Disability Toolkits’ scheme developed by the Careers and Employability Division, and Lifefab which is a widening participation project run by Manchester Museum.

Disability Toolkits is a comprehensive online resource for disabled students, graduate employers and academic staff which offer sources of information and support to help reveal, organise and facilitate work experience and other off-campus learning opportunities for students’ career development.

The Higher Education project manager for Disability Toolkits said: “We’re immensely proud to have been selected for such a prestigious award in the HE sector. Disability Toolkits exemplifies our ongoing commitment to promoting and sustaining diversity within higher education, business and society.”

The other project to be nominated – Lifefab – has been developed by the Manchester Museum and involves school children from underrepresented backgrounds working alongside young PhD researchers in real University Lab environments.

Commenting on the scheme Dr Bernadette Lynch, Deputy Director for Access, Learning and Interpretation at the Museum said: ‘Lifefab creates a “win win” situation for everyone involved. The PhD students get valuable teaching experience and funding; the University reaches out to hard to reach post-16 students and the students themselves get the chance to carry out real, exciting science and find inspiration from the PhD students who are of a similar age to themselves.’

The award winners will be announced at an official dinner at the Hilton Hotel on Park Lane, London on 15 November.

The University’s MJF Careers & Employability Division launches an expanded season of careers fairs this semester, with a record number of exhibitors booked.

New additions include The Part-Time Jobs Fair, helping Manchester students find casual paid work to boost their finances and work experience record. Also new is The Chinese Graduate Fair part of the Division’s commitment to international students, providing opportunities for jobs and work experience in China.

The Ethnic Diversity Fair has been re-named The Diversity Fair to reflect its broadened scope, encouraging student groups from a wider variety of backgrounds, including gay and lesbian students. Long-running fairs have also attracted record numbers of recruiters this year.

Divisions of Audiences.

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The museum staff themselves have found ways to identify document and interpret collections in a more meaningful way. This has challenged the notion of the curator as the font of all knowledge and acknowledged the user as an active agent rather than a passive consumer.

Curator of Community Engagement Gurdeep Thiarai, who was nominated in the same category, collected the award on behalf of the Museum.

see also: ‘Just the Job’, Staff Update, page 7

www.disabilitytoolkits.ac.uk  www.manchester.ac.uk/museum

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/fairs

Culture award for museum project

Projects shortlisted for prestigious awards

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Trio awarded for outstanding achievement

The achievements of three former students have been recognised at the Outstanding Alumni Awards 2006.

Professor Alan Emery, Dr Rajesh Jeetah and Robert Herz were each presented with the Award over the summer months.

Outstanding Alumni Awards are given to former students who have achieved distinction within their profession, have provided exemplary service to the University or have made an outstanding contribution of a personal or humanitarian nature.

Professor Alan Emery, who graduated from Manchester in 1952, is one of the founding fathers in the field of Medical Genetics, having enjoyed a highly distinguished career in Neuromuscular Genetics. He has held a number of prestigious positions throughout his career including President of the British Clinical Genetics Society and Chief Scientific Advisor for the European Neuromuscular Centre. He is also a Fellow of Green College, Oxford.

Professor Emery said he was delighted and deeply honoured by his Award, adding: “I entered medicine rather late in life - qualifying at the age of 31. There therefore seemed very few opportunities for me on the usual career ladder. However, on the advice of the then Professor of Medicine Robert Platt, it was suggested I tried Medical Genetics - a very new subject in the 1950s but which he forecast, quite rightly, would become increasingly important in the future.”

Dr Rajesh Jeetah, a 1984 Textile Science and Technology graduate, received his award in August while in the UK in his role as Minister of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Cooperative - within the Government of Mauritius. Rajesh was top of his class in all three years whilst studying in Manchester. He then returned to Mauritius in 1994 where he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Department of Textile Technology at the University of Mauritius, becoming Head of the Department in 1996. He then decided to enter the world of politics in 2003.

The third recipient of the Award was Robert Herz, a 1974 Manchester Business School graduate and now Chairman of the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), in the USA. Prior to joining the FASB, Robert was PriceWaterhouseCoopers North American Theatre Leader of Professional, Technical, Risk and Quality and a member of the firm’s Global and US Boards. He has also served as a part-time member of the International Accounting Standards Board.

Suggestions for future recipients of Outstanding Alumni Awards should be sent to Annette Babchuk, Head of Alumni Relations, Division of Development and Alumni Relations at annette.babchuk@manchester.ac.uk or telephone 306 3638.
Looking Back

The Manchester Museum Education Service

The Manchester Museum Education Service was founded in 1915, making it the oldest of its kind in the country that still operates today. Although not the first to be established, it has proved to be the most enduring, outliving similar schemes in Leeds, Newport and Norwich.

Schools visiting the Museum would first be taken to dedicated classrooms in the tower (and after 1931 in the custom-refitted basement) where they would have the opportunity to handle objects and undertake crafts and artwork. Thence, armed with a series of worksheets and questionnaires, the children would be released onto the galleries.

For many, the most memorable part of the visit was to the vivarium, where they would be given the opportunity to study not only dead but living animals. Keen children had the opportunity to return to the Museum on Saturday mornings for the ‘Children’s Museum Club’, established in 1944.

Today the Museum provides taught programmes in the arts and humanities to more than 50,000 school children, from under fives to post-16s, from across the North West and beyond. It is one of the largest and most respected museum education services in the region.

For more information on the history of the Museum, contact Dr Sam Alberti, sam.alberti@manchester.ac.uk.
For more information on the range of education programmes currently on offer, contact Lynne Andrew, lynne.andrew@manchester.ac.uk.

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