VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MEETING WITH FACULTY

The main challenge which currently faces us is to take as full charge as possible of our destiny in an external environment over which we have very little control. "In the medium to long term, I believe that the relentless pressure on the universities must begin to break up. But in the short term, the next five years or so, our task must be to position ourselves within that environment in order to secure the maximum advantage and attract the minimum penalties." This was the message with which the Vice-Chancellor began the meeting with faculty on 29 April.

Sir Leslie went on to describe some of the emerging features of the external environment as he saw them. The separation of funding for teaching from that for research now seemed certain to come about, with the likelihood that some groups in some universities might not receive funding for research at all. The University system would expand: student numbers were set to double by the next century. But no-one in Westminster thought that this could be done on the basis of past scales of financing, or in the traditional pedagogy. The unit of resource would be further squeezed. There would be greater selectivity in research funding, together with an increased physical concentration of research activity. Less certain, but nonetheless highly probable, was the disappearance of the binary line within the next two or three years, and the creation of independent academic quality control mechanisms at national level.

To provide some background for the 150 or so members of faculty present at the meeting, the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Fred Bayley, summarised the key elements of the University Planning Statement. Mr. Tony Sims, the Finance Officer, described the latest UFC funding arrangements, discussed the University's estimates for 1991-92 and reported on changes to the internal budgetary system. The intention, he explained, was to allocate resources in a way which reflected income flows to subject groups; there would need to be some initial underpinning where there were mismatches between commitments and income; the system would need further refinement to take account of cross subject teaching and in order to increase incentives.

continued on page 2
The significance of research selectivity and importance of recruiting research students were emphasised by the Planning Officer, Mr. Ted Nakhe. Recruitment was one area where we might be considered weaker than we should be, and was a critical factor in relation to research standing and maximising income to the University. He pointed out that the UFC gave most research students a weighting of four against an undergraduate weighting of one and also warned that there was a possibility that, in areas where the 1991-92 intake targets were not met, the UFC would claw back funds.

Ted Nakhe drew attention to the increasing emphasis on the contractual nature of public funding, but pointed out that the changes were not unmitigated bad news. The earmarking of sources of funding could also work in our favour, as was the case with our continuing education tender.

On student numbers, the UFC has indicated that it will fund roughly 90 per cent of students in the system in the forthcoming year. In the year following, the number of 'fees only' students an institution will have admitted would determine the numbers to be fully funded. Put simply, the more students we take at marginal cost in October 1991, the larger our funded baseline is likely to be in 1992-93.

As the Vice-Chancellor pointed out, increasing our student intake has worked to our advantage thus far: our favourable UFC allocation for 1991-92 was directly attributable to the University's earlier decision to go for expansion. Now we are approaching a student population of 6,000, the opportunity arises to plan for even greater expansion. "We have to ask ourselves," said Sir Leslie, "whether there is a real advantage in achieving a critical mass of between six and a half and seven thousand students. If so, can we be certain that our infrastructure, our housing, welfare and buildings will support such an expansion?" The feasibility of expansion will be discussed by all units within the University next term.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included the future of the Gardner Centre and the current pay negotiations. On the former, the Vice-Chancellor reported on the Planning Committee's decision to recommend to the Council that the University could neither afford to continue with the recurrent subsidy to the Centre, nor meet the substantial expenditures now required on the fabric.

On pay, he confirmed that the CVCF were seeking a meeting with the Secretary of State. Meanwhile, as recommended by the CVCP, the University would be paying an additional five per cent on account to all faculty.

Note: the first payment will be made with May salaries.

RGO LIBRARY
NAMED AFTER
MICHAEL PENSTON

The library of the Royal Greenwich Observatory at Cambridge has been named the Michael Penston Library after the Sussex DPhil and former Visiting Reader in Astronomy, who died of cancer in December. Professor R.J. Tayler, who was Michael Penston's first research supervisor, gave an address at the dedication last month.

JEREMY HOLLISS

We regret to announce the death of Jeremy Holliss on 19 April. Jery was an undergraduate in COGS from 1987 to 1990, and had been a research student in COGS since October 1990. He had many friends throughout the University and will be greatly missed.

There will be a Memorial Service in the Meeting House at 1 pm on Friday, 14 June. Would any of his friends who would like to play a part in planning the service, please contact Gavin Ashenden, the University Chaplain, Room 1, The Meeting House (tel. 3875).
NEW JOINT SOCIAL WORK DIPLOMA

A new Diploma in Social Work is launched. "It has been great to be able to take time to think what we are doing in social work — to be able to take an objective view and match theory to practice". "Working with people from a variety of backgrounds is really stimulating. We are learning a great deal from each other on the course". These are just some of the positive reactions of students on the new Diploma in Social Work course, the first ever collaborative venture between the Brighton Polytechnic, the East Sussex County Council and the University of Sussex.

The 20 students on the course, their tutors and senior officers of the University, the Polytechnic and East Sussex Social Services were gathered at the University to mark the launch of the new Diploma, which is one of the first of its kind in the country.

It is intended that, by 1994, the Diploma in Higher Education will be the only social work qualification, replacing the current range of social work programmes across the country. East Sussex, the Polytechnic and the University have taken the lead in introducing the course well in advance of the target date.

A distinctive feature of the course is the emphasis placed on practical experience. Not only do the students bring their own extensive experience as social workers to bear on the theory, they also undertake practical supervised placements within the local region. Another feature is the academic level of the course: the Diploma is equivalent to the first two years of a degree course.

The students are funded by East Sussex for the duration of the two year course and will continue to work for the County after qualifying. James Milford, Assistant Director of East Sussex Social Services, one of the speakers at the launch, drew attention to the value of the scheme to the community. “There are real benefits in this excellent scheme — it helps us to plan for sufficient locally trained social workers for the 1990s” and, as he also noted, the positive feedback received so far augurs extremely well for the future. Over 80 applications have already been received for the next intake.

The Diploma course is genuinely collaborative. Students divide their time between placements, the Polytechnic and the University. As David Watson, the Director of the Polytechnic pointed out, “This is working together in a positive way across the binary line and we hope we shall see a lot more of it in the future. This is a professional and vocational course of a very high standard, offered to students in a way which takes account of previous experience.”.

Among those present at the launch was Stuart Laing, Assistant Director (Academic Affairs) at the Polytechnic. As Dean of CCS, he played an important role in bringing the Diploma course into being.

SUSSEX DELEGATE FOR INTERNATIONAL SPACE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Nick Watkins of the Space and Plasma Physics Group in MAPS has been chosen to join a select band of British students for the International Space University 1991 session.

This is the fourth session for this new institution. It will be held in Toulouse, and the nearby French National Space Centre (CNES), for 10 weeks from 22 June. Previous sessions have been held at MIT in Cambridge, Mass., Strasbourg and Toronto.

The intensive programme involves about 260 hours of lectures in all aspects of space work, as well as courses in space physical sciences, Nick’s speciality. A major design study is also carried out — this year’s is to be a manned Mars expedition. Entrance is highly competitive and the ISU is typically attended by about 130 postgraduate students, research scientists and young space professionals from all over the world.

Nick works with Dr. Peter Christiansen of MAPS, Dr. Paul Gough of EAPS and Chris Mouikis of MAPS on data analysis from the USAF/NASA CRRES satellite launched last July. This satellite carries a Sussex particle correlator experiment, a more sophisticated version of the experiment previously flown on the AMPTE UKS satellite mission.

Nick Watkins has been at Sussex since 1985, having gained his DPhil in theoretical physics, supervised by Dr. David Waxman. His interest in spaceflight dates back to the Apollo 8 moon mission, when he was six, and he joined the British Interplanetary Society at the age of 12.

His current job involves liaison with the US groups in Boston, Iowa and Berkeley, and Mullard Space Science Laboratory of University College London, who are Sussex’s colleagues on this mission.
Equity in the finance and delivery of health care: what can be learnt from cross-country comparisons?

Dr. Adam Wagstaff of the School of Social Sciences continues our series in which faculty write about their current research interests.

Expenditure on health care varies considerably across the OECD countries, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of GDP (see chart below). The USA spends the most. Only Denmark, Greece, Spain and Turkey spend a smaller proportion of their GDP on health care than the UK.

Differences in public coverage and in the way health care is provided: tax-financed systems tend to have universal public cover and rely on public provision; social insurance systems typically have less than 100 per cent public cover and place less emphasis on public provision; in the USA less than half of the population has public cover (in 1986, 37 million Americans had no insurance cover whatsoever) and the private sector dominates in the provision of health care.

Countries differ too in the way they finance and deliver their health care. With the exception of the USA, where private insurance premia and out-of-pocket payments account for 59 per cent of health care expenditures, all the OECD countries finance the bulk of their health care expenditures publicly (see chart above). Some countries, such as Denmark and the UK, simply use general tax revenues. Others, such as France and the Netherlands, operate a ‘social insurance’ system: contributions are compulsory, based on earnings and paid to ‘sick funds’. Differences in financing systems are generally reflected in the delivery of health care (are health care expenditures distributed in an equitable way?).

There seems to be some agreement that payments for health care ought to be related not to the amount of health care a person receives but to his or her ability-to-pay. During the last three years I have been jointly co-ordinating a comparative study investigating differences in equity in the finance and delivery of health care in the 10 countries included in the chart shown here. The results of this study, which are to be published shortly, suggest that countries like the UK which operate NHS-type systems tend to perform reasonably well in terms of the extent to which payments for health care are related to ability-to-pay. In these countries the finance of health care tends to be at least proportional to income (everyone pays the same percentage of their income towards health care) and is in some countries mildly progressive (the rich pay a bigger share of their income towards health care than the poor).

The USA, by contrast, fares badly on this criterion. Private health insurance premia are often related to risk, whilst out-of-pocket payments are incurred only by those seeking medical care. The effect in both cases is the same: the worse-off tend to pay more, because they also tend to be the least healthy. The American health care financing system is, as a result, regressive (the rich pay a smaller share of their income towards health care than the poor). This is also often true of countries operating social insurance systems. Regressiveness results from allowing the rich to make their own arrangements for insurance cover against non-catastrophic illness and from taxing earnings rather than income (this favours persons in higher income groups who are more likely to have investment income). But regressiveness is also often present in the social insurance system itself. In France and the Netherlands, for continued on next page
example, social insurance contributions are proportional up to a ceiling (which benefits the better-off), whilst in Italy’s NHS (which has retained much of its old social insurance character) the marginal contribution rate actually declines as earnings rise.

If ability-to-pay ought to determine a person’s payments towards health care, what ought to determine how much health care a person receives? The obvious answer is need. One interesting question, therefore, is: To what extent do persons in equal need of health care actually end up receiving the same amount of health care? Or do some — the better-off? the better educated? — manage to secure more than their ‘fair’ share? Julian Le Grand — formerly a Lecturer in Economics in the School of Social Sciences — in a study undertaken in the late 1970s found that NHS expenditures were concentrated on those in the lower socioeconomic groups (SEGs), but that the incidence of illness was also higher amongst the lower SEGs. Comparing the two distributions, he concluded that the top SEGs received more expenditure than was warranted given their low incidence of illness. Similar results have been obtained (for income groups rather than SEGs) in most of the 10 countries in the study.

There is some doubt, however, about the usefulness of this approach. Le Grand’s method is ill-equipped to take into account the different health care needs of people with different degrees of — and different types of — illness. When more sophisticated methods are employed, the class bias in the health care delivery systems of the 10 countries becomes much less pronounced and in some cases appears to disappear altogether. It remains to be seen whether variations in the class bias can be related to differences in the health care financing and delivery systems of the countries concerned. It would be reassuring for the founding fathers of our NHS, who attached so much importance to equity, if it turned out to be the case that any inequity in the provision of health care in Britain is small compared to that prevailing in the less public health care systems of the Netherlands and the USA.

From left: Robert Vipond (University of Toronto), Shannon Stimson (Harvard University), Samuel Beer (Harvard University), David Currie (University of Chicago Law School) and Michael Dunne (Sussex)

FULBRIGHT COLLOQUIUM

In this bicentennial year of the American Bill of Rights, celebrations have often been inward-looking retrospectives of the American experience. The Fulbright Colloquium, Writing a National Identity: Political, Economic and Cultural Perspectives on the Written Constitution, held at Sussex last month, was planned as a forum to examine the lessons of American experience for Europe, as the Community drafts its own constitutional documents. In the event the Colloquium, initiated and organised by Dr. Vivien Hart of the School of English and American Studies and Professor Shannon Stimson of Harvard University, became a transatlantic dialogue in which lessons flowed equally in both directions.

American, Canadian and European participants created an interdisciplinary debate in the best Sussex tradition, between law, literature, history, economics and politics. Canada, with its British, French and American connections, provided an important link. The Colloquium was briefed at its opening session by Dr. Gilles Létourneau, President of the Law Reform Commission of Canada, on the first 10 years of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and discussed issues of federalism and multiculturalism yet to be confronted as directly in the USA or Europe.

The lessons from the United States mixed optimism with warnings. As Samuel Beer, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University and Honorary Doctor of Letters at Sussex, summed up the Colloquium, a Constitution is both an enabling and a disabling document. The American Constitution, despite its status as fundamental law, has created a permanent arena of contest. Its influence can be traced widely, from economic thought to works of fiction as well as on the familiar terrain of civil liberties.

The insights of law, literature and politics indicate that, while language and texts are hostage to contests of power, the fact of texutality and its national content also impose form on politics. Distinctively American concepts of liberty and equality will transfer, if at all, complexly to a European debate in which different claims for justice and autonomy influence the formulation of rights. In matters of constitutionalism, Europe may have become the New World to the Old World of America. In this new European politics, a general message about the law and the politics of constitutions and the role of a public culture of rights in translating constitutional rhetoric into reality, rather than specific legal analogies, is best drawn from the American experience.

The Fulbright Commission and the Cultural Affairs section of the U.S. Embassy funded the Colloquium with the intention of generating further discussions. An immediate spin-off has been the day of seminars on American Rights at the Brighton Festival. Plans are also in hand for a meeting in Europe in 1993, for the presentation of European perspectives in the United States, and for the establishment of a modest but permanent base at Sussex to promote work in this field; this last project to be named in memory of the founder of interdisciplinary American Studies at Sussex, Marcus Cunliffe. Meantime, the papers from this Colloquium will be published in 1992 by Manchester University Press.
NEWS FROM THE COMPUTING SERVICE —
THE NEW UNIX SERVICE

The current academic year has seen many changes in the Computing Service; especially the installation and introduction of the 200 Research Machines Nimbus personal computers (PCs) throughout the campus. In parallel with this development has been the installation of a new UNIX service which will complement the existing UNIX service on the Sequent Symmetry and the PC service, thereby completing the Computing Service upgrade for the early 1990s.

The new UNIX service will be provided by a central system—a Solbourne 5e/905-128, a Solbourne 5/601-16, and 43 Solbourne S4000 single user workstations. These computers will be networked together to provide a comprehensive UNIX service.

This article describes these systems and how they will integrate with each other and with the existing systems.

Development
The Computing Service has had some Solbourne computers on loan since September, so that the new service could be planned and tested prior to the arrival and installation of the hardware. The loan of the equipment by Computer International Ltd (the suppliers) and Solbourne Computers UK Ltd. (the USA parent company’s UK agents) has proved invaluable to the Computing Service staff, who, with the assistance of members of other Schools, have been determining how best to install and integrate the new systems within the Service.

Solbourne 5e/905-128 Central Computer

The Solbourne 5e/905-128, which will become the main central system, should be ready for full user service in the next academic year, subject to the outcome of the user trials which are now taking place. This computer will eventually replace the VAX 11/780 computers (VAX1 and VAX2) which have served the University community well for the last 10 years.

It will become the focus of the central services and will provide the necessary resources, such as file space and application software, for the support of the UNIX workstations and the PCs.

The Solbourne 5e/905-128 is manufactured by Solbourne Computers in the United States. The company is partly owned by its employees and partly by the Japanese company Matsushita (known to European consumers as Panasonic) which manufactures the SPARC processors on which the Solbourne computers are based. A SPARC processor (Scalable Processor Architecture) is based on RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Chip) architecture. RISC processor chips, a recent innovation in computing, provide a relatively small number of basic computer operations, thus enabling the processor to run at higher speed. That is, RISC computers can carry out more instructions per second. Because the basic set of instructions is smaller and simple, some complex operations require a larger number of steps, but in aggregate there is a substantial gain in efficiency.

The 5e/905-128 here at Sussex was the first 900 series computer to be installed in Europe, even though there is a large number already in operation in the United States and Canada. The University of Essex has recently installed a Solbourne 5e/902-64 in their Computing Service and other universities are known to be now actively considering purchase. The Solbourne system was innovative in that it was the first system that provided a multi-processor SPARC computer.

The 5e/905-128 comprises five 20 MIPS SPARC processors with 128 Mbytes physical memory and a total of 16 Gbytes disk space. The new system has 20 times the processing power of our largest VAX, the 8530 (VAX4). It is hoped that users will experience improvement by a factor of between four and five in processor speed and a much improved response time compared with VAX4 and the Sequent Symmetry S81 (SYMA).

OS/MP

The operating system on the Solbournes is a UNIX system known as OS/MP. The OS/MP 4.0D system is a port of the SunOS 4.0.3 system to the Solbourne’s multi-processor architecture. It is a version of the 4.3BSD UNIX system which is highly popular in education and research environments and is similar to the DYNIX system on SYMA. Thus there should be no networking or integration problems with the UNIX systems already on campus.

As mentioned earlier, the 5e/905-128 will become the central and main computer of the Computing Service. This means that it will be the filestore for all the Service’s users of this new UNIX service including those using the Computing Service UNIX workstations. Security copies of the filestore will be taken at regular intervals to ensure the integrity of user data. It will also hold back-up copies of the workstations’ essential systems files as well as its own.

It will be linked to the Campus Network and to JANET, so it will be possible to transfer files and mail to other systems here at Sussex or on JANET. Printing facilities will, in time, be available and be located at the UNIX workstation clusters (see later), enabling users to print their files at a convenient location.

Solbourne S4000 workstations

As well as the 5e/905-128 central computer there will be 45 UNIX workstations installed during this term. Each of these workstations has

continued on next page
Andrew Hood took up the post of Staff Development Officer at the beginning of this month. This is a new post, under which he will be responsible for both academic and non-academic staff.

BIKING BACK TO HEALTH

Engineering Technician Brian Budd will be participating in the London to Brighton Bike Ride on 16 June, only two years after a heart by-pass operation. A keen cyclist "25 years' ago", he is now getting back into training for the ride to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation. Brian is taking part because he is keen to prove to other people that the operation is a success.

If you would like to help sponsor him on the great day, he would be grateful if you would get in touch with him in EAPS 1.

devolution and training. Andrew Hood (pictured right) comes to Sussex from Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education where he was a Senior Lecturer in Education and Educational Management.

He is currently involved in a series of meetings with members of staff from across the campus to identify where the need is greatest and how best to respond. He aims to have courses ready for the start of the next academic year.

THE GARDNER CENTRE

Readers will be aware from the recent press coverage that the University has stated that it can no longer afford the recurrent subsidy to the Gardner Arts Centre.

It has subsequently been confirmed that in view of the University's own accommodation needs there will be no new lease beyond 1 September 1995; there will be no University subsidy beyond 1 September 1992 and the University cannot guarantee a subsidy from August 1991, although this will be subject to negotiation.

It is therefore now for the Gardner Centre to decide whether to carry on to 1995. If it does decide to do so, in addition to finding funds to replace the University subsidy, the company will need to find nearly three quarters of a million pounds for the structure of the building.

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eight times the raw computing power of VAX4 and will provide a powerful research tool for users who have compute-intensive applications. Two such applications are computer aided design (CAD) and geographical information system (GIS) which require the high quality graphics capability and the processing power which will be provided by the new workstations.

The Solbourne S4000 workstation is the first 64 bit SPARC processor with floating point capability built into the same processor. It is rated at 25.5 MIPS, 1.7 double precision MFLOPS and will have 8Mbytes of physical memory and each will have a 240 Mbyte internal hard disk drive. There is also a 3.5" drive which can hold up to 1.4 Mbytes of data on a high density floppy disk. All S4000 workstations will have 16", 1152x900 pixel resolution, 8 bit backplane screen and it is hoped that some workstations will have their colour screens updated to 1120x1024 pixel resolution, 24 bit backplane later in the year.

Location of Workstations

Most of the workstations will be located in clusters of between eight and ten with the remainder available as stand-alone computers. Each cluster will also include a Solbourne 5/501-16 workstation acting as a file server to the S4000s. These file servers, which will have 16 Mbyte of physical memory and a 660 Mbyte disk, will provide the necessary system, utility and application software. The stand-alone workstations will download their software from the local server or the central computer. One important feature of the workstations is that user filestore on the central computers will be readily accessible.

Location and number of public workstations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workstation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computing Centre</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAPS 1GB3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPS 5A20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPS 1A9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLS 3R513</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solbourne 5/601-16 Mail Server

This machine will not be used directly by individuals but will act as the mail server for the campus. This means that all incoming mail to the campus will be processed by this computer, which will then forward messages to the addressee on the computer of his or her choice, be it the VAX Cluster, Sequent Symmetry (SYMA), the Solbournes or a departmental computer.

Similarly, all mail leaving the campus will be routed through the mail server which has the advantage of converting the sender's address to a more meaningful form.

Back-up Role

The Solbourne 5/601-16 has a second important role, as a back-up computer for the central 5e/905-128. If, for any reason, the latter becomes unavailable (e.g. removal from service for preventive maintenance) the 5/601-16 will take over the role of the central fileserver for the workstations.

The disks attached to one can be easily reassigned to the other when required, and hence the workstations can still function. However, the 5/601-16 will not have the processor or the memory capacity to handle the hundred or so interactive users for which the 5e/905-128 is configured.

Roger Discombe
THE TRAVERS COLLECTION

The Travers Collection of early printed (and other desirable) books was presented to the University Library in 1978. A detailed catalogue, prepared by Jeremy Potter of Brighton Polytechnic's Department of Library and Information Studies, has just been published, and a small exhibition of selected treasures is now on view on the first floor of the Library.

More than half the 335 books in the collection were printed before 1530, and constitute a resource unlike any other in the Library. 20 are incunabula, i.e. books produced in the 15th century, and many of the others are early 16th century work by printers better known for their incunabula. Most are from continental Europe; a notable exception is William Caxton's 1482 edition of Higden's Polychronicon.

In his 'Introduction: on the collection' Jeremy Potter identifies the development of modern thought as the common theme of the rest of the collection, a theme 'represented by books from all periods of the history of printing, from the 15th to the end of the 19th century, though principally in first editions of major or influential authors of the 17th century'. As examples one may note, from the 1650s, editions of Hobbes' Leviathan, Loisel's Divers opuscles, Cowley's Poems and Vere's Commentaries.

Many will wish to know more of the man who formed this collection, and the catalogue includes a memoir of Michael Travers (1909-1977) by his widow, Joy. She refers to his hope 'that it would become a source of academic investigation and renewal', an expectation also mentioned by Jeremy Potter, whose 'Introduction: on the catalogue' describes how the catalogue is designed to encourage and facilitate this. A reference copy of the catalogue is available at classmark Z997.T7 Pot. Copies are for sale from the Librarian's Secretary's office, at £30.00 each. Volumes in the collection are for reference use only, and must be used in the invigilated reading area in the Mass-Observation Archive. Space is limited and prior booking is advised.

RECENT BOOKS

Recent publications by Sussex authors include:

DIRECTORY ENQUIRIES

Following the introduction by British Telecom of charges for Directory Enquiries, changes have been made to Payphones (coin-operated and cardphones) on campus and in off-campus residences, as follows:

Free Directory Enquiries may now be made only from the following payphones:

- East Slope Social Centre
- Essex House
- Kent House
- Kukukund House
- Norwich House
- Park Village
- Social Centre
- York House
- Refectory
- Holland House

Other Payphones in residential and academic buildings have been barred to 192 (Directory Enquiries) calls, but it is hoped that the above provision will give sufficient coverage. — Morag Stalker, Assistant Secretary, Estates


All obtainable from Sussex University Bookshop.
Dr. Jane Oakhill, Lecturer in Experimental Psychology, has been awarded the British Psychological Society's Spearman Medal for 1991. Psychologists are eligible for the Medal during the ten years following qualification for graduate membership of the Society — it is awarded for 'published psychological work of outstanding merit'. Jane Oakhill has co-authored two books and published over 40 journal articles and book chapters. Below, she writes about her research:

Although I have published in a variety of areas of psychology (children's reading, deductive reasoning, text comprehension and the effects of time-of-day on performance), both of my books and a substantial proportion of my papers have been about children's reading. I first became interested in children's reading comprehension when, as a primary school teacher, I noticed that some children who were fluent readers had very little understanding of a story they had just 'read'. Indeed, it was to follow up this observation that I originally came to Sussex to study for my DPhil. Further work was funded by a four-year ESRC project grant, and conducted in collaboration with Nicola Yuill and Alan Parkin. An account of this work will be published by Cambridge University Press later this year in a book co-authored with Nicola Yuill: Children's Problems in Text Comprehension: An Experimental Investigation.

This research has identified a distinct group of poor child readers: those who perform normally on word-recognition tests, but who show inferior text comprehension. It has had two main aims: to explore the nature of this impairment by comparing groups of good and poor comprehenders on various skills thought to be important to comprehension, and to investigate ways of remediating comprehension difficulties. Two plausible explanations for poor comprehension are vocabulary and memory problems. The first would argue that children may be able to read words aloud, but may not know their meanings. However, comprehension problems have been shown to exist in the absence of voca-

bulary deficits — in our own studies, the groups of good and poor comprehenders were matched on a vocabulary test. The second explanation suggests itself because comprehension tests usually require questions to be answered 'from memory'. Several experiments have addressed this issue and shown, first, that poor comprehenders do not have any difficulties when they have to remember the exact wording of sentences and texts and, second, that they still have difficulty in answering some sorts of questions even when they have the text in front of them.

So how do good and poor comprehenders differ? One series of experiments showed that poor comprehenders have particular difficulty in making inferences from texts, and in connecting up the ideas from different parts of a text. They seem to treat texts as sets of unrelated sentences, and do not attempt to derive the gist of the whole. This deficit is also apparent in their inability to appreciate the 'main point' of a story. A related problem is that poor comprehenders have difficulty in understanding cohesive links in texts — they are remarkably poor at identifying referents for pronouns and other sorts of anaphor. They have also been shown to have difficulties with comprehension monitoring — assessing how well they are understanding a text. In many cases, these difficulties persist even when the stories are read to the children. Thus, their problem is with language comprehension more generally, rather than being specific to reading.

One possible explanation for poor comprehenders' difficulties is that they have deficient working memories. Working memory is the name given to the temporary memory space that is used when carrying out complex cognitive tasks (such as mental arithmetic) that involve not only the storage and retrieval of information from a short-term store (such as remembering a phone number would), but also the simultaneous processing of information. Poor comprehenders performed badly on a working memory task that requires the simultaneous storage and processing of digits and, in a more naturalistic task that required them to resolve anomalies in stories, their ability to integrate information from different parts of a text was shown to depend crucially on the working memory demands.

Finally, some recent experiments have explored how comprehension can be improved. The rationale for these training studies was that, if poor comprehenders could be trained in the skills they lack, then their comprehension should be ameliorated. In one study, a programme of training in inference skills proved to be very effective in raising the comprehension score of 7-8-year-old poor comprehenders. The general aim was to encourage children to take a more active part in their own comprehension — to encourage inferences and comprehension monitoring. A second study showed that a very different type of training, in visual imagery, was also effective in improving the comprehension ability of a slightly older group of poor comprehenders but, like the inference training, was not beneficial to skilled comprehenders — perhaps because they already make use of the skills being trained.

The picture that emerges is of children who are poor at making inferences and connecting up ideas in a text to derive its gist. Working memory may play a part in such skills, but it is unlikely that all the difficulties could be explained in such terms, since comprehension can be improved by relatively short periods of training (which, presumably, does not affect children's working memory capacity). One possibility is that the training procedures provide the poor comprehenders with strategies that help them to circumvent their more basic deficits.
NOTICEBOARD

☐ BESSBOROUGH AWARDS

Lord Bessborough, Chairman of the Stansted Park Foundation, has generously agreed to make two awards of £500. One will be awarded to the Science undergraduate submitting the best paper on Science and the Arts, and one will be awarded to the Arts undergraduate producing the best paper on the Arts and Technology. Undergraduates may submit no more than one 3,000 to 5,000 word essay each, through their personal tutor or course tutor for this award. Essays must be submitted by 21 June. Further details are available from Deans or the Information Office, Sussex House.

☐ BIRMINGHAM TWIN REGISTER

A register of some 4,000 monozygotic and dizygotic twin pairs is held at the University of Birmingham and is available to provide access to twins and their families for medical or other research. For further information please contact: Dr. M.J. Kearsey, School of Biological Sciences, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT (021-414 5886/5890).

☐ LUNCHTIME RECITALS

Meeting House Chapel, 1.15 pm:
14 May: John Birch (organ)
16 May: Gerard Lefevre (cello and piano)
21 May: Christopher Stormont (organ)
23 May: Gavin Ashenden (tenor), Caroline Burden-Cooper (piano)
28 May: Elizabeth Amos (organ)

☐ HYGIENE TRAINING FOR CATERING STAFF

The Food Act of 1991 has laid down that all food handlers (in tea clubs, snack bars, etc) must be formally trained in food hygiene. This section of the Act came into force on 1 April 1991. After consultation with the Environmental Health Officer, it seems likely that the formal training will take the form of the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate. Such training will be carried out on campus. The first course will be held on the afternoons of 20 and 21 June for three hours, with an extra 40 minutes on the second day for the exam. If you are interested in booking your catering staff on to this course or have any queries regarding food handling and hygiene, please contact Graham Curry on ext. 3914 or 8221.

☐ VACANCIES

The Personnel Office has issued the following summary posts to be filled. Advertisements for these vacancies have been placed in local, and where appropriate, national papers, as well as being circulated to the relevant Section Heads and union representatives for circulation to staff and noticeboards. Copies of these advertisements and further particulars, if available, as well as application forms, are available from the Personnel Office, Room 227, Sussex House. This list was compiled on 3 May and is subject to revision.

Teaching Faculty
Chair in Electronic Engineering, EAPS
Secretary, Clerical and Related
Clerk/Typist, Admissions, afternoons, part-time, grade 2
Manual and Ancillary Staff
Groundstaff, Estates, full-time

Contact Mr. J. Burns, Laboratory Manager, School of Biological Sciences, for the following posts:
Trainee Technician (Ref TT/A/1), ft Technician (Ref C/A/U), ft, grade C

IDS: two full-time in-house Research Assistants, one economist and one non-economist. 1 yr. (non-renewable) from Oct. 1991. Contact Rosalind Woodhouse, Personnel Office, IDS

☐ UNIVERSITY ROYAL NAVAL UNIT (URNU)

Because of its success, the new Sussex URNU is seeking guest speakers and lecturers on maritime subjects. There is also a vacancy for a regular lecturer to join the URNU and obtain a Commission (on a part-time basis through the Royal Naval Reserve). For further information please contact the Officer in Charge Lt. Ben Falk, URNU, ext. 8289, or the Training Officer, David Buckland, Estates, ext. 8300.

☐ NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

Library users are reminded that colour photocopying is now available on the top floor of the Library at a charge of 12p per A4 exposure. The same photocopier machine does black and white copying at the usual price of 5p and is operated by the same cards as those used with the ground floor copiers.

☐ BLACK SWING MUSIC

Professor Lewis Erenberg, Fulbright Scholar, currently at Munich University, is to visit Sussex to lecturing on Black Swing music in the 1930s and 40s: Its role in American culture, on 21 May, 2.30-5.30 pm in Arts A4. His focus of interest is on the music of Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

☐ THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has published an assessment of the state of UK universities at the beginning of the 1990s. The report describes the ways in which the universities have coped with the financial stringency of the 1980s and assesses their ability to meet the many demands upon them in the 1990s. Copies are available from the Information Office, Sussex House.

Playing Fields Pavilion
Bar and healthy, home-made pub food now available.

Lunchtimes: Monday - Friday, 12.00 - 2.15 pm. Evening: Wednesday & Thursday, 6.00-9.30 pm.
Live jazz: Friday 1 - 2 pm.
Trivia Quiz: 21 May, 4, 18 June.
Come on up for quality and value.
Tennis, squash, pooltables, darts, TV.

☐ RAYMOND WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LECTURE

The first Raymond Williams Memorial Lecture, funded by a legacy from Allon White, will be given by Cora Kaplan, Professor of English at Rutgers University. The title of Professor Kaplan’s lecture is ‘Great Propensities: Nation, Race and Gender in Jane Eyre’. The lecture will be at 5 pm on Wednesday, 29 May, in A1 Lecture Theatre. Admission free; all welcome.

BULLETIN

The BULLETIN is published four times a term. The next issue will appear on 28 May. Copy for this issue must be received by Jenny Payne, Internal Communications Officer, Room 230, Sussex House, by no later than noon on Friday, 17 May. If you have any news items or ideas for feature articles, she would be pleased to hear from you (ext. 8208).

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