As results go online, will tradition go out the window?

Finalists were able last week to find out whether they’d got a first or a fail from the comfort of their bedroom, as degree results went online for the first time. But could this mean an end to the high drama of results day on campus?

Up to now most students have collected their results in person. Coming onto campus in droves, they crowd around noticeboards and congratulate or commiserate each other at the various school or departmental parties.

But Sussex Direct, the University’s personalised information resource, has been piloting the release of the all-important final marks on the web. All students have to do is log in and a few clicks later they know their final degree classification and breakdown of results.

Because this is a pilot project, results came out online on Monday (28 June) rather than results day itself, which was the previous Friday. Although all finalists’ results were available, and most 1st and 2nd year results are also online, some science students’ results will not be online this year.

This year, students were also able to get their marks in the more traditional way of going to their school office. In the future, though, pass lists may no longer be published on a noticeboard.

Rob Langston, who got a 2:2 for English and Italian, says he wouldn’t mind results being online, “so long as they find a way of giving us free champagne!”

Emillie Taylor and Stephanie Wielstead, who both got a 2:1 in English, say they would mourn the passing of the traditional results day: “This is a really good atmosphere, it’s more personal and you can be with your friends,” says Emillie. Stephanie wonders about the ability of a website to cope: “They’ll surge with so many people logging on and crash and then you won’t be able to get your results anyway.”

Owen Richards, Academic Registrar, is sympathetic to those who enjoy the results day spectacle. But he sees problems arising from making personal data available for all to see on a school noticeboard: “We are coming under real pressure from certain interpretations of the Data Protection Act to move away from publishing results in that way. We are looking to find a balanced way forward that meets legal concerns without losing the sense of ‘shared celebration’ that we think most students would like to keep.”

Owen continues, “In the short term we are piloting the release of results through Sussex Direct to provide a convenient, extra facility to students – especially those who have returned to homes abroad. A decision will be made during 2004/5 about continuing to release paper pass lists, and there will be consultation with the Students’ Union.”

Last Friday (25 June) hordes of Humanities students shared their successes with a glass of Pinms by the Arts A pond, while Informatics students were entertained with jazz and nibbles. It remains to be seen whether the convenience and security of online results is the death knell for these traditions.

Sussex academic wins prestigious national teaching award

A University of Sussex academic has been recognised nationally for her excellence in teaching and for inspiring others in her profession.

Dr Celia Hunt, Senior Lecturer in Continuing Education, is one of 50 university teachers nationwide to receive the prestigious National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) award this year.

Celia convenes and teaches the MA in Creative Writing and Personal Development. Throughout her career she has established creative writing as a powerful tool for self-reflection and improvement in the practical delivery of healthcare, education and work in the community.

Her successes include the foundation of Lapidus: the Association for the Literary Arts in Personal Development. She is currently working on a book called Creative Writing and the Writer, aimed at students of creative writing and their teachers.

The winners of the NTFS were selected from 249 nominations submitted by higher education institutions across England and Northern Ireland. The criteria used to select both the nominees and winners included the nominees’ ability to influence and inspire their students, to inspire their colleagues in teaching and to influence the teaching profession as a whole.

Celia is one of 29 winners in the category for experienced staff, which attracted 91 nominations. The Minister for Higher Education, Alan Johnson MP will present her with a cheque for £50,000 at a gala award ceremony on 9 September in London.

Celia will be using the money for the development and dissemination of models of good practice in the use of creative writing to enhance creativity in the learning process. This will include the organisation of a conference and the compilation of a book.

Professor Imogen Taylor, head of Social Work and Social Care, won an NTFS award in 2003.

Inside

3 Number one Hip hop academic aims to be top of the professors.

4 Gold medal A Dutch of academics are to receive the 2004 teaching awards.

5 Carnival Campus echoes to the sound of drums as staff get rhythm.

6 New PVC Sussex’s newest pro vice-chancellor announced.

7 Wild side Unexplored gales unearth hidden natural treasures.
Postgraduate students build Space Station instrument

Space science students at Sussex are developing an instrument for the International Space Station (ISS) to measure the effects of space weather.

George Seferiadis, Nick Huber and Marianne Pouchet, postgraduate researchers at the University’s Space Science Centre, have worked with their supervisor Professor Paul Gough to design and build the instrument. Although Paul is responsible for overall instrument design and control software, the instrument could not have been realised without major input from the three students.

"For a prestigious project such as this, it is unusual to have a team effort involving research students," points out Paul. The students also recognise the significance of their involvement. "This has been a unique opportunity for us to develop an instrument that will actually fly," says George.

Last month Paul took the initial engineering model to Hungary for the first of a series of rigorous tests. In 2006 a supply rocket will deliver the final flight version to the ISS, where cosmonauts will bolt it to the outside of the Russian segment.

The hand-sized instrument, which is being designed so that cosmonauts will safely be able to handle it while doing a space walk, will measure electrons and ions to study the effects of ISS on the near space environment and vice-versa.

This mission continues the collaboration with Russian and Ukrainian research centres that the Sussex Space Science Centre started with early Mars missions in the 1980s.

Research funding opportunities →

More details of these and other funding opportunities are available from your Research Support Officer in the Research & Regional Development Division. For an extensive listing of funding opportunities, search the Community of Science (COS) database at www.cos.com

A window on our research

If someone from outside the University asked you where they could find detailed information on the University’s research interests and on what faculty had published, what would you say?

The chances are that none of us would have a ready answer. The University does not maintain an institutional record of its researchers’ publications on an on-going basis.

As a result, it can be time consuming to identify areas of expertise within the University and to assess and promote our research activity as an institution. This matters not only in the context of the Research Assessment Exercise but more broadly in developing links with the wider world.

The Vice-Chancellor has, therefore, asked the Librarian to lead a project to develop a publicly searchable, web-enabled, University-wide system that will:

• record details of the publications of the University’s researchers

and also, if practicable

• record details of University researchers’ area of expertise

• hold electronic versions of researchers’ publications (subject to authors’ and publishers’ agreement).

A Project Steering Group, which includes senior representatives from all Schools, met for the first time in the spring term. A Project Working Group met for the first time in early June.

The first phase of the project will be to find out what current practice is across campus in recording researchers’ publications and in making publications (such as working papers) available online.

If you have any queries about the Project, get in touch with a member of the Working Group.

The members are Roger Discombe (IT Services), Jeremy Maris (Life Sciences), Celia McInnis (Science and Technology), Barbara Merchant (SPRU), Mick O’Malley (Humanities), Clare Whiston (Library) and Ben Wynne (Library).

Minutes of the Steering Group and Working Group meetings are available at www.sussex.ac.uk/library/researchrecord.

British Academy Sino-British Fellowship Trust

These awards support individual or co-operative research projects in Britain, China or both countries. Grants of up to £10,000 are awarded for any one project. Most awards are around the £4,000 to £5,000 level. Grants cover travel and maintenance expenses.

Deadline: 31 August

Royal Society Conference Grants

Conference grants are awarded to UK-based scientists presenting a paper/poster, or chairing a session, at an overseas conference. Conference participation must be the main purpose of the visit. The conference must be on a subject within the natural sciences. Applications must be made via e-GAP.

Deadline: 1 September

MRC Discipline Hopper Awards

These awards provide short-term support for new collaborations between engineers/physical scientists and life scientists. Support may include replacement salary, equipment and travel. Awards will be for periods between three months and one year, maximum cost of £60,000.

Deadline: 23 September

British Academy Larger and Small Research Grants

The larger research grants are for projects valued between £7,500 and £20,000 for a period of up to three years and the small research grants are for awards up to £7,500 for projects development and planning, workshops and visits of scholars.

Deadline: 15 October for both

Nuffield Foundation New Career Development Fellowship Scheme

Scheme aims to support social science researchers at the start of their careers. Grants are made to the new researcher in conjunction with a more experienced researcher. Awards are for three years and cover salary and research costs. Maximum award: £150,000.

Deadline: October 2004
String theory gets the hip hop treatment

Sussex astronomer Dr John Gribbin’s life work has been the study of the stars but now he might become one himself – as a featured artist on a hip hop album lauded by heavy hitters in the music industry.

Dr Gribbin, a Visiting Research Fellow in the department of Physics and Astronomy, is better known as a scientist, broadcaster and award-winning author of bestselling science books, including *In Search of Schrodinger’s Cat* and *The Science of Phillip Pullman’s His Dark Materials*.

Now his academic writings have been converted into a rap – performed by John – on a track entitled ‘Scientific’, featured on *Keep the World Guessin’,* the debut album of new Brighton hip hop outfit Digitale.

“...I am particularly pleased that I get a writing credit on the track,” he says. “I like the album, and in particular ‘my’ track. I’ve been playing it in the car.”

Reviews of the album, released this week on the Zebra Traffic label, have so far included praise from luminaries such as Daddy G of Massive Attack (“Some tuff hip hop here, wicked UK beats & UK flow. A real club banger, nice”) and Paul G of Glastonbury headliners Morcheeba. The album has already featured on Steve Lamacq’s ‘Evening Session’ on BBC Radio 1 and on BBC Radio 1xtra.

John was asked to contribute to the track by one of the band members, who is a friend of his son Jonathan and a fan of his books. “We’re also both into reggae,” says John, “so we found we had quite a lot in common.”

A veteran of radio and television broadcasts, John was unfazed by the recording process, but was rather surprised when he was asked to stand in a wardrobe to deliver his scientific rap. “It is the first time I have recorded in a wardrobe, but the guys insisted it would produce the best acoustics.”

On the track, John gets to grips with an extract from his book, *The Search For Superstrings*, and claims: “This is possibly the only current rap record to feature string theory” (a complex scientific idea related to the origins of the universe).

“I chose a piece from *The Search For Superstrings* because as well as being genuinely ‘scientifical’, the particular passage I used seemed to me to have a natural rhythm that lent itself to being spoken aloud.

Perhaps John has hit on a novel way to promote science, by appealing to a new generation through their favourite medium.

“If the music makes one or two other young people take up science, all to the good,” he says. “It also helps break down this still-too-prevalent idea that scientists aren’t like ‘ordinary’ people.”

It seems however, that his ambitions are really a little less lofty: "I didn’t do it to promote science, I did it because they promised I can go on ‘Top of the Pops’ if the song is a hit.”

For copies of the CD, contact Tom Simpson at Zebra Traffic Records on 01273 669070 or email tom@zebratraffic.co.uk.

Secondary schooling in Africa
Completing a missing link

Greater access to secondary schooling is needed in Sub-Saharan Africa, says an education expert from Sussex. In some of the countries in the region, less than 10% of the labour force have completed secondary schooling, raising questions about national development strategies.

Professor Keith Lewin, director of the University’s Centre for International Education (CIE), was giving the opening keynote address at a conference on secondary education in Africa.

Over 200 delegates from 17 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal, to hear him argue that the balance of education funding needs to be shifted towards secondary schooling (without undermining efforts to ensure universal primary education).

“Over the last decade much emphasis has been placed on primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa,” said Keith, “and the number of children completing primary school is now set to double or more over the next five years in Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.”

Without concerted action at secondary level, he said, transition rates from primary to secondary will fail dramatically and there may not be enough secondary graduates to train as primary teachers. Gender equity at secondary level, a Millennium Development Goal, is unlikely without expanded access.

“If expanded access to secondary schooling is to become a reality, medium-term financial planning is needed to balance funding allocations to secondary schooling with those for other sub sectors,” argued Keith. Tanzania and Malawi, for example, have been spending more on university education than on all secondary schooling.

He proposed that:
• over-ambitious curricula need reform: in some cases more than 14 subjects are offered with specialist teachers, resulting in high costs and limited access;
• student-teacher ratios, which are often below 20:1, need to move closer to those found in high-access systems; and
• external support should be rebalanced to recognise that universal primary schooling will neither be achieved nor sustained without appropriate development at higher levels.

Keith’s address was based on a research project on financing expanded secondary schooling in Africa, which he directs. It has support from the International Institute of Educational Planning in Paris and grant support from the World Bank.

Case studies have been completed in three further countries. At the conference, Dr Kwame Akpempong presented a case study of Ghana and argued that much more could be done with better use of teachers’ time, incentives to manage schools more efficiently, and rationalisation of expensive curricula options.

Sussex-based work on secondary schooling in Africa has also included developing a national plan for post-primary education in Uganda. The Department for International Development (DFID) is now supporting work on a national plan for Rwanda.

For more information, see www.worldbank.org/afr/seia or www.sussex.ac.uk/education/1-4-7-3.html
Three set to receive teaching honour

Three academics will receive awards at the graduation ceremonies this month in recognition of their excellent teaching.

The annual Teaching Awards scheme is open to all academics at Sussex who teach courses or supervise higher degrees. Shortlisted nominees prepare a portfolio of evidence for consideration by a judging panel, which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith.

Dr Marie Dembour has been a Lecturer in Law at Sussex since 1991. A specialist in issues of human rights, migration and identity, she teaches these subjects at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Marie also works part-time in Brussels, where she teaches a course on comparative and European law at the Vrije Universiteit.

Marie favours interactive methods of teaching. As a result, she chooses very carefully the material that she asks the students to prepare and gives them clear instructions on how they should prepare for each class.

One of Marie's favoured teaching techniques is student presentations. To prevent a boring monologue from the student, she asks the presenter to produce a handout for every class participant. This helps the audience to follow the argument and signals to Marie when a point is over, making it possible for her to clarify issues or generate a mini-debate before the next point is presented.

The result is that many students find her an enthusiastic, dedicated and effective teacher — some even going so far as to nominate Marie their "best teacher ever".

Tamsin Hinton-Smith combines her own full-time doctoral research with teaching sociology part-time to undergraduates, at both introductory and specialist levels. She has exceeded the expectations of a tutor, taking responsibility for curriculum development, her own development, student mentoring and in teaching teams.

Tamsin is also the sociology representative for tutors. "She has played a very proactive, full and constructive role," says Dr Luke Martell, head of the department, "providing a link between the tutors, students and the department."

Most importantly, perhaps, her student evaluations are all excellent. "I find Tamsin's teaching methods rewarding, innovative and refreshing," says Gregg Blunden, one of her first-year students. "Her teaching methods allow for large-group discussion and smaller group exercises."

It is not just her teaching methods that bring praise, but also her teaching style, which says Gregg, "allows students to think freely without inhibition". Amy Webb, who has been a student on two courses taught by Tamsin, confirms that all group members "felt comfortable to get involved due to her encouragement and optimism".

Dr Liz Somerville is exceptional in contributing at many different levels to the enhancement of teaching and learning at Sussex.

She is Director of Undergraduate Studies in the School of Life Sciences, which gives her a platform for encouraging colleagues to participate in curriculum development.

"Liz works tirelessly to ensure that our courses and programmes are academically coherent, and that student feedback and course organiser reflections are properly incorporated into improving our provision," says Professor Jonathan Bacon, Dean of Life Sciences.

Liz is heavily involved with an ongoing review of the science curriculum. In Life Sciences, the curriculum in years 1 and 2 has been thoroughly reorganised; work on the final year of study is now under way.

"Liz's knowledge, forward thinking and her constant consideration of what will provide the most appropriate and intellectually coherent student experience will be key to these deliberations," emphasises Jonathan.

In addition to these official roles, Liz convenes the interdisciplinary programme in Human Sciences and has done much to develop those parts of the curriculum that she herself delivers.

Dr Natalia Beloff, Dr Máiread Dunne, Dr Donna Jessop, Dr Pat Le Riche and Duncan Mackrill will each receive a Teaching Award at the winter graduation ceremonies in February 2005.
Media moves school

Senate has approved the creation of a new Department of Media and Film from 1 August, to be based in the School of Humanities.

The new department will replace the existing Department of Media and Cultural Studies, which is part of the School of Social and Cultural Studies.

The creation and transfer of the department promises to establish this very popular area of the University's teaching in the most appropriate setting, while offering opportunities for a stronger research strategy.

"The research and teaching here in film and media studies is oriented more to the humanities than the social sciences," explained Dr Stephen Burnan, Dean of Humanities.

The new department will include all the current students in the existing department, plus undergraduates on the new Film Studies major (starting in October) and postgraduates on the MA in Film Studies.

Naturally this means that the School of Humanities will gain a large number of new students and a working group has been meeting to ensure that sufficient student-support resources will be provided for the new department.

Staff members of the Department of Media and Film will be physically located in the Education Development Building (EDB). No decision has yet been made on who will head the new department.

The growth of demand for the Film programmes is such that more academic posts will probably need to be allocated to this subject area in future years.

Bang goes campus!

The sound of drumming echoed through Falmer on Friday 18 July as Carnival Collective came to campus.

Many staff and students took the opportunity to laze on the grass outside Bramber House and munch on a burger while listening to Brighton's most famous rhythm section. Some staff even ended up becoming impromptu members of the Collective for the hour!

The event was organised as a grand finale to the academic year.

LETTERS

The last straw

Having an office at the front of Essex House has not been easy over the past few weeks, with the relentless noise from the building work making concentration on one's tasks very difficult. Lunchtimes have been the only, and very welcome, period of guaranteed quiet.

Today, however (18 June), my office is filled with the tiresome, one-dimensional, pseudo-shamanic thump of the drums of a so-called 'Carnival Collective' who have occupied the ground beneath Essex and Bramber Houses.

I would have thought that the city's high proportion of scruffy, Caucasian, slumming-it vegans pretending to be 'tribal' was one of the most embarrassing aspects of Brighton, not something to be endorsed by the University.

What next -- compulsory tofu tastings or committee meetings expressing themselves through mime?

Dr Andy Medhurst, Social and Cultural Studies

Donate your unwanted books to Palestine

Thank you to those who contributed so generously to the recent book collection for Palestinian universities and public libraries. Fifty-five boxes, containing around 12-15,000 items, were despatched in April.

Given this amazing response, we are planning to make another collection. Books and periodicals in any discipline are suitable but should normally be less than 10 years old. If you wish to donate, please contact me on f.e.leach@sussex.ac.uk or Dr Jenny Taylor on j.c.b.taylor@sussex.ac.uk

Dr Fiona Leach, Sussex Institute

Recycling on campus

The recycling trial has, in the main, been very well received across campus. The overwhelming response by staff is that this initiative is long overdue; this has been reflected in the tonnage of material that has already been collected in the first three weeks.

Professor Jim Rollo raises some very valid points in his letter (Bulletin 18 June), including that the trial has relied upon the goodwill of staff.

The purpose of the trial has been to look at how viable recycling schemes would be and what resources are needed for them to be carried out effectively. A cost/benefit analysis is being carried out as part of the trial and the outcome of this analysis will inform our waste-management strategy in the future.

Due to the early success of the recycling trial I am already looking at options to formalise the collection procedure of recyclable material in buildings, including proper bins and means of collection.

As soon as the trial and the cost/benefit analysis are completed, further details on the recycling scheme will be published. Until then I would like to thank staff sincerely for their efforts in making the trial a success.

Amanda Hastings, Safety & Environment Officer

Survey responses top 1,000

On Monday (28 June), with a week to go before the closing date for the staff survey, 46.6% of staff had returned their questionnaire. "This is statistically a good response," said Richard Price, Staff Welfare Officer, "and we hope to get a majority by 5 July." The full results should be available within six-eight weeks.
Rose Luckin proposed as new PVC

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, will propose to the University Council today (Friday) that Dr Rose Luckin should be appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for a three-year period.

If Council agrees to the proposal, Rose will take up her new post on 1 August. She will be responsible for the science curriculum project, as well as other elements of teaching and learning policy including e-learning. Her portfolio will also include teaching-quality assurance and enhancement, as well as staff development.

Rose has been a Reader in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence since 2002, having previously held lecturing and research posts at Sussex. Hers has been a remarkably rapid rise: she finished her doctorate at Sussex only seven years ago, having completed her BA here in 1993.

Rose will replace Dr Evelyn Welch, who is leaving Sussex in September to take up a professorship in Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary’s, University of London.

• The Director of Graduate Studies in Humanities, Professor Deborah Cherry, is leaving for a post at the University of the Arts in London. The School will appoint a new Director of Graduate Studies and a Director of Interdisciplinary Studies, who will work as a team in the Graduate Centre.

Staff vacancies

For further details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/personnel/vacs or contact staffing services on ext. 8706, fax 877401, recruitment@sussex.ac.uk

First Class

The following faculty have been promoted to professorships: Dr Jane Cowan (Social Anthropology), Dr Andrew Crozier (English), Dr Brian Cummings (English), Dr Sue Hartley (Ecology), Dr Laura Marcus (English), Dr Vladimir Sassone (Informatics), Dr Mary Stuart (Continuing Education), Dr Paul Taggart (Politics), Dr Richard Wilson (Social Anthropology) and Dr Dek Woollson (Biochemistry).

The Queen’s Birthday Honours last month brought a knighthood for Professor Anthony Leggett, who conducted his Nobel Prize-winning physics research at Sussex in the 1970s; a CBE for Gavin Henderson, principal of Trinity College of Music (one of the University’s partner colleges); and an OBE for Robin Baker, director of Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication (another partner college).

The Royal Society has awarded Dr Diana McCarthy a four-year Dorothy Hodgkin fellowship to continue her research in the Natural Language Processing group within the Department of Informatics. Competition for these fellowships, which offer scientists and engineers a first step to an independent research career, is fierce as only 10 are awarded each year.

During the fellowship, Diana will develop further some techniques that she has recently devised to allow computers to automatically learn information about words and their meanings from large samples of human language.

Emeritus Professor Roger Taylor has been appointed as both Visiting Professor and Honorary Director of Fullerene Research at Anhui Normal University, Wuhu, China.

Director of IDS steps down

Dr Keith Bevanson stepped down on Wednesday (30 June) as director of the campus-based Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

During his seven-year tenure, Keith presided over a significant expansion of the Institute. A statement from IDS said that he "used his considerable management skills to substantially enhance the financial security of IDS.

He brought strong intellectual leadership and made a significant contribution to the Institute, not least through his own research and advisory activities." The new director, Dr Lawrence Haddad, took up his appointment on Thursday (1 July). He comes to IDS from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington DC.

Obituary

Geoffrey Hemstedt

Dr Geoffrey Hemstedt, who died suddenly on 23 June at the age of 61, was Senior Lecturer in English in the School of English and American Studies when ill health made it necessary for him to retire in 1999.

Geoffrey joined Sussex in 1971, having studied at Oxford and Princeton, where he completed his doctorate on the Victorian novelists. He was among the first to take a serious interest in the work of the artists and engravers who illustrated their books.

Geoff was well known through the University community, and much loved both as teacher and colleague. He was calm and analytic, able to put difficulties into perspective, while his wisdom and considerable force of character did much to shape the ethos of his subject group and that of his school.

He was an unfussy, effective administrator, whether chairing an examination board or planning the development and expansion of graduate work in English.

He was closely identified with the highly successful MA in Twentieth Century English Literature, but will be particularly remembered by many as an indefatigable and successful research supervisor: astonishing in the range of his erudition, generous almost to a fault with time, above all gifted with that mix of patience and intellectual sympathy needed to help turn round a project in difficulty.

Professor Andrew Crozier, English
Natalie’s race

The father of a Sussex student who died of meningitis in January backed the winner this week at a horse race in her memory. The University sponsored the Natalie Naylor Memorial Stakes at Brighton racecourse on Tuesday (29 June).

Charles Dudley, Director of Student Services, explained that Natalie was very keen on equestrian sports and a keen racer before she came to university. He added: “The family also owns a racehorse so it was very appropriate to have today’s event.”

Natalie’s father Graham put £40 on the winning horse at odds of 6-4. Her mother, Christine, is pictured presenting the horse’s owner with his winner’s certificate.

Natalie’s parents were accompanied by her brother James and a number of people from Sussex who have been working closely with the family in recent months. “It was good to get everyone together,” said Charles.

Real-world challenge for engineering and design students

Students who took part in a campus competition picked up valuable real-world experience that will help them to become the top-class designers and engineers of the future.

The Design Modelling and Manufacture competition for engineering and product design undergraduates gave them the opportunity to show their individual creativity as well as the ability to work effectively in a team.

Students worked in teams of three that included both mechanical engineers and product designers. Their challenge was to design and build an electronically controlled machine to a demanding specification.

They worked against the clock and were required to demonstrate the result both to fellow students and to a discerning judging panel of Sussex academics and industrial advisors.

Colin Newell, Visiting Professor of Engineering Design and founder of engineering company Eurotherm, observed: “The competition simulated a true industrial matrix approach, with each student having responsibility for a module of activity in a realistic high-pressure environment.”

The teams soon found that to make a theoretical design work in practice requires a process of repeated improvements. But they also discovered that it is better to scrap a flawed design early and start again rather than to soldier on and add fixes upon fixes to try to make it work. “The results contained much evidence of lateral thinking,” said Colin.

The better teams were able to draw on a wide range of skills from their members and the less complex designs were generally the most successful.

The two winning teams consisted of Will Griffiths, James Mander and Chloe Richards; and Lara Lewington, Terence Ponn and Alexander Phillips.

A walk on the wild side

Late on 22 June a deep depression swept across Sussex, bringing heavy rain and some of the strongest June winds ever recorded. Many campus trees lost foliage, allowing us to spot the normally hidden inhabitants of the tree canopy.

Ash fronds, for example, were often home to slender yellow-green caterpillars resembling legless stick insects, still busily munching circular holes in the leaves. These were the larvae of the Dusky Thorn, a moth that spends its whole life high in Ash trees. The eggs are laid on twigs in August and September, hatching the next May. Had they not been blown down, the caterpillars would soon have pupated inside a leaf wrapped with silk, emerging after a month as a pale-brown adult.

The animals living beneath our feet are usually as invisible as those living above our heads. For a few weeks at this time of year, however, young Moles become unusually visible on campus because they leave home, moving clumsily across the ground. Their poor vision makes them horribly vulnerable to predators and accidents.

Moles are viciously territorial and have to find an abandoned tunnel system or a vacant patch of ground where they can dig their own. They then patrol their tunnels, by day and night, searching for earthworms and other invertebrates that have fallen into what is in effect a large trap. Just occasionally, they emerge to collect grass and moss for bedding.

Molehills play an important part in generating a rich mix of plants in our meadows and pastures. Annuals in particular need a regular supply of bare patches in which to germinate and set seed before becoming swamped by more vigorous species.

One of the plants that are taking advantage of the disturbance caused by the molehills in the field behind East Slope is the small, yellow, clover-like annual Black Medick. Another abundant member of the colourful mid-summer grassland mix is the familiar sky-blue Germander Speedwell.

Many of these plants are currently sporting fluffy cotton wool-like distortions of their shoot tips. These are galls caused by a common gall midge, Japyllia veronicae. The fly causes the leaves at the tip of the shoot to become thickened and fused together at their edges to form a wooly pouch in which the larvae develop.

We have found four different kinds of speedwell in the mown grass around the Mantell building. Slender Speedwell has paler flowers and small kidney-shaped leaves. To those who insist on lawns that look like bowling greens, it is a pernicious weed. A native of Asia Minor and the Caucasus, it was first introduced to botanic gardens as a rockery plant in the early years of the 19th century.

The two other members of the clan are the Thyme-leaved Speedwell, with small blue and white flowers, and the Common Field Speedwell, also an Asian immigrant.
Freedom of information

A new post of Records and Information Manager has been created in the Secretariat, so that the University can put in place a sound system of records management across the institution and ensure full compliance under the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000.

Natalie Copeland has been appointed to this post and has been working at the University since mid April. She has an MSC in Information Systems and previously worked at Surrey and Sussex Strategic Health Authority on Freedom of Information.

"Successful implementation of the FOIA will rely on the University developing robust records-management systems and systems for processing and recording information requests," says Natalie.

Since February, the University has had a 'Publication Scheme' to make available information that it currently publishes or intends to publish. This is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/central/psy.

From January 2005, when the Act comes fully into force, members of the public will have a right to access all types of recorded information in addition to that detailed in the Publication Scheme, subject to certain exemptions as outlined by the Office of the Information Commissioner. The University will have 20 days within which to respond. More information is available www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

The aim of the FOIA is to ensure transparency in public affairs, changing the working premise that everything is secret, unless otherwise stated, to a position where everything is public unless it falls into specified excepted cases.

"Experience in other countries that already have Freedom of Information legislation has shown that the benefits are greater public accountability and ease of access to information," says Natalie.

Parking charges in the vacation: a reminder

Linda Newman
Transport Manager

Drivers of vehicles displaying a pass-to-park are not required to pay for parking during University vacations. Drivers of vehicles not displaying a permit or pass to park should continue to pay for parking at the external rate of £2.50 for four hours. Visitor permits are still required during the vacation for visitors on University business who are exempt from parking charges. The Conference Office will issue permits to conference visitors as part of the booking procedure.

Enforcement of those who breach the parking regulations will be enhanced during the vacation and a stricter enforcement regime will be in place before the start of the new session to include more regular tow-away procedures and vehicle clamping. New, more prominent warning notices will be used from the start of the vacation.

Small ads


To let: Purpose-built studio flat in Lewes, £430 pcm. Email j.aspley@sussex.ac.uk or call 473521.

Builder: Carpentry, plastering, maintenance. Conscientious, reliable, experienced (currently studying). Refs available. Can arrange electricians, plumbers. Large and small work considered. Enquiries/advice, call 07739 516169 or email t-dub@mtworld.com.

For sale: 3-bed B'ron maisonette, £299K. Nr Royal Sussex Hospital. Email levent@freeerif.fr.

For sale: Two dark-green 2-seater leather Chesterfields + footstool, £200. Yew glass display corner cabinet, double sized, £250. Email t.robinson@sussex.ac.uk or call ext. 8025.

For sale: Double room in large house in Hanover, sharing with 3 others. Would suit PG or graduate. £300pcm, available now. Email Liz c.chambers@sussex.ac.uk

House sit: 20 July-20 Aug. Lewes. Email bafta7@sussex.ac.uk or call ext. 7891 or 8507.

To let: Furnished G/F studio flat in Lewes. Available now: short or long let. £390 pcm incl. Tel. 477319. Email abigailwarren@eurobell.co.uk.

Wanted: Accommodation in Lewes for 1 person, 1-2 wks in Aug, flexible dates. Also from 1 Aug or 1 Sep, flexible dates, for min. 6 mths. Nr station pref. Email ey1957@yahoo.co.uk.

Wanted: Room from now to end Dec. PG from Mexico, house-sitter or lodger. Call Ariadna Estevez on 696 747 or email ae27@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: 4-bed furnished house nr Sackville Rd. Mid July onwards. W/M, C/H, DG. Suit 4 n/s staff or Pgs. £1,300 pcm + bills, deposit. Tel. Julie on 704437 or 509401.

To let: 3-bed furnished Edwardian house, West Dr (overlooking Queens Pk). 2 studies, garden. Available Sep/Oct for next academic yr; suit staff or Pgs. Email eileen.yeo@strath.ac.uk; call 682855.

For sale: 1994 Vauxhall Corsa LS 1.4 automatic. M reg. Tax and MoT. £950ono. Contact Steve at S.RC.Pavey@sussex.ac.uk or call 07742 528945.

For sale: Mercedes 190E, F reg., 102K miles, AMG body kit, FSH. £995. Email alang@sussex.ac.uk or call ext. 8337.

For sale: Nissan Micra 1.0, N reg. £1,995 ono. Call 07906 103713 or email A.Cheal@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: Blue sport motorbike jacket, with armour padding. £50, cost over £100. Call 07906 103713.


Wanted: Flatmate for 3 young professionals (2 male, 1 female). Double bedroom in house on Coombe Rd. Available mid Aug, poss. sooner. £78 p/w. Email rosouwen.uk@yahoo.co.uk.

To let: Bedroom + lounge in Husterpierpoint, 6-9 mth from late Sep/early Oct. Suit faulty or PG. Share kitchen, bathroom, garage, gdn. £560 pcm (incl. cleaner). Tel. 832374.

For sale: Kona Lava Dome 19" mountain bike: £230 ono. Sunn B-Mix 15" urban/dirt-jump bike: £200 ono. Call Barry on ext. 8102, email b.jackson@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: 4-bed furnished house, central B'ton. 3 living rooms, 3 balconies, patio, private communal gdns. £1,650 pcm. From Aug for 1 yr. Email nicholas.rohlj@virgin.net.

Holiday let: Hamlet in Haut Minervois, south of Fr. Bedroom has double bed + bunks, living room has sofa bed. 350 euros pw. See www.sueandreco.com/groffees.asp. Tel./fax (33) 46797 1795. Email sueandreco@carameal.com.

Lectures, seminars and colloquia

MON 5 JULY

10.00pm Knowledge and Information Sharing Seminar: Daren Okalo (Coady Institute). Avoiding McLuhan's rear-view mirror: Designing networked software for emancipatory learning. IDS 121.