Monkey and zombies win student film prize

A mockumentary inspired by Spinal Tap and a comedy about a monkey who burns down the Palace Pier were the winners at this year’s 36 Hour Film Rush competition.

The competition, now in its second year, sees students given the task of producing, filming, editing and screening a short film — all in the space of 36 hours.

From second year students Paul Aspery, Ashley Clarke, Matt Greene and Ed Mantle came the prize-winning tale of Souness the toy monkey, who sets out to undermine Brighton with his naughty exploits, including burning down the Palace Pier.

“We didn’t have an idea of what film we were going to make. We actually thought having an idea beforehand would inhibit us,” said Matt, an English Language student. “In the end we just thought it would be a lot of fun showing a monkey snorting coke.”

The team had a particularly worrying moment when it looked like they were finishing off the week of the West Pier once and for all. “We were under the pier with lighter fuel and matches in broad daylight starting a fire — which all looked rather suspect.”

Souness the monkey picked up the judges’ prize which, Matt said, was “immensely gratifying” but also surprising. “We were going for the audience prize as we didn’t think we were very technically proficient. But I think the judges liked it because it had a sense of humour.”

The audience at the Gardner Arts Centre went for a piece by Ed Baker, Mel Berry, Becky Hammond and Gareth Owain, entitled ‘The making of the day of the returning night zombies’, it was a spoof documentary in which a group of fictional students taking part in the 36 Hour Film Rush were filmed filming a film on zombies.

“We thought it would be funny if someone spoofed the whole thing so we created a fictional team and filmed it in the style of Spinal Tap and The Office, with hand-held cameras interspersed with talking heads,” explained Ed, a first year history student. “We didn’t even have a script and instead improvised it to give it a more documentary feel.”

Ed enjoyed the whole experience: “I’d do it every week if I could. Filming is so enjoyable and, although the stress is awful at the time, when you see it on the screen it’s absolutely fantastic.”

Media Production tutor Lee Gooding, who was heavily involved with planning the Film Rush and provided technical assistance to the teams, said: “Once again it was a great event and I think the standard this year was even higher than last.”

New international study centre at Sussex

International students are being offered a new opportunity to study at Sussex from October 2006. The University has invited Brighton-based Study Group to establish an on-campus International Study Centre (ISC), as part of Sussex’s international development strategy.

The new Centre will offer international students specialist preparation for degree-level study at Sussex in a wide range of subject areas (such as management, computing, engineering, law, humanities and social studies). It will also provide preparation in English language and study skills, along with dedicated student support services.

There may be two start dates — September and January. Both will be designed to lead to entry to undergraduate degree programmes at Sussex in the following October, provided the required entrance standards are reached.

The teaching staff will be specific to the Centre and will be drawn from the teaching team at Study Group, who are skilled and experienced in pre-degree education and learning for international students. The content and delivery will be validated by Sussex academics, in the normal way.

Unlike traditional foundation courses, which often place students in local colleges or in off-campus sites, the Centre will be located on campus. It will be based in the Mantell Building, in dedicated space. Students will be full members of the Sussex community, with access to all University facilities.

The joint venture links the ISC at Sussex to Study Group’s global network of 40 regional offices and partner agencies. The aim is initially to recruit around 50 students, building to about 200 in three years’ time. As students enter their degree programmes this will strengthen Sussex’s overseas numbers, in line with the University’s international recruitment strategy.

The new programme will not affect the numbers of ‘home’ (UK and EU) undergraduate students being recruited to Sussex, which next year will be about 2,300.
Professor's book explains "netiquette" of the email age

From: Belinda McPherson -- ADMIN
To: Whole Office -- ADMIN
Subject: Guess what?!
Date-Sent: Tuesday, November 22, 2005
3:28 pm -0000

alright!

Top secret stuff but listen to this its fantas-

Email disaster stories are the stuff of office legend: the joke at the boss's expense, accidentally sent to the boss; the love note mailed to 50 business clients; or the attachment that displays dozens of your holiday snaps instead of that vital set of meeting minutes.

Similar embarrassments and other sloopy writing habits can be avoided, says eminent linguist Professor Larry Trask in a new book, by observing a whole new set of dos and don'ts -- or "netiquette" -- when using email at work and in everyday life.

The book was published posthumously this year, having been commissioned when Larry was in the preliminary stages of motor neurone disease. Robbed early on of his voice, Larry came to rely on his laptop, a "talking" keyboard and, increasingly, email to communicate with colleagues, publishers and friends until the day he died in March 2004. His widow Jan says: "Larry enjoyed writing. Having access to the laptop and email allowed him to work throughout his illness. His book on email writing, which turned out to be his last, appealed to him because he was a great one for courtesy -- he was considerate of people's feelings. One of the points he makes in the book is, 'Why should you be sloppy just because it's email? It's all about the etiquette of writing for modern times.'"

The book, How to Write Effective Emails, provides practical instruction on using the technical tools of email as well as advice on presentation and re-visits the ground rules of the clear and courteous style required when writing for business or to strangers.

"Emails are typically hasty... [but] when you are writing a serious email, absolutely the last thing you should be trying to do is to save yourself a little time," writes Larry in the book, "What you should be doing instead is to make life easy for the people you are mailing."

Part of the Writers' Guides series by Penguin, the book's commonsensical style is spiked with the pithy wit that typified Larry's approach to his subject.

Tips include:
- Use the subject line carefully: A clear and accurate summary of the content of your email will encourage the reader to attend to it.
- Be aware of time differences when emailing abroad: you can hardly ask for a prompt reply if the recipient's working day is lagging 12 hours behind yours.
- If you need to send an attachment to a stranger, introduce yourself first, as attachments from unidentified sources are likely to end up in the waste basket.

Ants for the memory

Ants have long been regarded as among the intelligentsia of the insect world for their organisational skills and efficiency. Now scientists are beginning to understand more about the role of memory in their behaviour.

According to new findings published in Nature, researchers at Sussex have discovered that wood ants (Formica japonica) are able to retrieve the correct visual memory to enable them to either find their way back home, or to reach a food source.

Neurobiologists Dr Rob Harris, Dr Natalie Hempel de Ibarra, Dr Paul Graham and Professor Tom Collett trained individual ants to follow a short foraging route parallel to a black wall. The wood ants, which naturally rely on visual landmark cues, learned that the wall would be on their left when walking towards the sucrose, but on their right when walking home.

In later tests, trained ants were deposited midway along the wall. Unfed ants remembered that, in order to reach food, they had to walk in the direction that placed the wall on their left, whereas previously fed ants walked in the opposite direction.

Tom says: "Some ants are known to have a surprisingly large memory capacity. For instance, they will remember enough visual landmarks to follow visually guided routes over 10s of metres between their nest and a feeding site. One problem with having many memories is that one must be able to retrieve the right memory in the right situation."

He points out that the world looks different when viewed in the two directions, so that the ant has to keep its food-seeking memories separate from its homeward memories. Otherwise it might become very confused partway along the route.

"We were interested in seeing whether the ant's motivational state (hungry or sated) might trigger which visual route memories it retrieves," says Tom. "We found that in exactly the same visual environment, wood ants retrieved memories appropriate to their food-bound journey when hungry and to their homeward journey when full."

This is not the first cue that has been found to prime insect memories. It's long been known that ants and bees will retrieve different navigational memories at different times of the day -- they know which feeding site is rewarding when and take the route appropriate to a particular time of day, ignoring the other routes that they also know.
University design scoops top award

Celebrate with us

And the winners are:

Key Hiles, the University's Publications and Brand Manager, and Colin Goffett, of design agency Blast, celebrate with the gong jointly awarded for Sussex's visual identity.

Sussex has become the first higher education institution to win a major design award for its bold new look – beating big-name brands to do so.

The University's Publications and Branding team, along with design agency Blast, beat off competition from phone giants O2, whisky makers Chivas Brothers, property developer Chesswick Park and Vueling Airlines to take top honours at the Design Business Association's Design Effectiveness Awards at The Trocadero, London, last month.

The award, for best design effectiveness in corporate/brand identity, was given for the creation of a new corporate identity for the University. The result was a distinctive brand, which in its first year helped to deliver an increase in undergraduate applications three times the national average.

Raymond Turner, former group design director of BAA, who chaired the judging, said: “The design solution not only delivered significant increases in applicants, but also created a whole new brand for the University, which is being lived by staff and students alike.”

In the earlier stages of the project, Sussex worked with a brand engagement consultancy, Circus, to define the University’s vision and values. This work was hugely productive, leading to the development of a detailed design brief with Blast.

A key part of the new identity was the use of the acronym ‘us’, designed to engage and draw people into the University with questions and invitations such as “join us”, “why us?” and “discover us”.

The new logo replaced the old Sussex coat of arms, while all corporate and promotional materials, including the prospectuses and web site, were subject to radical redesign.

The new look was rolled out in March 2004, following consultation with staff and students.

The results are testimony to the power of effective design. By February 2005 undergraduate applications had increased by 22.7 per cent – more than three times the national average of 8.9 per cent. In the sciences, applications for physics increased by 35 per cent, by 81 per cent in environmental science and by 31 per cent in engineering. There was also a 99 per cent rise in applications for social work. By May, UCAS (the University and Colleges Admissions Service) put the number of accepted offers at Sussex at 2,037, a rise of 29 per cent on the previous year.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: “I am delighted with the continued success of our new visual identity. This radical and exciting design has already proved highly effective and flexible in its application, and is perfectly in keeping with the pioneering traditions of the University.”

Design Effectiveness Awards projects are assessed on commercial performance and are judged by senior industry figures from, among others, GlaxoSmithKline, Nissan, O2, Virgin Atlantic, Vodafone and Waitrose.

Dangoor Scholarship students praise scheme

Around 35 of the 59 Dangoor Scholarship students awarded £1,000 each in their first year of studies joined the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, at a special reception in Bramber House last month.

The scholarships were made possible by the generosity of businessman Mr Na'im Dangoor, 90, an Iraqi Jew, who wished to thank the UK for giving him refuge when he was forced to leave his native Iraq in the 1960s because of anti-Semitic persecution. He had previously studied engineering in London in the 1940s.

To show his gratitude, Mr Dangoor wanted to help students embarking on studies in UK universities. He chose the 1994 Group of 16 UK universities, which includes Sussex.

The scholarships are aimed at applicants who show particularly strong academic promise and come from a background of financial or social disadvantage – especially those with no family history of higher education. The selection process at Sussex was administered by the Undergraduate Office.

One of those benefiting from the scheme is Martin King, an undergraduate on the BA in English and Media Studies.

He says: “I think the Dangoor Scholarship provides great opportunities for people to further themselves in the academic world. I feel very lucky to have been chosen from a group of equally talented individuals who share the same ambitions. I hope my studies here will prepare me for entry into the real business world and direct me towards a career in the media.”

Karen Titchener, from Rushden in Northamptonshire, is studying English Literature with a view to completing a PGCE (Post-Graduate Certificate in Education) after graduating.

She says: “Teaching has been a long-standing aspiration for me. The scholarship has been extremely beneficial as it has reduced any financial worries I may have had, allowing me to participate fully in student life. I thank Mr Dangoor and his family for giving me this opportunity and hope that I can use it to best advantage.”

Student wins night in a luxury hotel

For one night only, Elisabetta Tollarzo will be swapping her student residence on campus for a sea-facing double room at a luxury hotel in Brighton.

Elisabetta, a Visiting & Exchange student from Italy, won B&B for two in a campus competition to celebrate the addition of Drakes Hotel to the University’s list of approved hotels and guest houses.

The number of correct entries in the competition was so high (more than 500), Drakes Hotel added a runner-up prize of cocktails for two. Megan Rowe, a clerical assistant in the Engineering and Design department, was “ecstatic” on finding out that her name had been picked.

Establishments on the approved list (www.sussex.ac.uk/about/hotels) offer reduced rates for visitors to the University, to friends visiting Brighton and even to Sussex staff and students themselves. These hotels and guest houses are inspected regularly to ensure they are of a satisfactory standard. Every year the use of rooms is monitored, and rates are reduced the more bookings have been made at the "University of Sussex rate."
Sussex student recovering well from meningitis

A first year mathematics student is recovering at home after responding well to treatment for the B strain of meningococcal meningitis. The student was admitted to the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton on 19 November and left ten days later.

There are no other known cases on campus and the risk of a further case occurring is very small.

In line with normal practice, however, the student's close contacts were identified (for example those living in the same house or in the Brighthelm residences on campus) and were given antibiotics. First year mathematics students were also contacted directly and given information about meningitis.

The University has been working with the local Health Protection Agency (HPA) and following its guidance about what to do in the event of a suspected case of meningitis.

Officials at the HPA advise that all students and staff should be alert to the symptoms. These symptoms can include:

- severe headache
- stiff neck
- fever
- vomiting (and refusing feeds in infants)
- drowsiness or confusion leading to unconsciousness
- discomfort from bright lights
- back and joint pains
- rash – red/purple spots or bruises anywhere on the body, which do not turn white when pressed.

If you think you may have this disease, call your GP (family doctor). For students on campus, the campus Health Centre number is (01273) 249041. If you cannot make contact with them, go straight to the nearest hospital accident and emergency unit. The emergency number on campus is 3333.

If you are under 25 and have not yet been vaccinated against the C strain of meningitis, call the campus Health Centre on (01273) 249041 to arrange an appointment for a vaccination. The vaccine does not protect against the B strain.

For general information about meningococcal disease, you can call the Meningitis Trust on 0845 6000 800 (24 hour helpline) or the Meningitis Research Foundation on 080 8800 3344. NHS Direct can also give information on 0845 4647.

The following websites also have useful information:

www.meningitis.org
www.meningitis-trust.org.uk

Students on campus who have any concerns can also contact the 24-hour reception at York House on (01273) 678234.
Down the drain: Students vote to ban Coke

Coca-Cola is to disappear from all Students' Union (USSU) shops and bars after students at the USSU Annual General Meeting decided to ditch the brand because of alleged abuses of human rights in Latin America.

At the meeting, held on 24 November, more than 500 students also passed motions supporting Guantanamo detainee and Brighton resident Omar Deghayes and supporting University work on a campus-wide sustainable energy and procurement policy.

However, it was the banning of Britain's favourite brown sticky liquid that aroused most interest. Coca-Cola is accused by Colombian trade union Sintratain of involvement in false imprisonment, kidnapping and even assassination of staff in bottling factories. In India, Coke is accused of extracting so much groundwater that local areas are suffering water shortages.

Rosa Wilson Garwood, USSU Finance Officer, said: "Our boycott sends a clear signal that our students are not prepared to continue to finance a company whose ethical rating is so incredibly poor."

A Coca-Cola spokesperson said in local paper the Argus on 26 November: "The Coca-Cola system does business around the world honestly, ethically, in compliance with applicable law and with respect for basic human principles of decency and justice." The spokesman also said the company welcomed "constructive debate" but pointed to two inquiries that found no evidence to support the Sinartrain allegations.

The axe won't fall on Coke straight away: USSU has to renegotiate its current contract and organise a new deal with Virgin Cola, a process that could mean it will take until next summer before Coke disappears. Non-Union outlets on campus will continue to stock the drink.

Another motion that won the students' support came from USSU president Roger Hylton, who tabled a motion of no-confidence in Council (the University's governing body), of which he is himself a member. Citing a list of complaints, from the University's financial position to Sussex's neutral stance on Falmer stadium and the "failure" of the new schools, Roger's motion accused the University of not providing a "high quality student experience".

Several students tried to amend the motion by calling for an immediate occupation of Sussex House. However, following a speech by former USSU Activities Officer Adele Burrow, who said an occupation would alienate many of the people whose support the motion is trying to foster, the amendment was defeated and the occupation threat defused.

Shining a light on enterprise at Sussex

This year's National Enterprise Week from 14 to 20 November saw the founding of a new organisation by a number of enterprising Sussex students.

iLumus is Sussex's approach to an enterprise and entrepreneurship society. The society aims to support students, alumni and staff on campus wishing to develop entrepreneurial skills in the areas of business or social enterprise, which they will be able to use in organisations ranging from start-ups to charities and large corporations.

This concept is supported by the University's high-level commitment to encouraging enterprise within the region. iLumus meetings and events will be hosted at the Sussex Innovation Centre on campus.

iLumus hopes to offer a full programme of events that will appeal to people with a wish to incorporate entrepreneurial thinking into their lives and future careers. These events will include talks from successful local and national entrepreneurs, activities that help to develop skills in areas such as communication and business finance, and opportunities to create a network of useful contacts from a range of industries across the world.

"For people who already have an idea that they would like to develop, iLumus will provide a safe environment in which they can explore it effectively," says Jonathan Markwell, a postgraduate on the MSc in Human Centred Computer Systems and president of the new society. "People who are still seeking an idea will be supported through the creative process of finding one that fits their aspirations and expertise."

To round off the first year of activities, iLumus members will work towards completing in a "Dragon's Den" style event in the summer term, most likely following a similar format to that of the popular BBC TV series.

If you would like to become a member of iLumus or find out more information, see www.iLumus.org. The society will be building up to a launch event early in the spring term.


Would you give these two a ride? Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) students Chris Munson and Toni Hamm strip down in preparation for a sponsored chest wax.

The duo hoped to make over £1300 for African community development charity Link, which will enable them to take part in an organised hitchhike to Morocco next Easter.

News in brief

Search engine launched for Brighton & Hove

Sussex is a partner in a new search engine for Brighton and Hove. http://p2o.net, launched last month, uses the latest Google technology but searches only local websites, including both universities, the local council, the Argus newspaper, NHS information and community sites. The site includes specialist search areas, such as jobs, education and images, which makes it easy to find specific content.

Free English classes

New teachers of English will be training at Sussex in the spring and summer terms. They need practice with international students, who get free lessons. The next classes start on 17 and 19 January and classes take place from 2-4pm on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays. There will be two levels. For more information, contact Mike Donelan in Arts A67. Further courses will be held in May, July and August 2006.

The heat is on

Students and staff were feeling the chill last month in the Library and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS). A leak in the campus pipework meant there was no heating in the two buildings for several days. Warm jumpers were in order until Estates staff managed to get the problem fixed.

Artistic feel for University Christmas card

The University's extensive art collection has been raided for this year's Christmas card, available now at 60p each. The design by local artist Bob Brighton features a series of symmetrical and brightly coloured rectangles. To order cards, call Chrissie Anthony on ext. 8888 or email c.m.anthony@sussex.ac.uk with the relevant budget code. They are also available in the Bramber House Bookshop and Students' Union Shop, Falmer House.

Correction:

'University Challenge'

The last issue of the Bulletin (18 November) contained an article about the sterling achievements of Sussex's latest 'University Challenge' team. We stated that they had beaten competitors Sheffield by the highest margin ever. Sadly our excitement got the better of us - Sussex actually won by the second-highest first-round score ever. Still, the point is Sussex won and Sheffield didn't. So there.

All articles are also featured on the internet at www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin
Financial position still tight

The University's spending forecasts for the current financial year (2005–06) have been hit by large increases in the cost of gas, electricity and water, as prices for utilities continue to rise nationwide. Spending on utilities is now forecast to be £3.7m this year, a growth of £1.3m on last year, and nearly £900,000 higher than previously expected.

These figures were presented to the University's main finance committee in November. The proposal going to Council is that half of the extra cost – around £500,000 – will have to be absorbed this year within the existing budgets of schools and units.

These rising costs add impetus to the plans being developed to create a range of energy-saving measures for the campus.

The figures presented to the committee also show that work in 2004 by the Savings Review Group was effective in starting to bring spending under control in 2004–05 and in setting budgets for 2005–06.

University income continues to grow year on year – this year reaching some £111m, although research income is some £250,000 lower than expected. But spending growth still means the University spends some £4.4m more than it earns.

The continuing tight financial position means that any vacancies still need to be approved centrally before recruitment can start.

Proposals for a new planning and budget-setting process will be presented to Senate and Council. This will inform the work being taken forward by senior managers to set out a long-term strategic view of the optimum size and shape of the University. This will then underpin decisions about where new investment and reductions in spending should be made.

LETTERS

The cost of printing the Bulletin

In the 18 November 'VC's voice', Professor Smith states that "every pound of inessential spending is a pound less available for high priority needs". The University could save money by distributing an electronic version of the Bulletin to staff and students rather than printing thousands of copies on gloss paper.

Currently the Bulletin is available online (www.sussex.ac.uk/press/office/bulletin), and much of the information is also published on the University's home page. The paper copy of the Bulletin could be replaced by a weekly email including a hypertext link to the online version.

This suggestion ties in with the cover story about a calendar to promote ecological awareness. Is the Bulletin published on recycled paper? Is the paper easily recycled?

I accept that paper copies of the Bulletin may be needed for mailing lists, publicity, etc. However, thousands of copies could be easily replaced by making better use of the electronic version.

Dr Richard de Visser, Psychology

Alison Field, Bulletin editor, replies:

Strange as it may seem to those of us who spend much of our day sitting at a computer, some Bulletin readers don't have easy access to the online version. Others simply prefer the physical interaction with the printed page. And there is still nothing to beat it in terms of portability and readability.

Rather than replacing print, the intranet and internet offer us a valuable additional communications channel for publishing campus news. In other words, our print and online information is complementary rather than competitive.

Most of the cost involved is for staff time rather than for printing and paper. And that staff time is spent on producing the online news and online Bulletin as well as the printed version!

The Bulletin is printed on 'environmental' paper, which means it is chlorine free, has a high percentage of recycled content and uses pulp from trees in managed forests. Fully recycled paper is coming down in cost (relative to partially recycled paper) all the time, while the quality is going up. So it's an issue we'll continue to keep under review. And yes: the paper can be recycled.

The cost of a sandwich and a coffee

I am writing to express my concern that in these days of increasing student poverty, the price of a small sandwich and a cup of coffee is soaring! I was charged £3.20 for a pretty small baguette in the JMS snack bar, and £1.20 for a coffee in the Medical School.

On the same subject I think that the Bridge Cafe and Laines Restaurant should be congratulated for their continued record of good value. I would also recommend a visit to Cafe Direct at the Innovation Centre.

Dr Stuart Rutlen, Centre for Genome Damage and Stability

FIRST CLASS

Linguistics undergraduate and cricketer Rosalie Birch has been the lynchpin of the England team touring Asia since early November. Spinner Rosalie took 4 wickets for 14 runs in the opening one-day international against Sri Lanka and then helped to seal the series with 4 for 22 in the second match. She played particularly well in a match against India's A team, taking 6 for 24 and scoring 30 (England's top score). Rosalie then batted well in the test match against India to force a draw. The tour continues with a series of one-day internationals against India through early December.

Last month the Polish president, Lech Kaczynski, presented the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Polish Republic to Professor Alan Mayhew from the Sussex European Institute. The award is for Alan's work — stretching back over 15 years — with the Polish government on Poland's accession to the European Union.

Chris Tape, a third year Molecular Genetics undergraduate, has been awarded a prize from the Society for General Microbiology (SGM) for an outstanding piece of microbiology-related coursework. The prize consists of both cash and a year's membership of the Society. Chris is currently increasing his microbiology expertise during a sandwich-year placement at Cambridge Antibody Technologies. His work is going so well that he hopes to present a paper at a meeting of the SGM in Warwick next April.
New student residences to be built

The University is planning to press ahead with its new student residences programme to meet demand from students for more and better accommodation on campus, and to keep pace with provision available elsewhere.

The decision follows a review by the Campus Facilities Working Group, led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Mary Stuart.

The aim is that an additional 720 rooms with en-suite bathrooms will be created by 2007-08, helping ensure Sussex can meet its housing commitments to undergraduate and postgraduate students. Further phases to extend north of Lewes Court and to redevelop East Slope will be explored, in line with the existing campus development plan.

Mary said: "It’s vital for Sussex to be able to offer students high-quality accommodation at Falmer. This is part of a long-term plan to improve significantly our housing stock. I hope we will be able to press ahead rapidly and make this new provision available for 2007."

The first two sites – opposite Bramber House and at Falmer station – already have planning permission for student residences, and would lift the proportion of en-suite rooms from 10% to nearly a third of all housing stock, closer to what other universities offer.

Following support from the University’s main finance committee on 23 November, discussions with the Students’ Union are now underway to ensure students are involved in the next stages.

The proposals will be presented to Senate and Council this term for final approval. If they get the go-ahead, work could start on the Falmer station site early in the new year, and on the Bramber car parks by late spring.

Funding for the £12 million Bramber site construction will come from loans repaid through the long-term income from student rents, and therefore does not alter the University’s overall spending plans.

The residence will not occupy the whole of the space available opposite Bramber House. The original plans for a teaching building were deferred in 2004. A review of the University’s space needs for teaching and learning is ongoing and the use of this land for a teaching building continues to be one of the possibilities.

The Falmer station residences will be managed by the University, like on-campus accommodation. However, the development is being undertaken by an external private partner, which means that Sussex will not bear the cost of construction.

Informatics is on the move

The latest stage in the relocation of Informatics, part of the University’s major five-year restructuring plan, is now well under way as three research groups move into newly refurbished labs.

The research groups – Natural Language Processing (Dr John Carroll), Representation and Cognition (Professor Peter Cheng), and VLSI-Graphs (Dr Martin White) – will enjoy high-quality facilities at the heart of Informatics’ new home in Chichester 1.

The redevelopment of former Chemistry Labs 1 and 8 in the listed building was carried out with a £500,000 grant from HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England), together with substantial funding for specialist equipment.

The new labs were designed in close consultation with Informatics researchers.

They will provide a well-equipped base for existing research and facilitate new research in emerging fields such as pervasive computing (new forms of computing technology embedded in the environment).

Professor Vladimiro Sassone, Head of Informatics, said: "This great new research facility for Informatics provides us with plenty of scope for growth and development. It will support our already strong research base and help us reach out into exciting new fields."

The next stages of the relocation, moving Informatics faculty offices, teaching labs and administrative staff to Chichester 1 and Chichester 2, have received HEFCE funding and are at an advanced stage of planning. These moves are expected to take place in summer 2006.

A walk on the wild side

David Harper
Life Sciences

David Streeter
Life Sciences

With the only British campus situated wholly in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the University has an especial duty of care for its local environment.

Amanda Hastings (Safety and Environment Officer) and Andrew Jupp from Estates. Amanda developed our Biodiversity Plan, which mapped the habitats on campus and suggested appropriate management. Andrew managed many of the initiatives on campus that we have written about, including the new flower borders by Peveryson (2004) and Bramber (2005). Amanda and Andrew do not work alone. Little of environmental value would happen on campus without the grounds staff, who – led by Alex Hart – not only do the work, but also much of the planning.

Amanda and Andrew have now launched a Habitat Management Project Team, which will update the Biodiversity Plan and devise new projects. This is where you can help: if you have any ideas for improving the campus environment, tell us (david@sussex.ac.uk). Already, the team have toured the main orchid sites on campus, and agreed suitable mowing regimes.

Campus awoke to a sharp frost on 17 November. As usual, Ash trees had shed many leaves overnight. More surprisingly, flocks of wintering birds such as Fieldfares flew eastwards, back towards mainland Europe. Perhaps they were retreating from the first ground frosts of the autumn farther west.

One of the consequences of the winter leaf fall is that tree trunks become more evident as the canopy thins out. It is a healthy sign that the trunks of most of the campus trees now sport a goodly coating of mosses and lichens. The great Swedish naturalist, Linnaeus, classified lichens along with the mosses. It was the Swiss botanist Simon Schwender who, in 1869, first unravelled the lichens’ secret and announced to a sceptical world that they were dual organisms, consisting of a partnership between a fungus and photosynthetic algae or bacteria.

Our biodiversity students recently carried out a survey of the lichens growing on the trees near the ‘meadow management’ by the campus entrance. One tree racked up a total of 11 species and – while this hardly matches the 30 that might be found on a venerable New Forest Oak – it is a respectable haul for the outskirts of the city. Prominent among the commonest are the bright orange splashes of Xanthoria parietina together with grey patches of Physcia and Ramalina species.

Lichens are extremely sensitive to changes in environmental conditions and this is particularly true of atmospheric pollution. Thirty years ago David Hawksworth and Francis Rose published a ‘biotic index’ that estimates atmospheric sulphur dioxide levels based on the lichen species growing on tree trunks. Applying this to our results suggests that the mean winter SO2 levels on campus are around 40µg m⁻³. This is encouragingly lower than our estimate of 60µg m⁻³ made just two winters ago.

Habitat management: If you have any ideas for improving the campus environment, email david@sussex.ac.uk.

02.12.05 | 7
CHRISTMAS VACATION OPENING TIMES

Christmas vacation: 10 Dec 2005–8 Jan 2006
Inclusive closing days: 26 Dec 2005–3 Jan 2006
Inclusive closing days: All locations closed weekends and closure days unless stated

CATERING OUTLETs
Baguette Express: 8am–4pm (except closing 2.30pm on Fri 23 Dec)
Brander House Coffee Shop: 8.30am–4.30pm (except closing 2.30pm on Fri 23 Dec)
Bolhale: 9am–4pm
East Slope Bar: Mon–Sat 11am–11pm, Sun 12noon–10.30pm, New Year’s Eve until 1am, New Year’s Day at 1pm, Closed 24–26 Dec incl.
SAT 10 DEC
10am Lecture: Ronnie Johnston (Freelance researcher) & Linden West (Canterbury Christchurch), Communities, citizenship and learning: Autobiographical and community, Venue TBA.

MON 12 DEC
1pm IDS Feminism seminar: Susie, jolly, Charlie Sever, Laura Turquitt (IDS), How does change happen? IDS 221.

TUE 13 DEC
6pm Cafe
Scientifiques: Malcolm Meggido (Sussex), The chemistry of smell, taste and sex, The Terraces, Brighton.

WED 14 DEC
1pm Seminar: Penny Jago (Sussex), title TBA, Genome Centre seminar room.

IDS Bar: 12noon–3pm and 4.45pm–10.30pm. Closed Fri 23 Dec–Wed 4 Jan
IDS Restaurant: 8am–5pm, Closed Fri 23 Dec–Wed 4 Jan
Laines Restaurant: 12noon–2pm, Closed Wed 21 Dec
Falmer Bar, Grapevine, Hothouse, Park Village Lounge, Pitstop: Closed
SCHOOL CAFES
Bridge cafe (Pevensy): 9am–3pm
Chichester: 8.30am–4pm
Dhaka (Arts C): 9am–4pm
Doctor’s Orders (BSMS): 8.30am–3.30pm
Huns (Arts A): 9am–4pm

Small ads

To let: Central East, unfurnished 2-bed maisonette. Suit small academic family or professional sharers. E. Drake@sussex.ac.uk.


For sale: BMW 3 series 318 i S Dr coupé. 1992. FSH, ABS, electric windows, mirrors & sunroof, alarm, immobilizer, 17" M3 alloy wheels, Sony MP3 player, M–Tec body–kit. Mot June 06, tax Jan 06, £2,195 ono. T. Vassilis on ext. 6706, 07968 742312 or E. v.stefanis@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: Chesterfield leather sofa (pref. 3 seater). E. m.drexel@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 2807.

For sale: Dell PowerEdge SC425 1U rack server + 4-post Dell rack rail kit. Almost new. 2 x 8GHz EMT64 Intel Xeon, 1GB DORD RAM, 8GB SATA HDD, DVO, AT 8MB graphics card, 2 x 150GB NIC, front bezel, £620 ono. E. a.basu@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: 1-bed flat in Btton. GCH. Suit couple. Available now for 6–month let. £650 pcm, E. m.a.supper@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 8338.

WANTED: Canvng skills (165–170 cm + bindings) and any other ski equipment. Also sofa, bookshelves, desks. For sale: Blomberg fridge-freezer & Gorenje fridge, both about 5ft high. E. james.rimmer@n39@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: 28" wide-screen Thomson TV + virtual Doby surround. 2 SCART inputs, front input, RF input, Purchased 2004, £190 ono. E. Vicente at prrc2@sussex.ac.uk or T. 07941 293110.

Arts events

PERFORMANCE
Mon 5 Dec–Sat 7 Jan various venues
This magical tale by Hans Christian Andersen traces the story of Iona, a handsome young soldier who discovers treasure beyond his wildest dreams when he comes across a tinderbox that gives him power beyond any other mortal. Gardner Arts Centre.

Wed 7 Dec 7.30 pm
University of Sussex Orchestra
Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4; Strauss, Horn Concerto; Vaughan-Williams, Wasps Overture. Venue TBC.
2005 has seen some significant developments in the work of Sussex IP. In this edition we review the year and look forward to new opportunities in 2006.

Sussex Innovation Centre launches new product network

One of the things that has always set the Sussex Innovation Centre apart from other business incubators is the extent to which support is available for the tenant companies. The Innovation Centre is an established and award winning business incubator. But, not content to rest on its laurels, it increased the range of support it offers with the launch of its new product network on 10 November. "Even ground-breaking companies face three difficult hurdles," explained Melanie Page, Innovation Support Manager.

- it is always difficult to raise investment before the product / service is in the marketplace
- it is hard for a new company to meet potential customers because they lack credibility
- as a result it makes it almost impossible for a new company to attract expert, early customer feedback into its product design.

The new product network is aimed squarely at overcoming these difficulties by bringing customers face-to-face with new products and services at an early stage, where they can have a real impact shaping future development plans.

The event featured companies that had benefited immensely from the support of the Innovation Centre. There were presentations from Corpora, Geek and Destiny Pharma.

Dr Sam Type from computer forensics experts Geek Ltd explained how the Innovation Centre's support of the Geek team had streamlined its development of the iGrade application. From time management, through finding sources of funding, to plugging Geek into a ready-made network, the Centre had brought both expertise and encouragement to the enterprise.

Today the Sussex Innovation Centre is a magnet for corporations, companies and wealthy investors that are looking for outstanding and innovative ideas and products. This launch shows how these links and the confidence and enthusiasm of its staff can give new start-ups a crucial advantage in the field of new product development.

Sussex IP – a year in review

2005 has proved to be a busy year for Sussex IP. Finally up to full strength, we were able to extend our skills audit to many more academics, run a number of courses, provide advice to staff and students, agree funding deals and negotiate licences.

In January we announced a new collaboration with Forest Research, the research agency of the Forestry Commission, to provide IP services and advice to their staff. This generated £17,000 of income.

In February SIP staff attended the DTI’s prestigious UK-Texas Bioscience workshop, which brought together people in technology transfer, technology discovery, licensing and venture capital from both the UK and USA. We also supported the Entrepreneurship master class held at SPRU, which promoted best practice when setting up SMEs. The spring term brought three new patents to the University, two from the Life Sciences school, in enzymes and the early detection of aging related disorders, and one from Science and Technology, a new type of ultra sensitive magnetometer. All three patents have the scope for important commercial applications. We also hosted a visit from NanoHoldings, a leading US investment company who hope to develop collaborative R&D projects with the University.

Also in the spring Pastel Bioscience, a University of Sussex spinout company, was given a grant from the DTI to attend the 2005 Biofinance conference in Toronto where they discussed future funding of their Epimer technology with potential investors.

Throughout the spring and summer terms Sussex IP held a number of workshops, courses and introduction sessions for University staff and students. We also sponsored a number of candidates on the Biodis workshop, held at the University. Run by Eurobioz, this session was aimed at scientists considering the start up of new life sciences companies. As well as these formal sessions we continued to offer tailored session for small groups, staff meetings and individuals. We also provided advice to the Centre of Excellence in Teaching & Learning in Creativity, which led to the setting up of a tailored IP management service designed to maximise the commercial potential of innovations developed through the centre.

More recently we have launched two new courses as part of the Staff Development Programme: Protecting and Commercialising Innovations and Inventions, and Making the Most of Interactions with Business.

Throughout the year we have continued to bring revenue into the University through licensing agreements such as the Sussex Ingestion Pattern Monitor, IP service provisions with xVista Ltd and direct investment from the DTI and the Cascade seed fund. 2005 has been our most successful year to date and we hope to build on these successes to the benefit of the University, its staff and students.
Jill Armstrong – new regional team player

In October we were joined by a new colleague in Sussex IP, Jill Armstrong, Higher Education Project Manager, supports Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Tony Moore in his regional activities and initiatives. Funded by SEEDA (South East England Development Agency), her projects focus on engaging higher education with business, promoting knowledge transfer and international collaborations, together with strengthening links and cooperation between the Universities and University Colleges within the SEEDA region.

Currently, Jill is working on a major development to the Research Excellence Directory website, manages activities for the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Group (HEEG) and co-ordinates the Global Regions programme. She also organises visits overseas by senior academics from the region with the aim of developing key international networks around technology and research, with a particular focus on China and India. She works closely with the Science, Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Team at SEEDA in Guildford.

Bringing a track record of marketing and communications in business, hotels and tourism to the task, Jill previously worked for Sheraton Hotels, as a Marketing Consultant to the Norwegian Tourist Board, leading up to the Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games, and more recently as Director of a UK travel company. Jill can be contacted on (01273) 873713.

RCUK the competition

Forget The X Factor and Big Brother, the people taking part in this competition will be making an impact on our lives long after Simon Cowell’s scowl fades.

The search is on for ‘would be’ entrepreneurs who want to turn their research ideas into a successful business that everyone can benefit from. The Research Councils Business Plan Competition (2005/06) was launched in October.

The last Research Councils Business Plan Competition led to the following research ideas being converted into commercial reality:

- Better detection of hidden guns and explosives
- More accurate photofits of criminal suspects
- Improving the management of high-risk pregnancies
- Using holograms to hit back at CD and DVD piracy
- ‘Virtually restoring’ damaged ancient artefacts.

The competition is open to researchers from across the breadth of activity that is supported by Research Councils UK (ranging from science and technology to the arts). All competitors will get business training and mentoring along the way.

The final will be held in December 2006 with the winning team getting up to £25,000 to further their business idea.

The last winner was ThruVision Ltd, a spin-out company from the CCLRC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire. Their development of revolutionary radiation-free imaging technology has led to the easier detection of hidden guns, explosives and contraband. ‘Quite apart from the prize money, winning the Business Plan Competition gave us a real boost in terms of credibility and profile,’ said ThruVision’s Director, Dr Jonathan James, ‘reinforcing our own confidence in what we're aiming to achieve at ThruVision.’

Further details on how to take part in the competition can be found at http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/bpc

Please let Sussex IP know if you intend to enter and we will help with the application.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this newsletter, but no responsibility is accepted for errors and omissions.