Where we are going with brain research

Thinking ahead

What do we think of our brains? How much do we know about our brains? What is the connection between our brains and free will?

These were among the mind-boggling questions Sussex neuroscientist Professor Michael O’Shea addressed during his talk at the Brighton Science Festival today (24 February).

Using videos and computer graphics, Michael explored some of the tricks our brains play on our consciousness. He also looked at how far we have come in creating machines that work like brains.

Michael says: “Neuroscience is moving at a rapid pace. Through Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) we have been able to localise functions of the brain – we know which parts of the brain control our speech, our movement, our emotions and memories. But we still don’t know how the functions are performed.”

One of the major advances has been in creating ‘brain-machine hybrids’, by which a computer can process brain activity to activate a robot to carry out physical tasks. The future application of this might help those who have lost the use of limbs. Other examples of brain-machine hybrids include cochlear implants that create sound waves for those with hearing loss and, potentially, artificial retinas that could restore sight for the visually impaired.

But, says Michael, it would be wrong to see the brain as little more than a highly sophisticated computer. “If we do, we will ultimately fail to understand the brain because the most interesting thing it does – thinking – is fundamentally not a computational process.”

Indeed, thinking about how we think is one of the major conundrums for neuroscientists. As Michael points out: “You might conclude that the brain is the most complex machine in the known Universe. But this may be nothing more than the opinion of your brain about itself.”

Thinking also throws up questions about consciousness and free will. “We are deluded into thinking that our conscious will is the driving force behind the brain’s functions. But, actually, it’s more likely that the brain process initiates the sense of consciousness and free will.”

Michael is director of the Sussex Centre for Neuroscience and is involved in several major research projects, including investigating the causes of brain tumours. His book, The Brain: A very short introduction, is dedicated to his daughter, Linda, who died at the age of 11 in 1990 from a brain tumour.

“We’re still a long way from understanding what happens when cells become malignant,” he says. “Linda would have died today for the same reasons. But I hope that our research may help sufferers in the future.”

Applications to Sussex up again

Latest figures from UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) show further growth in undergraduate applications to Sussex, following a significant increase over the last two years.

Applications to Sussex are currently up by 1% on last year, compared to a national decline of around 3%.

But other members of the 1994 Group of medium-sized universities have seen significant falls: Reading is down 1.7%, Lancaster down 11%, and Exeter down 10%. In contrast, there has been an increase in applications to London institutions.

The majority of applications have now been received. Most well-qualified UK students will have met the 15 January deadline, so the remaining applications will primarily be from EU and overseas students.

Assistant Registrar Marianne Boyer explains: “Growth at Sussex is lower than earlier in the cycle, which suggests that we’ve attracted more of the well-qualified applicants – who apply early.”

Admissions staff had in fact expected growth to slow down as the cycle progressed, because a move to electronic processing has resulted in more forms being processed early on.

Marianne concludes: “All in all this is a good position for Sussex, consolidating the 50% growth we have built up in recent years.”

Inside

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Sussex scientists probe particles.

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Celebrate campus diversity in a wide range of festivities.
Vyyan Evans (Senior Lecturer in Linguistics) and Melanie Green
Cognitive Linguistics: An introduction
Edinburgh University Press, £24.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 0748618325

Dr Brigitte Nerlich, of the University of Nottingham, says: "This book provides a clear, careful and comprehensive introduction to what the authors call the 'cognitive linguistics enterprise', including cognitive semantics and cognitive grammar, synchronic and diachronic approaches, linguistic and socio-cultural perspectives, universal and language-specific matters, older topics such as prototype theory, newer ones, such as blending and much more. The approach adopted is problem oriented rather than theory oriented. This means that cognitive, formal and functional approaches are not pitted against each other but are instead pitted against problems that have to be solved. This approach will draw readers into a learning process that will keep them interested in cognitive linguistics well beyond this book."

Nick Hubble (Sussex graduate)
Mass Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, history, theory
Pelgarve Macmillan, £45 (hardback)
ISBN: 140390556

A cultural history and theoretical exposition of Mass-Observation from 1937 until the present, based in part on Nick's Sussex DPhil thesis (awarded in 2003 following an MA in 1997 and a PGCE in 1995, both also at Sussex). The Mass-Observation Archive, which specialises in material about everyday life in Britain, is held in the Library on campus. The publisher says: "The real extent and significance of mass observation's unique role in the formation of postwar Britain's idea of itself is explored, through the examination of everyday life across the twentieth Century. An excellent guide to mass observation and the period generally, this scholarly work also provides surprising insights into the role social research has played in the development of policy and mass democracy."

George Mather (Professor of Experimental Psychology)
Foundations of Perception
Psychology Press, £24.95 (paperback)
ISBN: 0863778356

The publisher says: "This clear and balanced introduction to perception examines all the major and minor senses and provides the reader with a thorough analysis of our perceptual experience. In addition, each chapter includes a 'Tutorials' section providing the opportunity for advanced students to explore supplementary information on recent or controversial developments."

In a paper submitted to Physical Review Letters, the team has just announced the results of a ten-year project to make one of the most sensitive measurements ever of sub-atomic particles. Theories attempting to explain the creation of matter in the aftermath of the Big Bang now have to be tuned up — or thrown out.

Physicist Dr Philip Harris, the head of the Sussex group, says: "This represents a significant breakthrough, and a real success for UK particle physics. Although there are a couple of other teams in the world working in this same area, we're managing to stay ahead of them. It's been said in the past that this experiment has disproved more theories than any other in the history of physics — and now it's delivering the goods all over again."

The new result shows that the distortion in the subatomic particles is far smaller than most of the origin-of-matter theories had predicted — if the neutron were the size of the Earth, the distortion would still be less than the size of a bacterium.

"This will really help to constrain theories that attempt to go beyond our current understanding of the fundamental laws of physics," says Philip. "For some of them, it's back to the drawing board; but for the better ones, it will definitely show them the way forwards."

To carry out the research the Sussex group, together with scientists from the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory and the Institut Laue Langevin in Grenoble, built a special type of atomic clock that used spinning neutrons instead of atoms. It applied 120,000 volts to a quartz 'bottle' that was filled regularly with neutrons captured from a reactor. The clock frequency was measured through nuclear magnetic resonance.

'Tablet' gives parents a pupil's-eye view of classroom

A high-tech learning tool developed by Sussex researchers is giving parents a pupil's eye view of what their children get up to in class — all from the comfort of home.

Researchers from the Human Centred Technology Group, together with TV production company Open Mind and and computer programmer Dave Johnson, developed the Homework Project — a pioneering electronic teaching and learning system.

The aim was to combine educational technology, TV production and artificial intelligence to enhance learning in and outside the classroom. The system comprises an interactive 'whiteboard' (electronic screen) and individual portable screens or 'tablets' (rather like fold-away laptops) for each pupil.

The prototype has so far been tested by six- and seven-year-old pupils, their parents and their teachers. Earlier workshops at Westdene School and Patcham House School in Brighton helped developers to refine the prototype. Little Horsted Primary School in Uckfield, East Sussex has just completed the latest trial.

The teacher uses a whiteboard — a kind of giant touch-screen PC — for class lessons, while pupils can work on their own using the tablets. The teacher can then monitor every child, even sending messages offering help or fresh instructions.

All this information is stored on the tablet, which the children can take home to show their parents.

By clicking on an interactive picture screen, parents can view:
• activities that the child has completed at school that day and previously, along with lesson plans, photos, film, music, worksheets and fun items, sent direct to each tablet;
• homework activities set by the teacher;
• tips for parents about the class and homework activities;
• fun activities that relate to learning, but are not specific pieces of homework;
• a messaging system that allows messages to be sent/received to/from the teacher.

Feedback so far has been very positive, says Visiting Professor Rose Luckin, who heads the Sussex research team. "The interactive tablets are meant to enhance conventional learning — not to replace pen and paper. Parents are also able to share more actively in their child's learning."

She adds: "Additional funding will be needed now to develop the prototype into a commercial product that could be rolled out to schools across the country."

For more information, see http://ideas.fcs.sussex.ac.uk/projects/Homework/.

Bookmark is a regular review of new books by Sussex authors.

You can buy these books at the University Bookshop in Bramber House, or order online at www.sussexunibooks.co.uk. Staff get a 10% discount on all products in the Bookshop on presentation of staff ID.
VC's Voice

In my last Bulletin column (24 January), I described the strategic planning process on which the University has embarked. The first stage of that process is well under way, centred on discussions with Deans on the development of school academic plans.

As I wrote in my last column, we face some difficult decisions, and a very demanding decision-making timetable. But we also face great opportunities.

The key bodies that will be asked to approve the University's academic development plan will be the new Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) on 10 March, Senate on 17 March, and Council on 24 March.

At my open meetings with staff, which take place before SRC meets, I will explain and discuss the process. There will be further open meetings between SRC and Senate specifically to outline the proposals being put to Senate and Council.

Alongside the development of the strategic plan, other high-priority work continues, notably planning for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE); addressing the important issues raised by the Students' Union about the student experience; and the implementation of the new pay framework.

The prospect of industrial action by the Association of University Teachers (AUT), following a ballot in which just half of AUT's national membership voted, is an unwelcome backdrop to an already demanding agenda.

I understand why many university staff are dissatisfied with their pay, but there are a number of reasons why I think the AUT's proposed action is unwelcome.

First of all, an assessment boycott is a profoundly uncomfortable form of industrial action. It can create difficulties between staff and students, conflicts of loyalty for staff, and difficult decisions for managers too. At a time that we need to work together, industrial action will have divisive effects.

The AUT's action is also premature. The academic unions made an early submission about pay in October, but this was not turned into a pay claim until January. The ballot was announced on 10 January, less than 24 hours after the academic unions submitted their pay claim.

Even if the university employers were minded to accept the academic unions' pay claim in full, they could not do so immediately. We now have a national pay framework covering all staff in higher education, and the support-staff unions have not yet submitted their pay claim for 2006. It is unusual, to put it mildly, for employers to face industrial action before all the relevant unions have submitted their claim.

In the end, what can be done on pay depends on affordability. We all know the financial constraints under which we operate. The five-year plan that will be submitted to Senate and Council will show how we will invest the additional income from higher tuition fees. A high proportion of that additional income will go into pay and pension costs, including the costs of the new pay framework. The more goes into further pay increases, the fewer additional posts we can afford. Serious discussion about these choices is a more sensible way forward than industrial action.

AUT calls strike for 7 March

Teaching, research and administration at Sussex are set to be disrupted on Tuesday 7 March when members of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) go out on strike.

An assessment boycott begins the following day. AUT will ask lecturers, researchers and academic-related staff who are members to refuse to mark students' work or take part in the exam process.

AUT and its sister academic union NATFHE (the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education) voted in favour of industrial action earlier this month.

The proposed action is part of a dispute relating to the unions' pay claim for 2006-07. They say that "taking industrial action is an absolute last resort" and that they "remain committed to resolving the dispute at the negotiating table, not on the picket line".

Of the AUT's 48,000 members around the UK, 51% took part in a postal ballot: 64% of those voting backed strike action and 81% backed "action short of a strike".

The University of Sussex has about 1,250 staff eligible for AUT membership, of whom 500 are members entitled to vote. The ballot was decided on a simple majority of those voting nationally, not on the majority of members.

Reacting to the ballot result, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: "I understand why many university staff are dissatisfied with their pay, but the AUT's proposed action is unwelcome."

When a pay settlement is reached, it will cover all groups of staff; the other unions (including Unison and Amicus, which represent support staff at Sussex) have not yet submitted their claims and are not planning industrial action.

Letter

What's all this about wind turbines?

I read in the Argus local newspaper on Monday (20 February) that Sussex "plans to build wind turbines to supply its South Downs campus". Then I read in the badger student newspaper that management are "in discussions about the prospect of building a wind turbine near to the Falmer Sports Complex".

What's all this about, then? If it's true, I think it's a great idea!

Ria Gane, Publications and Branding

David Kirkwood, Director of Estates, replies:

Utility costs (including those for electricity) are rising sharply and we are in the very early stages of considering whether it would be a good idea to generate some of the University's electricity using a wind turbine. A single turbine would meet 25% of our electrical power needs.

However there are a number of issues to consider before we even put in a planning application, not least whether there's sufficient wind over the campus to make such a project viable.

We plan to monitor wind speeds for at least six months and are waiting for temporary permission from Lewes District Council to erect a 10m mast in order to do this.

If the results suggest it is viable we then need to consider how it might be financed and discuss the idea with the planners, as clearly a wind turbine in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (and on land that is soon to border a National Park) would be controversial.

Whatever the outcome, we certainly don't plan more than one wind turbine!
Sussex graduates make a world of difference

Around 1,800 students were awarded degrees at the winter graduation ceremonies at the Brighton Dome today (24 February).

The two ceremonies were presided over by the University's Chancellor, Lord Attenborough, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Aledair Smith. The University also conferred two honorary degrees in recognition of outstanding contribution to public life. Lord Lloyd of Berwick, one of the most distinguished legal figures in the UK, received a Doctor of Laws degree. The historian and one-time Sussex student Professor Norman Davies was conferred with the degree of Doctor of Letters.

How to recognise a Goth

Most people's idea of a Goth might be of a pasty-faced, sullen-looking teenager dressed head to toe in black - with a morbid taste in music and a penchant for the Dark Side. Sussex postgraduate student Dunja Brill, however, paints a brighter picture to that of the stereotype image - which should come as a relief to parents, if not to Goths themselves.

The Brighton Goth, according to Dunja, has a healthy sense of humour, is intelligent, eminently employable - and partial to a bit of pink in his or her wardrobe. Dunja, who graduates with a doctorate in Media and Cultural Studies today (24 February), researched and compared Goth lifestyles in Brighton, Edinburgh, Berlin and Bonn/Cologne as part of a deeper examination of a youth subculture that has become an international phenomenon.

She says: "Goths have an unfair reputation. They might not like me saying it, but the Goth lifestyle, unlike the Punk scene, is a middle-class subculture. Those who remain as Goths into their thirties are usually holding down pretty good jobs."

Flamboyant and with a positive attitude to life, Goths can be flamboyant and fun-loving too, says Dunja, and she pays particular tribute to the Brighton Goths in her study.

Dunja says: "British Goths are less pretentious than the German ones. As Brighton is not such a big city, the Goths all know each other and it's pretty friendly. There are different types of Goth, and the Cyber Goth look is very dominant in Brighton. Cyber Goths are into robot looks and technology, but they don't take themselves so seriously. Brighton's Cyber Goths like adding a bit of pink to their wardrobe - a colour that's usually anathema to black-clad Goths."

Dunja used to be a Goth herself, although it was the music rather than the dressing up that attracted her at first - she was once in a Goth band called Lie Still. Now, her ambitions are more in the academic line, and she hopes to get into academia back in her native Germany.
Helping to heal the wounds of war in Bosnia

Sabina, who will receive a Master of Science (MSc) degree in Applied Social Psychology, interviewed Serb and Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) students in Bosnia and Herzegovina to assess emotional responses such as shame, guilt and hatred to the violence and horrors of the country’s inter-ethnic war from 1992–95.

Sabina says: “I was intrigued by how young people deal with the recently experienced violence and with the fact that members of their own group have harmed others.”

Like most Bosnians, Sabina had direct and life-changing experience of the war. She and her family fled their Sarajevo home in 1992 when the city was occupied and she spent most of her teenage years as a refugee in Germany.

Many of the emotional scars of fear, mutual hatred and lack of trust between the communities have yet to heal. Sabina says: “The war issues, especially the question of atrocities, are still very fresh and people are avoiding discussion about them. Conflict resolution is only the first step towards reconciliation.”

Sabina’s studies have led to her acting as a consultant for the United Nations Development Programme, working on a project dealing with war victims in Bosnia. She was also asked to be involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Bosnia, which will try to help the different communities to find a way to live together in peace again. This led to her attending the first conference on reconciliation in August 2005, in Sarajevo.

Sabina came to Sussex on a Chevening Scholarship (awarded by the British Council and the Foreign Office) to work with social psychologist Professor Rupert Brown, whose research areas include prejudice and inter-group relations.

She is now looking forward to doctoral research, again under Rupert’s supervision. Sabina will divide her time between campus and Bosnia, where she will continue to raise awareness of dealing with the past.

Research student attends graduation 37 years late

A doctoral student who was unable to attend his graduation ceremony 37 years ago finally donned his mortar board and gown today.

Dr Hugh Guilford, now a management consultant and a grandfather, could not afford the air fare from America to collect his Chemistry DPhil from Sussex in the late sixties. Subsequent efforts to attend ceremonies were thwarted by work commitments and family ties.

Hugh, 62, recalls: “I was given the opportunity to complete my DPhil at Yale University after my supervisor at Sussex landed a job there. It wasn’t financially possible for me to travel to the UK for the ceremony. I’d also got married and we had our first baby.”

From America he carried on his research at Sweden’s Lund University, where his second daughter was born. And after that his career in the nuclear medical industry took off.

This year, following communication with the Development & Alumni Office, Hugh decided to have another attempt.

“I have always held an affection for Sussex,” says Hugh, who was also one of the first chemistry undergraduates on campus, from 1962 to 1965.

“When I came for my interview, campus was just a building site. One of my questions during the interview was, ‘Where am I going to study?’ The laboratories hadn’t even been finished.”

During his career he has also taken time out to teach weekend courses in chemistry at Sussex and has continued to stay in touch with old university friends.

He now lives in the Chilterns with his second wife, who attended the graduation ceremony with him.

VC’s meetings with staff rescheduled

The Vice-Chancellor’s termly open meetings with staff, which had been due to take place this month, have been rescheduled to Thursday 2 March (9.15am, Terrace Room in Brander House) and Monday 6 March (12.30pm, BSMS lecture theatre).

New HoDs in SciTech

New heads have been appointed for two departments in the School of Science and Technology – Dr Rupert Young for Engineering and Design, and Dr John Carroll for Informatics. Both will be in post for nine months. Rupert takes over from Professor Richard Stobart, who has stepped down as head of department after three years in post, and John from Professor Vladimirio Sassone, who has taken up a new post at Southampton University.

New club for former staff

A club for former long-term members of staff is being launched. It aims to keep ex-staff in touch with each other as well as with ongoing developments at Sussex. The steering group, which is chaired by Professor Sir Gordon Conway (Vice-Chancellor from 1992–98), is holding an inaugural reception in the Meeting House on 6 April. Ex-staff who are interested in attending should contact Development Officer Roger Walkinton on 876574, email r.e.walkinton@sussex.ac.uk.

Questions of Sport

Kick-off for a ‘Questions of Sport’ quiz is 7.30pm on Tuesday 7 March. Teams of four will compete at the Falmer Sports Complex for a first prize of up to £150 cash. Entry costs £10 per team. Call the Falmer Sports Centre on ext. 7125 for details.

www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin
Third time lucky?

Could it be third time lucky? If you weren’t fortunate enough to win a stay at the Drakes Hotel or Amherst Hotel in the two previous campus competitions, try again.

This time you could be spending a night in the best available room at Blanch House, a Grade II listed building in a Georgian terrace just off Brighton’s seafront. It boasts a 70’s lounge-chic cocktail bar and a renowned restaurant.

The prize is a one-night stay (Sunday to Thursday). To be in with a chance of winning, all you have to do is answer one question: How many rooms does Blanch House have?

To find the answer, see the online list of University-approved hotels and guest houses, available at www.sussex.ac.uk/about/hotels.

Email your answer, name and contact details (indicating if you are a Sussex student, graduate or staff member) to Caroline Lehany at c.lehany@sussex.ac.uk, or drop your entry in to 111 Sussex House. The closing date is Thursday 9 March.

LETTERS

The “inequity of the new car parking fees”

I felt I must respond to the reply from Chris Wadey (Bulletin 10 February) on the inequity of the new car parking fees.

I find it difficult to believe that “all payment methods and associated salary levels were considered” unless the intention was to create unfairness.

How on earth can it make sense to leave the threshold of £12,000 where it is? If the policy on lower paid staff being given an exemption on the fees was correct two years ago, I would be interested to know what has changed in the interim and why those same staff no longer warrant the same benefit. As far as I am aware there has been no significant restructuring of salaries in the interim.

As J. Thorogood so sharply pointed out, a small salary increase that takes staff £67 over the threshold results in a parking charge of up to £240. This cannot be fair, and is a significant pay reduction to the lowest paid colleagues here. The threshold clearly should have been raised in line with salaries.

Paul Cecil, Head of Academic Office

Chris Wadey from Transport Management replies:

The £12,000 threshold was a concession in the original arrangements for parking charges, introduced in October 2003. The possibility of removing that concession and charging all staff and student users £1 per day (or 50p for four hours) was considered as part of the review.

On the face of it that would seem a fairer arrangement, as low-paid staff don’t get free bus or train travel, so why should they be encouraged to use their car by getting free parking? In addition, many students who pay for parking have lower incomes than these exempt staff, which could seem unfair.

However, it was felt that the removal of this concession would have been hard to bear for our lowest-paid staff, so it was agreed that the existing £12,000 limit should be left in place for the time being.

Given the above arguments for abolishing the exemption, there was no support during the review process to increase the exemption level.

Why will an annual parking permit cost more than pay and display?

As a part-time teacher, I am currently charged £100/year to park. I come in nearly every weekday, so under the new regime, with charging also in vacations, my costs would more than double. The bus service is both slow and unreliable; I get more work done if I use my car.

Why is the proposed one-off annual charge more than would be paid by someone travelling to campus for, say, 46 weeks and paying cash daily? Is it to deliberately irritate people who will save money if they are prepared to stock large supplies of £1 coins, and queue in the rain to pay?

The charges were initially proposed because parking demand exceeded supply; it no longer does so – especially in vacations.

Dr John Haigh, Mathematics

Chris Wadey from Transport Management replies:

We aim to encourage most drivers – wherever possible – to use the pay-and-display method, so we made the cost of an annual permit higher than the daily rate. This reminds the individual each day to think of using other modes of transport; in time we hope that most staff and students will start to think of the car as their second option when travelling to campus.

FIRST CLASS

Choice magazine (which reviews books for the American Library Association) has chosen books by Dr Sue Currell and Dr Richard Follett to appear on its list of Outstanding Academic Titles for 2005. _The March of Spare Time: The problem and promise of leisure in the Great Depression_ and _The Sugar Masters: Planters and slaves in Louisiana’s cane world, 1820–1860_ were selected “for their excellence in scholarship and presentation, the significance of their contribution to the field, and their value as important – often the first – treatment of their subject”.

Sussex students stripped off for the Environmental Society’s 2006 awareness- and fundraising calendar. Now the initiative is in the running for a Green Gown Award from the Times Higher Education Supplement. The THES will reveal all in April.
Sabbatical elections – the winners

After a record-breaking turn-out of exactly 2,345 voters, the six Students’ Union sabbatical officers for 2006/07 were elected in a hotly contested race. In addition to record numbers of voters, there was also the highest ever number of candidates (35).

Voting took place over three days this month, and the large turn-out means that Sussex has one of the highest participations in student elections in the country.

Well-known environmentalist Dan Glass was elected as President. Dan, a final-year Geography and Development student from Barnet, is “chuffed” to have been elected and takes inspiration from vocal, politically motivated students past and present.

He said, “I have no agenda, I leave that for our members to decide. I want our University to be environmentally friendly, self-sufficient, to be part of the wider community. I don’t want to represent anyone, but help everyone represent themselves.”

English Literature student and Finance Officer-elect Adam Lindsay would like to ensure that the Union focuses on the issues directly affecting students’ time at Sussex. On a national level Adam is keen to see Sussex and Brighton students granted loans on a par with those studying in London.

Speaking after his election as Activities Officer, Michael Alexander, a final-year Media and Cultural Studies student, said, “One of my key aims is to improve the accessibility of Union events, especially sports. I would like to encourage more off-campus students to become involved in the on-campus activities.”

Sophie Priestley (International Relations and Politics), Education Officer-elect, said, “There is much to be done and I am excited and eager. The Education Officer has a duty to offer students avenues to actively engage with their course. Union policy, set by the students, demands international solidarity with students who cannot always access education.”

The new Communications Officer will be Emma Reynolds (English Literature), with Sophie Flax (English Literature) as Welfare Officer. Callum Rumble (Maths) will be the part-time Entertainments Officer.

The coming academic year will prove if the rhetoric and electioneering can be translated into positive action.

All different, all equal

From 7–12 March, campus will be celebrating the diversity of its community with suitably diverse activities taking place, ranging from flinging coloured powder in an Indian festival of colours, through self-defence classes to thoughtful academic debate.

Above: Last year’s Holi festival was a colourful affair.

The highlight of the annual festival, for some, will be the debate between famous atheist and Guardian journalist Polly Toynbee and political scientist, Anglican priest and University Quaker chaplain Revd Dr Paul Oostreicher. These two beacons of thought will debate whether religion is bad for the nation’s health. Will they come to a consensus or is there no middle ground in this thorny topic?

8 March is International Women’s Day, when the activities will have a female focus, including the ‘FemFeast’ open air café, a women-only self-defence taster session and health workshops held by the Brighton Women’s Health Collective.

Also on 8 March, student society The Power of Culture invites all-comers to participate in a lunch party with traditional food, clothes and music followed by a talk by a traditional Maasai on his rural development and educational projects in Tanzania. Details of all events can be found at www.sussex.ac.uk/equals/diversityweek.

SocCul Launches Research Student Common Room

Students and faculty mingled in a relaxed atmosphere at the launch party this month for the new Research Student Common Room in the School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies (SocCul).

The room (Arts D541) doubles as a study/resource room and a social space. It provides a range of spaces suitable for different types of usage: seminar-style meetings or reading group activities; a bar/kitchen and café-style area; and a soft-seating area for chilling out.

Newspapers and journals are on hand for students to keep up with current events, and a filing cabinet will house successful research outlines and dissertations for reference purposes.

Dr Barbara Einhorn, Director of Graduate Studies in SocCul, says usage is already high and the school’s culturally diverse students are “thrilled” with this new form of support: “It enables them to bond with each other, discover links with others’ research, make friends, and develop a sense of identification with SocCul as a school dedicated to fostering interdisciplinary, comparative and cross-cultural research.”
**Academic events**

**MON 27 FEB**

3pm International Relations seminar: Stefan Elbe (Sussex), Risking lives: AIDS, security and three concepts of risk. Russell 30.

4pm Language and Linguistics seminar: Stephanie Pourcel (Sussex), Representing motion in language and cognition. Arts D440.

**4.10pm Economics seminar: Ray Barnett (NIESR), The determinants of consumption in the EU. Russell 28.**

**4.30pm Neuroscience seminar: Wm Van de Grind (Utrecht), Time, space and motion in vision. Genome Centre seminar room.**

**5pm Education seminar: Deborah Youdell (London), The commensurability of popular desirable hetero-femininity and institutionally acceptable studenthood. Arts E149.**

**TUE 28 FEB**

12.30pm History seminar: Mark Bhatti & Jayne Raisborough (Brighton), Empowerment and resistance in women's leisure. Library meeting room.

2.15pm SEI seminar: Dionysios Dimitrakopoulos (Birkbeck), Explaining the establishment of the Convention on the Future of Europe. EDB 121.

**4pm COGS seminar: Richard Menary (Hertfordshire), Party problems. Pevsesey 1A1.**

**4pm Anthropology seminar: Inge Daniels (RCO), The spirit of the Japanese gift? The significance of ephemeral and utilitarian things in the creation of spiritual and social value. Arts C233.**

**Academic events**

**4pm German-Jewish seminar: Helen Fry (UCL), Germans who fought for Britain in World War II. Arts B127.**

7pm Institute of Physics lecture: Colin Wright (Sussex), Juggling: Theory and practice. Pevessey 1A7.

**WED 1 MAR**

1pm Genome seminar: Peter Mcgrory (Aberdeen), High-performance genomics. GDSC seminar room.

1pm IDS seminar: Rapha Kaplinski (Sussex), Will China affect SSA's capacity to industrialise? Lessons from the clothing and textiles sector. IDS 221.

2pm Experimental particle physics seminar: P Chadwick (Durham), TeV gamma-ray astronomy with HESS. Pevsesey 1A1.

2pm Music seminar: Martin Dixon (Glasgow), The voice in modernity. Falmer House 120.

5pm Migration seminar: Hen de Haas (Oxford), Migration and development in southern Morocco. Arts C233.

**THU 2 MAR**

4pm History seminar: Benno Teschke (Sussex), Capitalism and geopolitics. Arts A155.

**5pm Sussex development lecture: Pauline Rose (Sussex), Poverty of education, or educating poverty? Bridging the disciplinary divide. Chi LT.**

**FRI 3 MAR**

2.15pm SPRU/CENTRIM seminar: Suma Athreya, (Open) & Pari Patel (Sussex).

Internationalisation of technology and the market value of large firms. Freeman Centre G24/25.

**MON 6 MAR**

3pm International Relations seminar: Mike Williams & Rita Abrahamson (Aberystwyth), The globalisation of private security. Russell 30.

**4pm Language and Linguistics seminar: Geoffrey Sampson (Sussex), Does simple imply creole? Arts D440.**

**4pm Neuroscience seminar: Gregory Jeffries (Cambridge), Organisation and development of the drosophila olfactory system. Genome Centre seminar room.**

**4.10pm Economics seminar: David Blackaby (Swansea), The Catholic-Protestant earnings and employment differences in Northern Ireland: Evidence from the LFS. Russell Building 28.**

5pm Education seminar: Michael Fielding, (Sussex), Student voice: Revolution, renewal or regression? Arts E419.

**TUE 7 MAR**

12noon Biochemistry & Genetics seminar: Corinne Smith (Warwick), Cyto-electronic microscopy of cell organelle caging complexes. JMS LT.

**12.30pm Life History seminar: Rocío Davis (Navarra, Spain), Reading the family memoirs of the Asian diaspora. Library meeting room.**

2.15pm SEI/Politics seminar: Tim Balle & Paul Taggart (Sussex), The rules, rigidities and experiences of new members of the European Parliament. EDB 121.

**4pm COGS seminar: Stephen Butterfield (Warwick), What are modules? Per 1 A1A.**

14.30pm Anthropology seminar: Racha Moghaddam (Sussex), Famnon, filial devotion and the Arab film star fan club networks. Arts C233.

6.30pm Professional lecturers: Paul Gough (Sussex), Space weather: A down to earth science. BMS LT.**

**WED 8 MAR**

1pm IDS Asian drivers seminar: Hubert Schmitz (Sussex), Asian drivers as innovators. IDS 221.

1pm Genome seminar: David Lydall (Henry Wellcome, Newcastle), Living with chromosome ends. GDSC seminar room.

**4.30pm Law seminar: John Strawson (East London), International law and the making of Palestine. Russell 24.**

5pm Migration seminar: Denise Hart (FCO), Managing migration in the UK's interests. Arts C233.

**THU 9 MAR**

4pm History seminar: Donald Winch (Sussex), The political and economic context of Mill's principles. Arts A155.

5pm Sussex development lecture: Emmanuel de Kadt (IOI), Religion, human rights and development. Chi LT.

**FRI 10 MAR**

2.15pm SPRU/CENTRIM seminar: Attila Varga (Pecs), Geography, technological progress and macroeconomic growth. Freeman G24/25.

**Arts events**

**PERFORMANCE**

**Tue 28 Feb & Wed 1 Mar**

**Booffes Du Nord – The Grand Inquisitor**

An adaptation of Dostoevsky's classic text. The action takes place in Seville during the Inquisition. Christ returns to the world of man in human form and enters the burning streets of the city, where, the previous day, the Grand Inquisitor had sent a hundred heretics into the flames. Gardner Arts Centre (GAC).

**Wed 1–Fri 3 Mar**

**7.30pm Student production – Vagina Monologues**

Tickets from Falmer House reception, Hothouse.

**Sun 5 Mar**

**5pm ACAS – Culture Festival**

Dances and traditional performances from Africa and Asia. GAC.

**FILM**

**Sun 26 Feb**

**2pm Nanny McPhee** (UJ, GAC).

**5pm Godzilla** (PO).

**8pm Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang** (15C, GAC).

**EXHIBITION**

**Until Sun 19 Mar**

**Magali Nougrède**

Made on the English south coast and the French Côte d'Albâtre, this new body of work by Brighton-based photographer Magali Nougrède results from a series of chance interactions with members of the local communities.

Her intensely coloured studies of young people and the elderly suggest two distinct and often alien generations. GAC.

**Small ads**

**Wanted:** Holiday accommodation for family with two children 13–21 Mar in B'ton, How or Lewes. £1. kishimar@usus.ac.uk.

**For sale:** Guitar Fender Squier Stratocaster (Korean model) + gig bag, 10-watt practice amp. £120. T James on 07875 617237.

**Wanted:** 2- or 3-erth stay with English family to improve language skills. French man, 28. Will do gardening, odd jobs, etc. Payment for lodging according to work required. Available now. T Drs. Heberlee on 033 247 389 32, E bernardheb@ioid.com.

**For sale:** Classical guitar + soft case bag. New strings, suit beginner. £55 ono. T Tom on ext. 2893, Et.armour@usus.ac.uk.

**For sale:** Volo 340. 8 mths MoT, new battery, new water pump, nearly new radiator & exhaust. £225 ono. T 454499.

**For sale:** Euro Disney trip 19–22 Mar. 3 nights in Newport Bay hotel (B&B), 4-day pass to park for 2 adults & 2 children. £357 + transport. E tfc2@usus.ac.uk.

**Free:** 2 x roc mag-flie filing cupboards. T ext. 8543 to arrange collection.

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Claire Potter, with contributions from Jacqui Bealing, Maggie O'cline and Bob Read. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from the staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 10 March, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 3 March. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 86888 or email bulletin@usus.ac.uk.