Celebrating Success

Launch of Spanish
25th November saw the official launch of the new BA Spanish, hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, which brought together University colleagues, the first cohort of students on the programme, local stakeholders and dignitaries (the Ambassadors for Nicaragua and Panamá, and the cultural attachés for Mexico, Panamá and Cuba). The guests enjoyed Spanish tapas and wonderful live music from Charanga del Norte.

Dr Par Kumaraswami, Programme Lead for Spanish.

Celebrating 50 Years of Linguistics at the University of Reading
Fifty years after David Crystal helped set up a Linguistics degree at the University of Reading, he returned to give a public lecture about the changes he’s seen to linguistics over this period. The Great Hall at the London Road Campus was filled with students, lecturers and members of the public on the evening of 4th November, all enjoying David’s insights into establishing a linguistics degree at Reading and how it has developed over the years. Many thanks to Professor Jane Setter for organising the event.

HEA Fellowship
Congratulations to colleagues across the School who achieved HEA Fellowship through the FLAIR scheme in 2015. Not only is HEA Fellowship an important recognition of our professional skills, it also affords us opportunities to reflect on and to support and share our excellent practice in teaching and learning.

Well done to...
Senior Fellow
- Professor Alison Donnell
- Professor Françoise Le Saux
- Professor Jane Setter
Fellow
- Dr Sylvia Jaworska
- Professor Catherine Léglu
- Dr Clare Wright

‘I am not a costume’
On Friday 27th November 2015, three members of SLL contributed to the panel of a student-led event titled ‘I am not a costume’ in response to an event held by the Agricultural Society, which was followed by local media. Dr Nicole King (DEL), SLL’s Director of Teaching and Learning, spoke about the differences between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation and the damaging effect of stereotypes. Dr Federico Faloppa (MLES) spoke about the use of language in the construction of identities. Dr Nicola Abram (DEL) spoke about racial in/justice and the educational environment, and the
responsibility of universities to ensure that our classrooms and curricula are equally accessible to all. The event was hosted by the African Caribbean Society and supported by RUSU, and will feed into a RUSU campaign next term.

Research Round up

English Language and Applied Linguistics

- Congratulations to Dr Parvaneh Tavakoli, now Associate Professor. Parvaneh collaborated with Clare Wright on a colloquium delivered at the EuroSLA conference in York 2014. In July and November, alongside Colin Campbell and Joan McCormack from ISLI, Parvaneh organised two Research Impact workshops. The participants included 45 MFL/EFL teachers from local schools, colleges and the University of Reading. Drawing on research conducted at UoR, the workshops presented the latest findings of research in developing second language fluency and practical implications for classroom language teaching.

- In November, Professor Jane Setter spoke on National Public Radio (US) on accents in singing. Jane explained why there was recent controversy when Alesha Dixon sang the National Anthem in an apparently American accent.

- On 19th June 2015, Dr Christiana Themistocleous and Dr Sylvia Jaworska organised a one-day conference on Multilingualism in the Digital Age. More than 50 delegates from as far as South Africa and Canada attended this event and contributed to engaging discussions about multilingualism in various digital media including Twitter, Facebook and video games.

English Literature

- In August 2015 Dr Kate Macdonald, a Visiting Fellow, was arguing with The Observer’s literary critic Robert McCrum on The Guardian Books Podcast about the merits of John Buchan. Kate is the leading scholarly authority on Buchan’s work, and also appeared on a BBC Radio 4 programme in April, fighting Buchan’s corner in the lead-up to the centenary of the publication of his most well-known novel, The Thirty-Nine Steps.

- Rebecca Bullard was invited to give a public lecture on ‘Women and Secret History’ at Chawton House Library in Alton, Hampshire. Chawton House once belonged to Jane Austen’s brother, Edward. It hosts regular public events about the eighteenth-century and Regency periods and is home to an internationally-recognised research institute.

- Professor Karin Lesnik-Oberstein and Dr Sue Walsh of the Graduate Centre for International Research in Childhood: Literature, Culture, Media (CIRCL) in the Department of English Literature, together with CIRCL members from other countries, lectured in April 2015 at Sookmyung University in Seoul, Korea at a conference on ‘Childhood and Gender’ organised for CIRCL by its alumna, Professor So-Jin Park, the first Professor of Children’s Literature appointed as such in Korea.

Modern Languages and European Studies

- Dr Lisa Sampson (Italian Studies) has been awarded a prestigious British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship for the next academic year (2015-16) for a project on Theatre in the Academies of Early Modern Italy: festivity, learning, and cultural transformations, which builds on her research for the recently completed AHRC-funded project on Italian Academies, 1525-1700: The first intellectual networks of Early Modern Europe.

- Daniela has also edited a special issue of the A-rated journal Journal of Modern Italian Studies (21.1). The issue is entitled ‘Mediating Culture in Italy 1940s-1950s’. This publication is linked to the AHRC-funded project Mapping Literary Space.
Staff success

- Visiting Professor Cyril Weir was appointed as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the June 2015 Queen’s Birthday Honours List for services to English Language Assessment.

- Dr Clare Wright gained a national JISC Institutional Change Leader award for working on TEL for student autonomy and employability. This project aimed to build student expertise in managing task-based approaches to learning, fostering active engagement in seminars including international students, and support students’ development of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) skills, through student-led revisions of a popular undergraduate module. Claire has also been appointed the Director of Bilingualism Matters@Reading.

- Dr Jackie Laws was awarded a Leverhulme Small grant of £10,000 to extend the analytics and impact of her MorphoQuantics website which can be found here: http://morphoquantics.co.uk/. Jackie has also established a formal partnership with the OED who will use her website.

- On 6th November, Andrew Gurr, Professor Emeritus, was one of seven senior research fellows to be announced by Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in recognition of their ‘extraordinary contribution to knowledge of Shakespearean theatre through their work at and for the Globe over two decades or more’. For twenty years Andrew chaired the committees that designed the new Globe in London and is currently a Trustee working to put the remains of the Rose Theatre on display.

- Professor Grace Ioppolo has been named the 2017 Sam Wanamaker Fellow at Shakespeare’s Globe and will deliver the Wanamaker Lecture in 2017. In addition, she will be giving a public lecture at the Globe on May 19, 2016 commemorating the 400th anniversary of theatre entrepreneur Philip Henslowe.

- Dr Andrew Houwen was awarded the prestigious Ezra Pound Society Article Prize 2014 at a ceremony in Boston in April of this year for his article ‘Ezra Pound’s Early Cantos and His Translation of Takasago’, which was published in the Review of English Studies in April 2014. Andrew recently completed his doctoral thesis, graduating in July this year.

- In October, Dr Andrew Mangham won a University Collaborative Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning, along with former colleague John Holmes and members of the History and Biological Sciences departments, for their module ‘Science in Culture’. The course is unique in its combination of lectures and seminars by staff across the humanities and the sciences.

- Jean Call joined the School on the 15th October 1990. In 1996 she was the Admissions Secretary, where her contribution was immense, helping us build firm foundations for DEL. Twenty five years on, she now provides a wonderful service looking after our Part 1 students. Jean said of her time here ‘in my 25 years in the department of English, I have seen many changes but the one thing that has remained constant is that the staff have always been supportive and a pleasure work with!’
Many congratulations to Dr Diane Watts, SLL School Manager, on the successful completion of her PhD thesis on ‘Pierre Des Maizeaux: A Huguenot In Exile’, supervised here at the University of Reading in the Department of History.

Dr Daniela La Penna has been awarded a UROP placement for the project entitled: ‘The Italian Refugees Relief Committee: A transnational perspective on political activism and intellectual network’.

In January, Professor Bryan Cheyette was made a Fellow of the English Association. The only other fellow of the EA in the school is Dr Nicola King. Past Fellows included Professor Patrick Parrinder and Professor Simon Dentith. Bryan has been a university teacher for thirty years and has been a full professor since 1999. There are only two hundred Fellows of the English Association worldwide.

Student success
English Language and Applied Linguistics

MA English Language Teaching (ELT) by Distance Study student, Richard Spiby, was entered for the 3rd British Council ELT dissertation award in 2015. His dissertation was awarded a commendation for its impact on the ELT sector. His title was: ‘A comparison of the performance and utilization of reading strategies on tests of expeditious and careful reading’, conducted in a Turkish university context.

English Literature

Professor Peter Robinson writes: It was a great pleasure, as one of my final duties as outgoing Head of the Department for English Literature in the School of Literature and Languages, to present The Margaret Seymour and Percy Sharman Prize for Literature, awarded to Lorenzo Pagano, the student with the best overall mark in finals, who had a GPA of over 74 and a run of marks at Part 3 all in the first class band. I also presented our Best Dissertation Prize to Benjamin Beach, for a thesis on T. S. Eliot’s earlier poetry and the problems — poetic, philosophical and critical — of emotion in his work. This was awarded an agreed 85 by the two anonymous examiners. It was also a great pleasure to welcome again Paul Ovstedal, son of the novelist, to present The Rosalind Laker Award for Creative Writing to Unah Cader for the best dissertation on our Pathway this year, which consisted of two short stories rewriting fairy tales and an accompanying commentary. All three of the winners were able to be present in person, along with members of their families, and it was a delight to welcome them into the Department for our celebrations.

Student Bonnie McGill has been awarded the M. A. Ward prize for the Most Outstanding Postgraduate Result in the University for her ‘M(Res) in Children’s Literature with Distinction’ results. Bonnie obtained both the highest mark for a dissertation and the highest average across her degree. Bonnie was also awarded a University of Reading Studentship (from October 2015) to undertake her research on ‘Literary Theory and Quantum Theory’.
• Professor Alison Donnell had the pleasure of meeting with two of our alumnae on her most recent research trip to Barbados: Dr Gloria Quinytne and Dame Patricia Symmonds, who are, respectively, celebrating their 80th and 90th birthdays this year. Both of these distinguished alumnae studied for an English (Hons.) degree at Reading in the 1950s.

Dr Quintyne (née Rollock), who was also awarded the Alice Seymour and Percy Sharman prize for Literature, shared her memories of studying eighteenth-century literature, of annual dinners conducted in Latin, of Monday morning one-to-one tutorials and of Lord Wolfenden (the then Vice Chancellor) joining students in St. George’s Hall for dinner. Always clear that she wanted to be a teacher, Mrs Quintyne was called back to teach at her alma mater, the prestigious Queen’s College in Barbados, as soon as she had completed her studies at Reading. She later gained a teaching qualification and further degrees in Canada.

Dame Patricia Symmonds vividly remembered being taught by the legendary Professor Donald Gordon and Sir Frank Kermode, as well as her impressive young tutor Dr Jean Young. She resided at St Andrew’s Hall, the first hall of residence outside of London to provide female-only accommodation. The dining room, where Dame Patricia recalled nightly formal dinners in gowns, is now the Museum’s Reading Room. Dame Patricia subsequently gained a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from the Institute of Education, University of London. She worked for forty years at the well-known St. Michael School, for the last nine years as Principal. She was President of the Barbados Association for the Teaching of English for twenty-two years. Beyond her influential presence on the island’s education committees, Dame Patricia was a member of both the Barbados Senate and the Barbados Privy Council and was made a Dame in June 2000.

Modern Languages and European Studies

• With the support of our DAAD-Lektorin Sandra Beer, six of our German Studies undergraduate students were successful in receiving one of the prestigious scholarships from the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst/DAAD) which enables them to study at a German university for 6 weeks.

Congratulations to all!

Scholarship recipients: Stephanie King (Part 2), Roisin Forde (Part 1), Lauren Davies (Part 1), Meili Ellison (Part 2), Jonathan Hornby (Part 2) and Katie Fountain (Part 2) [from left to right].

• Stefano Santosuosso (Italian PhD candidate) has set up a new Italian Theatrical group involving undergraduate students from Italian Studies in MLES and beyond. Their performance in the summer term was a success and the practice provides students with an excellent opportunity to develop linguistically and culturally.

Outreach

• June and October Open Days were well attended this year. Comments received were very positive including ‘All staff and students were very friendly and helpful everywhere. This is far better than we have seen at any other university we have visited’ and ‘I had a really enjoyable day! The University was filled with many helpful and enthusiastic staff and teachers, and the campus itself was lovely. I really hope that I can become a part of this fantastic
community next year’. Thank you to all involved in the organisation and delivery of the days, helping us to create a positive and friendly atmosphere for all applicants.

- As part of SLL’s work to widen participation in HE, we have formed a number of partnerships with selected schools and colleges. This new feature profiles those partner institutions, and reports on the various ways we engage with them.

  St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College is a mixed FE college located in Ladbroke Grove, West London. It has over 1,100 students, enrolled on a range of courses from vocational Foundation courses to BTECs and A-Levels. St Charles is characterised by a very diverse student and staff body, and many of its students will be the first members of their family to enter Higher Education. Our outreach activities are therefore a valuable method of communicating information about university, and of supporting students’ aspirations to attend.

  On 1 December, Dr Rebecca Bullard and Dr Nicola Abram visited St Charles to run workshops with two groups of AS English Language and Literature students. Complementing the students’ studies on the poetry of William Blake, Rebecca and Nicola used iPads to facilitate discussion about Blake’s illuminated manuscripts. One of the students, Sudio, commented: ‘The session was extremely intriguing and engaging. I learnt why Blake used images with his poems and what effects it created for the reader’. Rebecca writes: ‘It was wonderful to work with such bright and lively students. I was really impressed by the way they engaged with the material we had brought with us and by their thoughtful responses to Blake’s texts’.

  Later this term, Claudia François and Professor Catherine Léglu will be visiting St Charles to deliver workshops to students taking A-Level French. Students will engage with the topic of immigration and the film Un Long Dimanche de Fiançailles.

  Professor Michelle O’Callaghan is also visiting St Charles College on 22 March to deliver a workshop on Doctor Faustus to the A2 English Literature students.

  If you would be interested in designing and/or delivering workshops to school/college students from backgrounds currently under-represented in HE, please contact SLL’s Widening Participation Officer Nicola Abram: n.l.abram@reading.ac.uk

English Language and Applied Linguistics

- The University of Reading has been teaching linguistics for 50 years this year. To celebrate, the English Language and Applied Linguistic and Clinical Language Science Departments put on a day of events for Year-12 students interested in pursuing the subject at University. Students took part in interactive workshops, giving them a taste of university lectures and seminars. The first seminar was run by Dr Christiana Themistocleous on English Language in Society, based on a compulsory first year English Language module. The Clinical Language Science workshop focused on the different types of speech and language therapy patients require, and was run by PhD students Laura Spencer and Laura McFiggans. In the afternoon some of our students gave talks about being a student at Reading, highlighting RUSU, societies, halls and support here at Reading. Thank you to all of those who organised such a special day, especially Professor Jane Setter; we hope those who attended had an enjoyable experience and learnt more about what makes Linguistics at Reading so special.

English Literature

- The Primary School Poetry Day in October was a wonderful success and saw pupils from Shinfield Infant School and Manor Primary School attending. A huge thank you to Dr Neil Cocks and Ashley Harrold for their sessions – by turns hilarious, challenging, creepy, spooky, wonderful and strange! All of the attending teachers and teaching assistants agreed that the event was a positive experience and was ‘likely to change students’ attitudes to English Literature’. Some of their comments included: ‘the children were
enthused and engaged with the activities’, ‘The excitement of the workshop really showed how poems can come to life’ and ‘Our children giggled and absorbed. Thank you!’.

- The Reading Poetry Festival, held 20-25 October and organised by Dr Andrew Houwen, enjoyed its strongest ever turnout. Kei Miller’s Gerald Finzi Memorial Lecture and reading was followed by a translation-themed Saturday of readings by Spanish, German and Dutch poets. The audience praised the ‘high quality events, poets and speakers’ and described Kei Miller’s event in particular as ‘really enjoyable’.

Kei Miller, who gave the Gerald Finzi Memorial Lecture on Friday 23 October.

- On 3rd October, 46 Year-9 pupils joined Widening Participation Facilitators and Officers from across the university to celebrate the UNESCO Festival of Light. As part of the day pupils attended an interactive workshop on poetry and creative writing delivered by Katy Green. Student’s comments included ‘I learned about a new way to help me write a poem. Flash writing and word banks’ and ‘I learned that imagery and the techniques that involved senses can be enlarged and used to be more effective’.

Thank you to Dr Nicola Abram, Katie Mitchel, Dr Mary Morrissey and recent English Language graduate Madeline Wilson for all their help in making this event possible.

Learning board from the Festival of Light 2015.

- On 11th November, the English Literature department welcomed teachers to their first Creative Writing INSET event of the year. The session was run by Adrian Blamires and was very well received; one teacher commented: ‘It’s really nice getting to talk to other people about our ideas and share some resources. It is also so different from other professional development we do - getting to go to a university is a real treat for us’. We believe building strong professional relationships with teachers will help aid recruitment in the future and are looking forward to running the first MLES TeachMeet in January.

- The English Literature department held a Gothic Masterclass day on 6th July for Year-12 students studying the subject at A-Level. The day included interactive workshops on texts such as Sheridan Le Fanu’s ‘Green Tea’. Students found the day ‘informative’, ‘enjoyable’ and ‘extremely useful as part of their preparation for their upcoming unit on the Gothic’. Thank you to all of those who organised and taught on the day and helped make it such a success. The Gothic Masterclass is being replaced by a twenty-first century poetry workshop in 2016 to keep it relevant to the A-Level curriculum.

Modern Languages and European Studies

- On 14th and 15th December, the Modern Languages and English Literature strands of Reading Scholars held their first events of this academic year. Both sets of students where lively and excited about the year ahead. All were positive about the sessions they attended and seemed very engaged and interested in the tasks, as well as during the break times. Thank you to all for helping to achieve this and to the Student Mentors who were so instrumental to the success of the day. A special thank you to Claire Challis in SRO for her superb organisation of the scheme.
New staff
We are delighted to welcome our new colleagues to the School in 2015-16

English Language and Applied Linguistics
- Professor Rodney Jones,
  Head of Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics.

- Dr Michael Daller,
  Associate Professor in testing and assessment/second language acquisition.

Modern Languages and European Studies
- Dr Wine Tessure,
  Conducting her post-doctoral research on the AHRC-funded project ‘Listening Zones of NGOs’.

- Dr John McKeane,
  Lecturer in French Studies.

- Dr Noor Mat Nayan,
  Teaching Fellow in the Department of English Language & Applied Linguistics.

- Dr Marjorie Gehrhardt,
  Lecturer in 20th century French History.
English Literature

- Dr Aisling Byrne, Lecturer in Medieval English Literature.

- Dr Paddy Bullard, Associate Professor of English Literature and Book History.

- Dr Alanna Skuse, Wellcome Trust Research Fellow.

- Dr Bethany Layne, Teaching Fellow in Modern English and American Literature.

School of Literature and Languages

- Miss Sarah Mills and Miss Lucy Stone. Academic Placement and Professional Track Facilitators.