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St Leonard's College

News from the postgraduate community
2014 / 2015

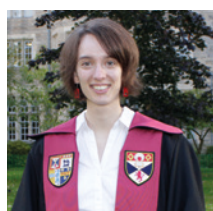
Welcome to St Andrews and our postgraduate community!



This new edition of St Leonard's News from the Community is all about encouraging our postgraduate students to engage more closely with each other. In the pages which follow you will find information and articles about many different aspects of postgraduate life at St Andrews and how to make the most effective use of your time here. Whether you are a new or returning student, a taught or research postgraduate, I hope that you will find this magazine useful, and that it will inspire you to play an active role in the intellectual and social life of St Leonard's College.

I look forward to meeting you at events throughout the year. Alternatively, do come and see me in one of the open office hours that I hold throughout the course of each semester.

Professor Louise Richardson FRSE
Principal and Vice-Chancellor



I am Tania and I am your Postgraduate Convener during the academic year 2014-2015.

I am currently in the first year of my PhD in

Environmental History after having spent the last two years completing an MPhil in the same subject.

I was elected in March by the postgraduate student body to represent postgraduate interests within the University and the Students' Association.

Along with the other Sabbatical Officers, I sit on Academic Council (Senate), Learning & Teaching and the Postgraduate Research Committee where any new policies and regulations regarding postgraduate studies are to be discussed and approved. I also work

closely with other units such as the Library, Careers and Student Services to ensure that the postgraduate (academic) experience is the best it can be. In addition, I regularly meet with the Provost team (St Leonard's College) to discuss any postgraduate issues.

Current topics I am working on are study space issues and better training and pay for PhD students who teach.

There are also postgraduate representatives for both research and taught students in every School that are the direct link within Departments for you to address any concerns. These student representatives are elected at the beginning of each academic year and I meet with them twice per semester to discuss current issues.

Within the Students' Association, I sit on the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and two of its sub-committees

working on education and employability. Probably not surprisingly, I am also a member of the Postgraduate Society and work closely with David to make sure you are having the best possible experience during your time as postgraduates in St Andrews.

If you encounter any topics that you think should be addressed or have any questions regarding academic issues, don't hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help or simply listen to how you are finding your time in St Andrews.

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Welcome from the Provost & Your Pro Provosts

Being a Postgraduate Researcher can be challenging and so the Provost team is here to support you!

Verity Brown (Provost), **Colin Allison** (Pro Provost Science and Medicine) and **James Palmer** (Pro Provost Arts and Humanities), are part of a team dedicated to fostering an environment in which you can meet your goals. They are concerned with all academic matters associated with postgraduate researchers and oversee matters relating to the support and training of our postgraduates, working hard to promote your interests. Their tasks include dealing with requests for Leaves of Absence, helping with supervision issues, approving examining committee nominations, checking that submitted theses conform to Faculty regulations, reviewing annual progress reports from students and Schools, and revising the PGR Policy.



As Provost of St Leonard's College, I look forward to meeting you at the various events the College will be hosting for postgraduates across the University. In this edition of the St Leonard's Newsletter, you will get a flavour of our postgraduate community at St Andrews. What strikes me is the talent, dedication and imagination of the postgraduates who work here. I hope you enjoy reading about **Café Scientifique** and find the articles about the Registry and remote supervision useful. Even if the breathtaking pictures from the **Postgraduate Hiking Club** do not inspire you to climb a mountain with them, they may inspire you to join in and try something also new to you... and then write about it for the next newsletter.

Professor Verity J Brown
Provost of St Leonard's College
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You are currently in the fantastic position of being free to pursue research activities under the guidance of your supervisor with only minimal administrative or teaching duties. Make the most of these years and really engage with your topic of study! I can be contacted at any point if there are issues or queries that cannot be resolved within your School or adequately addressed by the PGR Policy. Your progress and development matters very much to the University, so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Colin Allison
Pro Provost Science and Medicine



Setting out on postgraduate research is a great challenge and we hope that you enjoy the experiences ahead. I deal specifically with the Schools in Arts and Divinity and their postgraduate students. I am also a lecturer in the School of History with my own postgraduates, so I have a vested interest in striving for excellence, developing our global reputation, and helping you to fulfil your potential.

Many of you will only really come across me at the end of your journey, when dealing with the submission and examination of a thesis. But I am also someone to contact if you run into difficulties which cannot be resolved within your School. Since I began work in St Andrews in 2007, I have seen many students come here and flourish. Many have continued their achievements beyond our community, armed well with the skills and experiences they have developed here. I hope that, soon, you can become part of this success story.

James Palmer
Pro Provost Arts and Humanities



Q&A with the PG President David van Brussel

What do you study?

I did my undergraduate in Natural and Social Sciences (major in Chemistry) at the University of Amsterdam and in 2013 I started an MPhil degree in Chemistry here in St Andrews.

What do you like about running the PG Society?

The Postgraduate Society is here for every postgraduate taught and research student in St Andrews. I enjoy having the possibility to make the academic year 2014-2015 a great one for all of them. I'm confident that our events will be good and I hope lots of people will attend and have a nice time. But the society is also here for students who experience problems during their time in St Andrews and if this is the case they can always contact the Postgraduate Society and we'll try to help. So I guess it's this multilateral active involvement in the life of the postgraduate community that appeals to me the most.

How long have you been involved with the PG Society?

I started getting involved with the Postgraduate Society last year as Vice-President of Finance. Since 1 July 2014 I have been the President of the Society.

Can anything prepare you for the role of PG President?

My predecessor Scott Schorr has made it a great year for the Society and has taught me everything I need to know to take on the job myself.

What does the role of PG President entail?

My job is to ensure that every postgraduate student has a great time while studying here in St Andrews. In addition to that, I sit on the Student Services Council (SSC) to provide a voice for postgraduates in the Students' Association. Last but not least, an important part of the job is writing The

Sunday Postgraduate, which I send out to postgraduate students on Sundays.

What do you feel you offer?

It's important to know that postgraduate students can join any society and sports club in St Andrews, and I encourage everyone to do so. However, sometimes postgrads want to go to events with other postgrads. What we offer is events specifically aimed at postgraduate students. Additionally, we try to collaborate with other student societies in order to achieve a richer postgraduate life within a wider community. We would like to see more societies reach out to postgraduates and more postgraduates attending events and joining societies.

Why should people be involved with the PG Society and/or Committee?

In my opinion, it is great to develop other skills apart from academic skills during your time in St Andrews. This university is unique in the sense that it offers such a wide range of opportunities to get involved in extra-curricular activities, the Postgraduate Society is just one of them. I think everyone should find something to do outside their studies and there are so many societies and sports clubs that everyone can find something they like. We are unique because we are just for postgraduate students and we offer a wide range of events in order to accommodate everyone.

What events have you held this year?

We try to keep our events as diverse as possible. Last year we collaborated with the student whisky society and organised a free whisky tasting. It was a wonderful evening in which we had the opportunity to taste four different whiskies introduced by the President of the Whisky Society.

We also know that Scotland is a beautiful country, and it's great to explore it during your stay in St Andrews. To facilitate that, we organised a few bus trips. In December, just before Christmas

vacation, we went to Edinburgh to visit the famous Christmas market. In the summer we travelled to a whisky distillery in Pitlochry and to the Queen's View over Loch Tummel in the Highlands.

Our biggest event was the Summer Ball. This took place at the Old Course Hotel and was attended by almost 300 people. It was a great night with free ice cream, a ceilidh band, jazz music and a DJ.

What events are coming this year?

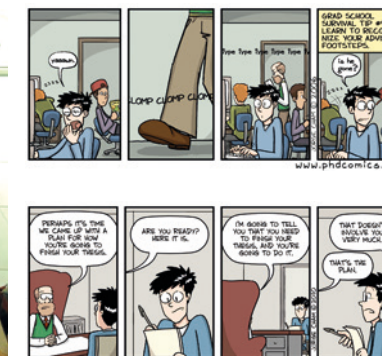
We are very keen on making this year an even better one (if that's possible). The Summer Committee has been busy organising the Freshers' Week 2014, which the postgraduates seem to have enjoyed. Other great events for next year include a bus trip (to a surprise destination!), a gala at the Scores Hotel, a potluck dinner in collaboration with St Leonard's College) and the Graduation Ball at the Old Course Hotel. The latter required particular attention in our discussions, because the Society feels the postgraduate students deserve a fabulous ball to commemorate their unique St Andrews experience.

And what do you plan to do next after being PG President / Convener?

Two months after my term as Postgraduate President ends, I finish my MPhil degree. Unfortunately, I have no idea what I'm going to do afterwards. It's possible to convert an MPhil into a PhD degree but I'm not sure if I would like to do that. I might do a PhD elsewhere or look for a job but again, I'm not sure what kind of job. Fortunately, I've got another year to think about it.

David van Brussel, Postgraduate Society President 2014-2015.
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PhD Comics comes to St Andrews



It was a sunny Tuesday morning in March 2014, and I was cheerfully walking towards North Haugh. That morning, I was meeting with Jorge Cham, 'the PhD Comics guy', who finally came to St Andrews all the way from the United States.

Jorge entered the Medicine building all happy and smiling, as if all those hours of travelling meant nothing to him. He was here to deliver a workshop 'Communicating your research', and a talk 'The Power of Procrastination'. His arrival meant a chance to bring together postgraduate students, researchers and academics: there was not a single free seat in the workshop (admit it – don't you want to learn how to make your research become a cartoon?!), and about 170 people were waiting for his talk in a large lecture theatre – not only St Andrews, but also some students from Dundee and Edinburgh. Dr Tamara Lawson (Provost's Office) and I managed to invite Jorge to the UK thanks to the Grad Skills Innovation Grant and Enhancement Theme funding, and as a result of a successful collaboration with the University of Warwick and the University of Cambridge.

The Power of Procrastination was presented at the university where, as we all know, people work very hard. You might wonder why a talk on 'The Power of Procrastination'. And you would not be alone – this question was hanging in the air as Jorge started his presentation.

The lights went off, and we saw an image of a PhD student-to-be happily walking along the road. With a click of a button, a deep dark hole appears on that road, and the student disappears into

the depths of the PhD programme. Ouch. Jorge then presented research findings which, in that 'hole', 95% of students have felt overwhelmed, and 67% have felt hopeless or depressed. In the so-called 'real world', people buy houses, flood the social networks with photos of their children, have guilt-free leisure time and (wait for it!) weekends. But in the depths of the ivory tower, 'the real world' takes a different shape – hard to understand for those not experiencing it, yet no less fascinating and beautiful. This is what 'PhD Comics' is all about. And 'The Power of Procrastination' is the creativity that is sparked when we try to make sense and reconcile these two 'real worlds'. When our mind cries for a time out, a space full of interesting ideas opens up. In this creative space, sometimes the greatest problems of our research get solved, while at other times ideas like Jorge's PhD Comics come into being. The power of that space is what helps us carry on.

Listening to Jorge's presentation, or reading PhD Comics, students and academics alike were laughing together – Jorge's account is one with which everyone can identify, one that most are experiencing or have experienced. Looking around, many understood that research is not a lonely and frustrating endeavour after all. The uniqueness and, at the same time, the universality of the PhD story is what created a sense of community.

Every PhD Comic then becomes a lesson, and inviting Jorge to present at your university teaches you that everything is possible. It takes perseverance, negotiation and sometimes trying to manage chaos and finding things out at the very last minute. Even more, it means starting to plan well in advance, and not being afraid to ask. A 'no', which is the default answer to any unasked question, may well turn into a 'yes'! Finally, there is another lesson to be learned from Jorge. Seeing him on stage, I am sure many of us admired how good a speaker he was. If you met Jorge behind the scenes, you would notice that he is not a natural extrovert. Jorge showed us that being introverted or shy does not preclude us from developing a great stage persona and confidently presenting to large audiences all over the world. For every introvert out there who ever thought they could not do anything like that – yes, yes you can.

Toma Pustelnikovaite
PhD Candidate in Management Studies

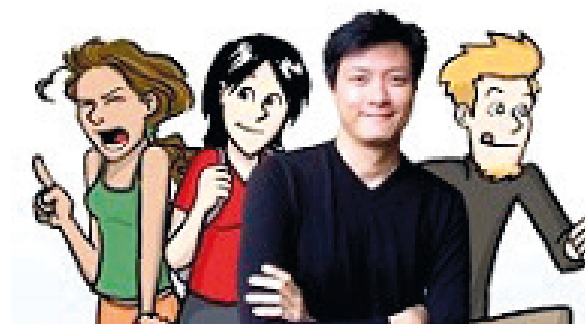




Photo credit: Matt Prokosch

Postgraduate and Staff Hiking Club

The Postgraduate and Staff Hiking Club offers an opportunity to explore Scotland's beautiful scenery and nature in a relaxed and healthy atmosphere. We organise hiking day trips and weekend trips throughout the year.

The club was started by Paul White in 2012, and now has around six people organising the walks. Combining the experience of all committee members, we know the best hikes and places to see all over Scotland. Last year we went on trips to Glencoe, Ullapool, and the Isle of Skye. Day hikes included walks around Blair Atholl, Loch Katrine, and Glen Clova.

The atmosphere in the club is relaxed, and we always attempt to cater to different people's abilities, offering easier and advanced walks. After the walk itself, the post-hike pub visit is an equally important part of the day and a long-standing club tradition. The pub visit and evening activities on weekend trips are examples of the valuable social aspect of the club. You are guaranteed to meet new

people from different departments and with different roles across the University on every trip and are likely to walk away with new friendships.

Aimed at university postgraduates and staff, the Hiking Club is not associated with the Athletic Union or the Students' Association of the University. We are a diverse group of people, from taught and research postgraduates to academic and non-academic staff. You can join the Club at any time of year, we welcome new faces on every hike. The Hiking Club does not have a membership fee, you only have to pay the cost of the trip itself. Day hikes usually cost around £10, to cover fuel and rental car costs. The price of weekend trips depends on the time of year, destination, and duration of the trip.

The best way to keep up to date

with the activities of the club is through our Facebook group. New day hikes and weekend trips will be announced there.

"After the walk itself, the post-hike pub visit is an equally important part of the day and along-standing club tradition"

To sign up for a trip simply email the Club, you will receive a reply when your place is confirmed. People signing up for a trip

will receive information and advice on what to bring and wear. Appropriate footwear and waterproof clothing are required for all hikes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via our Facebook group or email pgstaffhiking@gmail.com

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Creative solutions during your PhD

Things never go according to plan, and my PhD has been no exception. Over the last year I've been working closely with Laurel, one of the resident seals at the local St Andrews Aquarium. Using animal training, I've been studying the unique sounds seals make. But right from the start I hit a roadblock – I walked out to the seal pool ready to train Laurel, and found three other hungry seals competing for attention. When training animals, it's best to have one teacher to one student, but with only one of me and four eager animals this presented a bit of an obstacle. With a bit of creativity though, what was a problem turned into a great opportunity. Rather than work alone, I started a brand new course to get university students involved in the animal training. A diverse group of University of St Andrews students were brought together to learn positive reinforcement training techniques and gain hands-on experience with the seals. The students trained the seals to

do research and husbandry behaviours that are useful for the care of the animals. For example, teaching the seals to open their mouths so that they can be visually examined for health checks. This was a perfect solution: I was able to work with one seal, and the students gained valuable experience working with the others and keeping them busy. In solving my problem, I'd found a way to give students a positive experience they wouldn't have otherwise had the chance to do. One student commented, "the course is a rare opportunity and I feel lucky to have participated" and another that, "it was an excellent complement to my academic programme and gave me a chance to develop a wide number of skills, both in research and in animal training."

This course has also fostered a collaborative relationship between the University and St Andrews Aquarium. The Aquarium is an excellent teaching resource for students to experience

"I didn't need to struggle on my own: by reaching out to our community I not only improved my own research but also benefited students"

working within a professional animal care facility, a resource we can now make even better use of. The students also benefit from the knowledge of experts as the course is co-taught by the head animal keeper at the aquarium, Cara Anderson.

Not only does the University benefit by expanding the learning opportunities for its students, but the Aquarium also profits. Training provides enrichment to captive animals, which reduces stress and improves cognitive abilities such as memory and problem solving. The thing is, training is also very time consuming



and it can be difficult to find time in a busy work day to train the animals. Our keen students provide the extra energy and enthusiasm to work extensively with the animals. And all of the training is voluntary; the seals are free to participate or not as they please. If they participate and work with us, then they are rewarded for their efforts with fish. If not, no matter, they will be fed the same amount of fish later that day. The seals are free to move about their pools however they like, but they actively choose to participate in training.

What started as an obstacle to my PhD became a symbiotic solution. I

didn't need to struggle on my own: by reaching out to our community I not only improved my own research but also benefited students, the University, and the Aquarium. Getting the course started took money and effort, but again I found support. The funds to get the course started were provided by the University's Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD) research skill's innovation grant. Now that the course has been established, the investment has paid off and we hope to continue to expand and involve new students. If you are interested in learning more about our course, Practical

application of animal training in research studies, please contact me.

While not everyone's PhD will involve a group of hungry seals, we all hit problems from time to time. Alone, these difficulties may feel impossible, but by reaching out, you can both help your own work and also give something back to our community.

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Café Scientifique



As most scientists will tell you, science and the pub enjoy a long-standing relationship. Watson and Crick famously announced their discovery of the structure of DNA while drinking in the Eagle pub in Cambridge. One of the many apple trees alleged to have dropped its fruit on Isaac Newton's head grew in the yard of a popular tavern. Even Pasteur's discovery of germs started as an attempt to make nicer-tasting beer.

While it may not be possible to definitively prove a causative relationship between the after-work drink and scientific brilliance, St Andrews' Café Scientifique is, at least, observing the correlation. The last Thursday of every month, this series of talks aims to bring science out of the lab, lecture theatre or 27km long steel-reinforced concrete tunnel hundreds of metres below Switzerland and into the comfortable surroundings of Aikmans' pub on Bell Street.

Café Scientifique is a movement throughout the UK which, outside of traditional academic settings, attempts to make scientific discussion accessible to everyone, whatever their background. After a short talk from a speaker on their scientific subject, there is plenty of time for further exploration of the topic with a Question & Answer session and general discussion. In these informal conversations, contributions from the audience are what it's all about – no scientific expertise necessary. Sometimes the most basic questions are the most thought-provoking.

Since revving the Café back up, several fascinating speakers from very different areas of scientific research have visited *Café Scientifique* in the past year. Dr Lewis Dean (School of Psychology & Neuroscience) spoke with us in April about evolutionary theory and the possibility

“Café Scientifique is a movement throughout the UK which, outside of traditional academic settings, attempts to make scientific discussion accessible to everyone”

that great apes could commit murder. Dr Akira O'Connor (School of Psychology & Neuroscience) followed in May with a discussion on the psychology of hypnosis and its implications for cognitive phenomenon, such as déjà vu. And this year is no different.

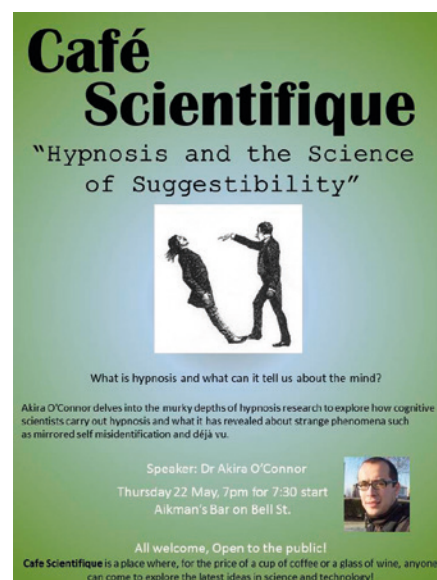
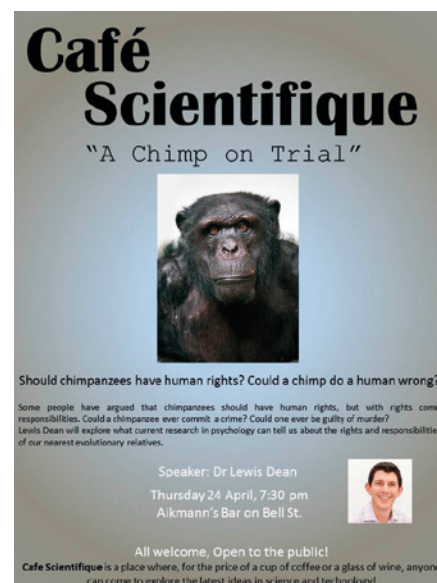
So come along! For those with no scientific background, Café Scientifique is a great, unintimidating place to learn more about the fascinating and often groundbreaking research being conducted throughout our scientific community, and to think about the implications such research can have on our everyday lives.

The events aren't just for the non-scientists though! The talks and discussions at Café Scientifique are accessible but by no means dumbed-down. For the labcoat-wearers among us, they offer the rare opportunity to meet St Andrews leading scientists in a more relaxed and sociable context than a conventional lecture and to get to know more about them and their research over a quiet drink.

St Andrews' Café Scientifique meets the last Thursday of every month (during term times) in Aikman's Bar on Bell Street, at 7:00 pm for a 7:30 pm start.

And if you are interested in presenting your data with us, please email myself jd86, or Charles Paxton cgp2.

Jenny Daggett
Final Year PhD student
Supervisor Prof Verity J Brown
School of Psychology & Neuroscience



Dundee: one city, many discoveries. So reads the sign on entering St Andrews' closest city. Located just 20 minutes' drive from St Andrews, Dundee is often overlooked by students both undergraduate and postgraduate alike as they are caught up in the bubble that is St Andrews. However, as those who cross the River Tay will tell you, there is a lot going on and a lot to discover.

Once famous for the three 'j's: jam, jute, and journalism, modern Dundee is a hub for learning with two of its own universities: the University of Dundee and the University of Abertay Dundee, world leaders in Life Sciences and Computer Game Design, respectively. Accordingly, Dundee is well equipped for student life. University of St Andrews students are welcome at events held at the University of Dundee's students' union and can get memberships for their Institute of Sport and Exercise (ISE) which includes a gym, weights room, squash courts, indoor sports hall, outdoor sports pitches, and a swimming pool.

Dundee also offers all the mod cons of a modern British city: 4G internet (a welcome change from the mobile internet blackspot that is North East Fife); a theatre; a small but vibrant LGBT scene; multicultural restaurants and grocery stores such as a Chinese supermarket and both Polish and Caribbean mini-markets; an active music scene with bars, pubs, and nightclubs offering a variety of musical entertainment every night of the week; multiplex and art-house cinemas; beautiful botanical gardens;

award winning museums including the Verdant Works, Dundee Science Centre, the McManus Galleries, and the Discovery Centre; shopping facilities including late night opening of the majority of city centre shops on Thursdays; and live sporting events from major sports such as football and ice hockey to less well known sports such as wheelchair rugby and roller derby. With the current development

of the quayside underway, the city is transforming itself into what will hopefully be a cosmopolitan hub.

The growth of Dundee during the past one hundred years or so has expanded the city to include the neighbouring seaside town of Broughty Ferry. Famous as being home to British television celebrity Lorraine Kelly and the actor Brian Cox, the town is extremely friendly and welcoming. The beach serves as an excellent BBQ venue in the summer and is excellent for walks and runs all year round. Broughty Ferry Castle is well worth a visit, not only to learn a little bit about life in historic Tayside but also for beautiful views across the river from which the region gains its name. The cycle path that runs around the edge of the City of Dundee (the Green Circular) runs along the riverside between Dundee city centre and Broughty Ferry making the Ferry easily accessible by foot or bicycle. Continuing on the cycle route will take riders through Camperdown Park. If you do venture this far, keep an eye out for deer running through the forest.

Dundee is a great place for St Andrews students to live, as well as

visit. The regular bus routes (as frequent as every ten minutes during the day and running from 6.30am to 11.30pm) make commuting the 30 minutes to St Andrews easy and the views remind travellers how beautiful this area of the world is. Most buses on the direct Dundee to St Andrews route are equipped with complimentary WiFi, great for socialites and workaholics alike. Also, should you purchase either the four-week or twelve-week passes, you can enjoy unlimited travel on Stagecoach buses anywhere within Fife as well as to Edinburgh and its airport.

In addition to the easy commute, Dundee is perfectly placed to allow relatively easy access to the rest of the UK and further afield. The train line running through Dundee is not only part of the Scotrail route between Aberdeen and Glasgow and Aberdeen and Edinburgh but also the East Coast route between Aberdeen and London King's Cross, and the cross country routes from Aberdeen to the south west of England. Getting to Edinburgh airport is simple either by train or by bus and Dundee also has its own airport with services to London Stansted and Jersey.

Whether or not you choose to live in Dundee, do try to pay it a visit at least once during your time at the University of St Andrews. As Stephen Fry said recently: "Dundee's setting is probably more extraordinary than any other city in the UK. It is about as ideal – ludicrously ideal – as any setting could be".

Claire Davies
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Bursting out of the bubble

Social media

tumblr.

facebook

Pinterest



WORDPRESS

twitter

digg

LinkedIn

flickr

Facebook. Twitter. LinkedIn. Tumblr. Vine. Pinterest. ResearchGate. Academia.edu. StumbleUpon. Digg. About.me. Flickr. Wordpress. Oh, and anyone remember MySpace? (Let's not dwell on Bebo.)

I've missed a few, but you get my point. Social media is ubiquitous these days, with everyone from journalists to politicians to big brands and TV shows using it to communicate with fans or get their message out there. So why are researchers so poor at using it to good effect?

I first set up a Twitter account about a year ago. I was curious to find out whether this phenomenon I'd been avoiding might actually be of some use in the game of academia. In particular, I wondered if I could use it to good effect as a public engagement tool, hence my choice of name was intended to be vaguely professional and catchy, rather than opting for something more conventional like my initials or some obscure song lyrics.

Twitter took me a while to get my head around. How on earth do you say anything useful in 140 characters? Why do some tweets start with a full stop? Who should you follow, and how do you get people to follow you? In short, what's the point?

Fast forward a year and I'm virtually addicted. I go through phases, but that's the great thing about social media – you can be as involved as you choose to be, and there's no pressure to open the website or app if you don't feel like it. You

can engage with it on your own time on your own terms, and it really is what you make of it.

Most researchers don't use social media very effectively, if at all, but some science communicators really make it work for them – @IFLScience, for example, has become a phenomenon on Facebook and Twitter, reaching hundreds of thousands of people. Wouldn't you like to do the same?

If you're going to make it on social media, you need to dive in and interact with others. Don't be timid about it, just go for it. Follow people who interest you and engage with them – reply to their posts, retweet cool things you see, give credit where credit's due and be sure to tag high-profile accounts and use popular hashtags to get your messages to a wider audience. My most successful was a run

of tweets with photos of the aurora which ultimately reached tens of thousands of people – used in the right hands, social media is scarily effective.

A word of caution on that note – be careful not to post up anything you'll regret. Remember, it's a public platform, and anything unprofessional or damaging to yourself and/or your institution can have repercussions. If you're using it in a semi-professional capacity, think of how your tweet would look splashed across the front page of a newspaper. If it gives

you pause to consider, you're probably better off not posting it.

In a culture where public engagement is becoming a bigger part of grant proposals and life at the sharp end of academia, creating a Twitter account or a Wordpress blog is an easy and simple way to get some good science out there online

in a format that, used cleverly, can easily reach large numbers of people. If you're a postdoc or a PhD with aspirations to an

academic career, you could do worse than build up an active presence on Twitter. At the very least you'll learn to be clear and concise, and at best you could find that you have a latent talent for #scicomm, making yourself more employable in the future.

Steven Thomson is a theoretical physics PhD student in the Condensed Matter Doctoral Training Centre in the School of Physics & Astronomy and goes by @PhysicsSteve on Twitter!

"If you're going to make it on social media, you need to dive in and interact with others"

"Most researchers don't use social media very effectively, if at all"

Remote supervision

"There's no easy answer to this, and it's a situation that forces you to weigh up the personal and the professional aspects of your life"

How did you end up here? What made you choose St Andrews? Was it an excellent supervisor, a fascinating subject, the picturesque location? All or none of the above? For me, it was almost an accident – having done my undergraduate degree here, I tried to leave, but a combination of factors pulled me back in and I ended up choosing to remain here for my PhD. For a time, all was well.

But there was a problem, a ticking time bomb in the background even from the start. My supervisor was also trying to leave, to find a more senior job elsewhere. For nearly two years, the poor economic climate worked in my favour and my supervisor remained here, but eventually he got a fantastic job elsewhere, and I finally had to face the problem I'd been wilfully ignoring.

This isn't an unusual situation. Many students have to deal with the challenges of their supervisor moving to another institution. Any senior staff members will more than likely have moved and left students behind. I was lucky that my supervisor was still in the UK, but I was faced with a dilemma all the same. Stay in St Andrews and try long-distance supervision, or uproot my life and move to the other end of the country?

There's no easy answer to this, and it's a situation that forces you to weigh up the personal and the professional aspects of your life. Professionally, moving often makes a lot of sense. It lets you experience a different institution, allows you to meet new people and make a different set of professional connections, and it looks good on a CV to have affiliations in different places.

On a personal level, though, it means you need to be willing to up sticks and move at the drop of a hat. Sometimes that's good, sometimes it's not. Initially I was very tempted, but I became a lot less sure when I realised the cost of such a move on my personal life.

Before we get too deep into the agony of indecision, the thing which will ultimately decide your fate will be funding. If the new university doesn't have any money for you then you'll find you don't have a choice. Pressure your supervisor to find this out early on, as part of the interview if possible, to avoid prolonged negotiations after the fact.

In the meantime, while a posteriori negotiations about my funding took place above my pay grade, my supervisor and I worked long-distance, with the occasional trip to meet in person. We've found this works well – for our work, keeping in touch via email and Skype was sufficient. The School of Physics & Astronomy here was (as usual) spectacular at looking out for me. This illustrates a crucial point: if you choose to stay, you need to make sure your home university is prepared to adequately support you.

It also depends on what stage of your PhD you're at. When my supervisor left, I was halfway through, at the stage where I was able to become a bit more independent and take more control of my own PhD. I had clear ideas and definite ambitions, and I was now ready to steer the PhD in the direction I wanted it to go. Losing my supervisor at this point wasn't the death blow it could have been had it come a year earlier. The later you are in your PhD, the easier you'll find it to cope

with remote supervision.

As I write this, the negotiations for funding are still going on in the background. By popular opinion (mine included), it looks like the best option for me is to stay in St Andrews and travel regularly to visit my supervisor. This means I get to remain living and working here with minimal disruption to my personal life, but also I get to spend time at a different institution with different people, netting me the professional benefits as well.

My advice, if you find yourself in this situation? Make a clear decision early on as to what you want to do. Take control of the situation and make your opinion heard. It's your PhD, it's your life, and you should never let yourself be manoeuvred into a position that makes you unhappy, disadvantaged or causes you to miss out on opportunities.

The longer you leave it before making a decision, the more uncertain your life will become. Make that decision early on, to stay or to go, and suddenly your future is more certain and secure, and you'll be able to concentrate on living your life instead of worrying about what's around the corner.

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Founding an open access journal



Dr Claire Warden on The Kelpies.
<http://bit.ly/1tHcQyq>



Dr Holly Patrick and Caroline Bowditch on Scotland as a 'hotspot' for disabled dancers. <http://bit.ly/1vaufAJ>

The idea for the Scottish Journal of Performance emerged in October 2012, when three doctoral students identified the scope for a new peer-reviewed journal focusing on the arts in a Scottish context. Postgraduates in Scotland explore drama, dance, music, film and community arts through a wide range of lenses, from sociology to historiography, psychology to practice-as-research, among others. We wanted to celebrate this diversity by creating a flexible space for emerging scholars to disseminate research about performance in the widest sense.

We had three initial aims: the journal should be open access, student-led, and digital. As well as democratising knowledge, not to mention keeping costs low, these also meshed with our own experiences of PhD studentship – Google Scholar brings up papers in the blink of an eye, but frustration quickly builds when your institution doesn't subscribe to that obscure Norwegian journal which ceased publication in 1998.

We set ourselves the task of producing our first issue in 12 months, aiming for launch in December 2013, and assembled a crack team from St Andrews and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. As well as the founding Editorial Staff

(Ben Fletcher-Watson, Bethany Whiteside and Thomas Butler), we were able to call on the considerable skills of our Review Editors to shepherd papers through the peer-review process (Louise Stephens Alexander, Katya Ermolaev, Shona Mackay and Dr Ralph Strehle, with support from Dr Anna Birch and Dr Stephen Broad). Seed funding from RCS helped us lever further funds via CAPOD's Innovation Grants, providing enough income to publish two full issues online and in print.

We've now produced our first two issues, with the third due in December 2014. It's been a fascinating journey designing a journal from scratch – we had to get to grips with the tenets of Open Access publishing, design a peer review process, build a website with all the bells and whistles needed to accommodate the varied submission styles we wanted to showcase, ensure sustainability and appropriate archival standards, and maintain supportive relationships with our authors, not to mention having to gather enough high-quality papers and book reviews to make a substantial issue every six months. Long evenings over Skype and Herculean labours on the part of over thirty reviewers have produced a valuable addition to contemporary research.

The greatest challenge perhaps has been the need for a varied skill set within the editorial team. We were immensely lucky to have a web-savvy Journal Manager (Thomas Butler) to design and build our site – without his expertise, the journal would be flat and dull. However, we also found that fundraising skills were key to guarantee longevity, and an almost obsessive attention to detail was required to ensure consistency and high standards of scholarship.

We're very proud of the result, and hope that SJoP has a long future showcasing the best research addressing Scottish performance in all its forms.

Ben Fletcher-Watson

PhD student in Drama, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

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Playfair Project: creating a social enterprise

After being employed for a couple of years, doing my PhD feels like freelancing – you are asked to be diligent, self-sufficient, able to demonstrate self-discipline; you organise your own time and project. After all, it is your project and you truly are the major stakeholder and beneficiary, right? The way I feel about it, these are, among others, qualities you depend on when starting a business. You need that intrinsic drive and motivation to be persistent and to withstand and recover from setbacks – why else do you get up in the morning; how else do you get back on your feet after your supervisor (all too often rightfully so) smashes with a disarming and seemingly brutal honesty your latest draft or what you at least considered to be an 'ingenious' idea?

Two of my friends and I called upon these very qualities when we decided to start a student consultancy in our small community. We borrowed the name for our organisation from a former town Provost and named it the Playfair Project. The Provost's determination to develop the town inspired us. In the spirit of (Mr) Playfair and much of today's student community, we wanted to give something back to the town and its people. In our case that includes business owners and the student community.

Well, that is more or less what we have been doing for almost a year now. We wanted to create an opportunity for students to get, what potential employers would call relevant practical experience during the semester. Our activities thus supplement the academic curriculum. On a semester basis, students volunteer for Playfair Project and obtain the opportunity to work in a team on research and consulting projects with local businesses or on our own organisational development. Ultimately students grow as people and enhance

their employability; working on issues we face as an organisation or with clients directly, volunteers improve, among others, problem solving, communication, presentation, and analytical skills. Local businesses benefit from an affordable service offered by enthusiastic and very capable students and the close exchange with the student community.

Starting our own (social) enterprise has equipped the three of us with plenty of what the University would probably call transferrable skills. Ultimately, we too have improved our employability and have grown as people. I might have a business background but such skills transfer into various areas and industries.

In addition to rather generic organisational skills, supervising and working with volunteers (or employees for that matter) requires leadership. In one situation last semester I exhibited very poor leadership. But it was that failure that had forced me to reflect and adapt accordingly. Leadership, together with negotiation and public speaking skills, is something you can directly carry into the lecture or seminar room or use for grant applications. When I organise internal meetings, for instance, I try different creativity techniques just to see what works and what does not. This surely has implications on how I will run future tutorials.

As mentioned before, it also works the other way round. As a postgraduate research student you already have plenty of skills necessary to start your own business. You can look at starting an enterprise as a large-scale project – similar to what you are doing right now. Similarly you need to make sense of an overwhelming amount of information and constantly struggle to give structure to your work and the information you receive. I am not saying that it is a piece of

cake. It requires time and determination. But you may discover that your skills relate very much to, what is often referred to, as the real world – as opposed to our ivory tower, I guess. I encourage you to not shy away from, say commercialisation opportunities of your academic work for instance.

On another note, we all notice it about fellow students or about ourselves: PhD students tend to be detached from what is going on in town. We sit highly focused in our office (hell yeah we do... well...) and have only one nagging thought... it shall not be named here. And when we sit in groups outside of work we are most likely to talk about... yeah, exactly. My involvement with this kind of student organisation gives me the opportunity to engage with locals from very diverse backgrounds and students across all years and Schools. I deem this to be an enriching experience that adds a balance to my academic responsibilities and, more generally, quality of life – how else would I have met one of the first pilots graduating from Top Gun (not Tom Cruise) or learn about the latest gossip (you do not want to know, believe me) among undergraduates?

Even though the PhD can be a lonesome process, in the end you need people around you who contribute directly to your work or do not get tired of listening to you talking (or whining... or complaining...). Similarly, Playfair Project is a team effort that offers lessons for the doctoral process. In a way we are already entrepreneurs. Maybe in a very narrow definition but we sure have certain qualities an entrepreneur must bring to the table.

Mirko Semler

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