new projects, new places
new courses, new faces
The days of long library queues were left behind last year when a new card system replaced the turnstiles at the entrance. All library card holders were issued with a new card that acts as identification without ever having to leave your wallet.

The new 'close proximity card' system reads a chip in the card and opens the gates when users approach. The new system means you can leave your card in your wallet as you walk through the monitors, saving time and reducing queues.

Deputy librarian, Gavin Rea, who oversaw the project, said: “We issued around 12,000 new cards and the total bill came in at around £60,000. I think students and library staff would agree that the easy access has made it worthwhile.”
Language barrier is raised for local children

Enterprising final-year language students have launched an after-school French club at a local junior school. The club, which is held at Widcombe Junior School and is free of charge, is aimed at children in Years Four to Six (aged between eight and 11 years) who don’t currently study modern languages as part of the school curriculum.

Stephanie Blanco, one of the student teachers, is in her final year of International Management with French. She said: “I wanted to become involved because I appreciate the importance of starting to learn a language as early as possible. I’ve seen it increase school children’s confidence and encourage them to have greater aspirations.”

Your search stops here

A range of web initiatives have been launched to enhance and develop the University’s website, including a new search engine system using Google technology.

The system, which is tailored to the University’s needs, currently searches over 350,000 web pages and files. Since its launch in October it has performed nearly 200,000 searches and the busiest time of day is between 3-4pm, when it performs more than four searches a minute.

Top search queries since the launch include: ‘moodle’, ‘library’ and ‘term dates’. This is part of a new strategy for the web launch by Marketing & Communications and BUCS.

The new file sharing system has been launched to enable staff and students to easily share files with colleagues and collaborators working around the world.

The online storage application allows all members of the University to upload, access and share files from anywhere in the world via the internet. Created as an e-learning tool, the system has a range of benefits for staff across the University.

“We think we’re the first university to offer online storage as a specific service, so are really pleased to be breaking new ground,” said Kelvin Gan, Web Software Developer in BUCS.

The Learning Materials Filestore, or LMF, can be accessed through related links section or at http://www.bath.ac.uk/lmf

New filing system for global office

A new arts user’s forum was launched by the ICIA in October to give staff and students a voice about arts on campus.

As well as talking about ICIA activities, the forum considers general issues, such as increasing the profile of arts on campus, and has a particular focus on the new Arts Complex to be built at Claverton.

The new forum meets three times a year and is chaired by Jane Millar (Pro-Vice Chancellor: Strategic Development).

The next meeting will be held in April and is open to all members of staff and students who currently participate in the arts at the University. To become involved, please contact Emma Gray on ext 6777.

Be outspoken about art

A new arts user’s forum was launched by the ICIA in October to give staff and students a voice about arts on campus.

As well as talking about ICIA activities, the forum considers general issues, such as increasing the profile of arts on campus, and has a particular focus on the new Arts Complex to be built at Claverton.

The new forum meets three times a year and is chaired by Jane Millar (Pro-Vice Chancellor: Strategic Development).

The next meeting will be held in April and is open to all members of staff and students who currently participate in the arts at the University. To become involved, please contact Emma Gray on ext 6777.
Campaigns on young people’s weight are missing the point

Campaigns that try to get young people to lose weight by focusing on their dissatisfaction with their appearance are missing the point, says Ekant Veer in the School of Management.

Mr Veer, a lecturer in the Marketing Group, recorded the attitudes of 330 schoolchildren aged between 13 and 18 as part of his study into the effectiveness of obesity campaigns.

He found that young people who don’t like their appearance are no more motivated to change their eating habits than those who are happy with the way they look.

But getting children of all sizes to think more about their bodies, not necessarily favourably or unfavourably, makes them much more receptive to campaigns about losing weight and keeping fit and healthy.

Mr Veer split the 330 children into two groups, one of which was asked to draw a picture of themselves. Seventy-five per cent of those who had drawn the picture of themselves, and who had therefore had to think about their bodies, said they would eat healthier and exercise more after being shown motivational advertisements, compared to only 58 per cent of those who had not drawn a picture of themselves.

New research cracks age-old puzzle of why the bumble bee can fly so well

New research in the Department of Mechanical Engineering has cracked the old puzzle of why bees and other insects are so good at flying, paving the way for aircraft just a few centimetres wide to be built.

Many insects’ wings are a special flexible shape to increase thrust and fly efficiently, engineers have found. This shape allows them to produce the vortices – spinning masses of air – which generate lift and help them move.

The research was carried out as part of a programme to develop tiny aircraft with cameras and sensors which could be used in traffic monitoring, border surveillance, fire and rescue operations, and hazardous substance detection.

In an award-winning research paper, the engineers set out how they found that a wing which is rigid at the front but more flexible and bendy at the rear is the most efficient way for a small wing to generate optimum vortices and to move in air.

“This is a very important step forward in understanding how we can create tiny aircraft that could be so useful for us,” said Professor Ismet Gursul, who heads the team.


AFTER studying the results of the smoking ban in Scotland, Dr Linda Bauld in the Department of Social & Policy Sciences concluded that the NHS services designed to help smokers quit could struggle to cope with the increase in demand in the run-up to the smoking ban in the UK.

Dr Bauld said: "At the moment the message from government seems to be that preparations should be in place when the ban begins. In fact, it is the three to four months beforehand that are most important.

"Some stop smoking services in England, for example, have a very limited number of staff and may struggle to cope with an increased number of clients. It is important that these services are adequately prepared and resourced so that the health gains of supporting more smokers to quit are not lost."

Health benefits of smoking ban could be lost, if NHS is not better prepared

INVENTION harnesses hydrogen power

Dr Andrew Weller and colleagues from the Department of Chemistry have invented a material which stores and releases hydrogen at room temperature at the flick of a switch, and promises to help make hydrogen power a viable clean technology for the future.

Hydrogen is thought to be an ideal fuel for vehicles, producing only water on combustion, but until now its widespread use has been limited by the lack of a safe, efficient system for onboard storage.

Although the material is too heavy to make an entire hydrogen tank from it, it could be used in combination with metal hydride sources to store and release energy instantaneously whilst the main tank reaches sufficient temperature, approximately 300°C, to work.

"The problem of how to store hydrogen has been a major bottleneck in the development of the hydrogen power technology," said Dr Weller. "The fact that we discovered the material by chance is a fantastic advertisement for the benefits of curiosity driven research."

Dr Weller and his team made the discovery whilst investigating the effect that hydrogen has on metals. The researchers are now looking at ways of printing the material on to sheets that could be stacked together and encased to form a storage tank.

"With the growing concern over climate change and our over-reliance on fossil fuels, hydrogen provides us with a useful alternative," said Dr Weller.

Invention harnesses hydrogen power

Big-brained birds survive better in nature

Dr Tamas Szekely from the Department of Biology & Biochemistry has revealed that birds with brains that are large in relation to their body size have a lower mortality rate than those with smaller brains.

The research provides the first evidence for what scientists describe as the 'cognitive buffer' hypothesis - the idea that having a large brain enables animals to have more flexible behaviours and survive environmental challenges.

This theory was first put forward to answer the puzzle surrounding why certain animals, including humans, have evolved a relatively larger brain, given the 'cost' associated with developing and maintaining this.

Research showed that birds with larger brains relative to their body size survived better in nature than birds with small brains. This may explain why, for example, birds with small relative brain sizes, such as pheasants, find it harder to avoid a moving car than those with larger brain size, such as magpies.

Dr Szekely said: "The idea that large brains are associated with reduced mortality has never been scientifically tested before. Our findings support the theory that large-brained animals might be better prepared to cope with environmental challenges such as climate change and habitat destruction."

Big-brained birds survive better in nature
Dr Christopher Bailey
Lecturer, Department of Pharmacy & Pharmacology

The use of drugs such as heroin, cocaine and alcohol cause changes in the brain that still aren’t fully understood. My research looks at the changes that take place in the brain when users move from recreational to compulsive drug abuse.

I came to Bath in October after five years as a postdoc in Bristol. This position is my first opportunity to get my own laboratory and pursue my own research interests. I’ve got lots of research ideas but at this stage my priority is to apply for funding so I can buy my own equipment – at the moment I’m using borrowed equipment worth about £70,000.

Denise Brooks
Information Librarian

I taught locally for nine years before training as a librarian and getting the job here in October. This position provides similar challenges to teaching, I’m just dealing with older students now.

I see my job as being about helping people get to grips with the resources available to them and helping them find and evaluate the information they need.

I like the open door policy here – in other institutions you don’t see the librarians for dust. The way the library is organised means it accommodates the different ways people like to work – whether it’s sitting at a desk in silence, or lying on a beanbag with friends.

Miles Davis
Project Manager
Research & Innovation Services

Before joining the Research and Innovation Services team, I worked as a project manager for an environmental consultancy based in Swindon. I was doing similar work – promoting the commercial potential of research to business – but agency work tends to be totally financially focussed; here there is more time to develop ideas.

In my experience the academics at Bath are very commercially aware and are enthusiastic about working with businesses.

I specialise in energy and the environment, which is a very busy area at Bath. I expect to be working on up to 15 different projects at any one time. One of my current projects, which I’m working on with Professor Raj Aggarwal (pictured right), is a submission to the Department of Trade & Industry for the University to host part of the Energy Technologies Institute.

Professor Chris Riddoch
School for Health

We know that the question ‘How do we get people to exercise more?’ can’t be answered by a single specialist, but it can be addressed by a multi-disciplinary team of experts.

It’s part of my job to pull those collaborative teams together from the pockets of sports research going on across the University, from Education to Psychology.

Generating new research and new funding was part of my job at Middlesex University, where I was head of the London Sports Institute before joining the team at Bath. This is an exciting time to be involved in sport and exercise science – the Olympics are not only an opportunity for winning medals, but also for becoming a healthier, fitter nation.
Dr Ajit Mishra
Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics & International Development

I think students in England benefit greatly from specialising in their subjects earlier than their Scottish contemporaries. I taught in Dundee for eight years before coming here in December, and in Scotland it was hard to motivate students who are dividing their time between subjects.

The move to Bath has provided lots of opportunities; it is one of the strongest departments of its size in the country but still remains friendly and welcoming. People have commented on how quickly my family and I have settled into life here but it’s easy to live in a beautiful city.

Sean Chawla Duggan
IT/Assistive Technology Support Officer, BUCS

In November I started a new job at the University for the second time. Before becoming involved in IT Support, I was an Experimental Officer in the Department of Chemical Engineering. I went on to do a Masters in Computer Science here at Bath before getting a job with the BUCS team.

As well as being part of the straightforward IT support team, I help students who are registered for Learning Support, like Mesar (pictured right). He’s a third year Computer Studies student and has been blind since he was six. The software he uses reads out the words on his screen and he has a Braille reader. I’m on-hand to help him, and the other Learning Support students, with any problems that they have.

Maria Balarin
Research Officer, Department of Education

When I returned home to Peru to write up my thesis after finishing a PhD at Bath I didn’t expect to come back.

I worked as an education researcher in a social research institute in Peru for a while but I found there weren’t many opportunities for the academic research I am interested in. It was a hard decision to come back but definitely the right one.

I started my two-year postdoc position in October and in the next few months I will start to apply for funding so I can begin my own research projects. I’ll be looking at the impact of political agendas on education policies both here and in Peru.

Now I’ve made the decision to come back to the UK, I hope to stay for a while – it’s great to be back in Bath.
Major improvements to University Hall and surrounding landscape

University Hall
A major refurbishment of the University Hall was completed in October. The project, which began in April 2006, included increasing the number of seats in the lecture theatre, improving wheelchair access and installing new audio visual equipment. A large foyer was created as an ICIA exhibition space. The project cost approximately £1.2 million. Other upgrades on campus include extensive work on the library, the refurbishment of the Eastwood and Westwood residences, and improvements to the Parade and Plug Bar.

Ornamental ponds
The area outside the University Hall, around the ornamental ponds, was developed to coincide with the 40th anniversary celebrations. The area had received no major improvement since its original planting in the early 1970s.

The re-planting, which will come into its own in the spring, includes American hybrid waterlilies in white, yellow and pink; red and white hydrangeas; and ornamental grasses in the borders. A fountain was added to the newly filled pond and additional seating provided.

New language laboratory
The Department of European Studies & Modern Languages upgraded its language laboratory as part of its ongoing plans to replace analogue facilities with digital laboratories. Students on the Masters in Interpreting & Translating use the new Sanako Digital Laboratory, located in 1 West, for simultaneous interpreting classes and mini-conference practice.

A Fresh look at oriental food
Fresh Oriental, the new speciality food shop on campus, has served approximately 1,500 customers a week since opening in October. In response to customer requests, it has increased its range by nearly 30 per cent, including authentic Indian and Indonesian products, and extended its weekday opening times.

Christine Allgood, Retail Manager, said: “The unit was offered to the Union on a temporary basis and any future plans depend on securing the lease when the University puts it up for tender this autumn. “It’s an exciting time for the team who developed it from concept stage to a thriving and busy shop which can celebrate real success and innovation. It is hoped that the Union will secure the shop unit well into the future.”
The University’s proposal to build 355 new student bedrooms on land between Marlborough Court and the eastern campus boundary has been granted planning consent by Bath & North East Somerset Council. Work will begin on the extension to the Eastwood student housing village, also known as R5, in March 2007 and is expected to be ready for use by October 2008. It will cost around £21 million.

Plans for 355 new student bedrooms get the go-ahead from the Council

The building will be in an E shape, forming a three-sided courtyard open to the east to create space for students to study and socialise out of doors. In designing the bedrooms, the University took into account feedback from people using its Marlborough and Solsbury Court accommodation. It also wanted to create accommodation suitable for people on conferences during academic breaks.

New imaging suite crosses traditional research boundaries

Researchers from across the University are able to use the new Bioimaging Suite, based in the Centre for Electron Optical Studies. The facility contains £500,000 of cutting-edge imaging equipment, including two confocal laser scanning microscopes, a bench-top flow cytometer and a calcium imaging instrument. The equipment will enable researchers to create detailed 3D pictures of cell organelles and to examine ‘live’ cells.

The instruments will be used in projects investigating inflammatory diseases, stem cell biology and diabetes, as well as in research areas including neuroscience and developmental biology.

Speaking at the conference which was held at the University to mark the opening of the suite, Professor George Lunt, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, said: “I am pleased that we have a central interdisciplinary facility around which members of the research community can interact with each other.”

Mass improvement to chemistry service

The Department of Chemistry received two new mass spectrometers worth £540,000, enabling the department to set up a long-awaited full mass spectrometry service.

Mass spectrometry is the measurement of mass on a molecular level, and the new equipment can analyse the chemical make-up and structure of samples of materials smaller than the eye can see. The equipment is available for use by University departments other than Chemistry, and by outside organisations. One of the mass spectrometers is coupled to a special airless chamber where researchers can work on their samples using special gloves. It is the only ‘glove box’ and mass spectrometer combination in Europe. This means that compounds can be analysed without exposing them to air or moisture.

“The new facilities will allow us to analyse samples more quickly and with greater sensitivity,” said Mass Spectrometrist Dr Anneke Lubben (pictured), who manages the new facilities.

The applications of mass spectrometry are wide-ranging, from the analysis of atmospheric gases in space and urine drug testing in athletes, to fine detail characterisation of proteins influencing the development of cancer.

The setting-up of the mass spectrometry service complements the recent expansion of the nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) facilities, following a successful chemistry-led bid to the EPSRC for funding of £395,000.

NMR spectroscopy is a useful analytical technique for chemists, and uses similar technology to MRI scanners in hospitals.
Bollywood comes to Bath

In November, the Bath One World Staff Society launched a series of Bollywood dance classes for staff on campus. The classes are taught by Bollywood performer Minakhshree Hansora. She said: “In Bollywood-style dance, every movement is an expression of a meaning. It’s almost like sign language. I started learning when I was about three years old by watching Bollywood actresses on screen.

“Here, I teach by writing a translation of the Hindi lyrics on the wall and demonstrating the move which goes with each word. It’s a great way to exercise, de-stress and learn a new skill.”

The One World Staff Society aims to create a sense of an international community around the campus.

It’s a great way to exercise, de-stress and learn a new skill

New course set up to fill chronic engineering skill shortage

A new course that aims to produce students with the combined mechanical and electrical engineering skills that employers badly need has been approved by Senate and will run from October 2007.

The Integrated Mechanical & Electrical Engineering degree is being sponsored by firms including Rolls-Royce, BMT Defence Systems and BAe Systems as a way of meeting a chronic skills shortage in industry.

Traditionally, universities in the UK have taught electrical and mechanical engineering separately but this can often produce students who may be proficient in one area of engineering but largely ignorant in another. Employers often want all-rounders because when they design products they know it is more efficient to consider the mechanical and electrical aspects of design together from the beginning.

Professor Alan Bramley, Department of Mechanical Engineering, who helped develop the new course, said: “Factories and laboratories today require graduates to join multi-functional teams when development projects – graduates trained to work across engineering disciplines are best suited to this.”
The School for Health has launched the UK's first postgraduate programme in Healthcare Information Governance. The course is dedicated to help health service professionals throughout the UK deal with the sensitivities, ethics and security of the information they handle.

Twenty six students from throughout the UK are enrolled on the innovative part-time course. Designed to meet the needs of people based in remote and rural locations, it combines the latest e-learning techniques with occasional face-to-face seminars and tutorials.

The students, whose professions include: data protection officers, IT security managers, records managers and GP practice managers, gain the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake leadership roles in information governance within health and social care organisations.

The latest Lifelong Learning programme offers a range of new courses, including Eat your garden, for would-be vegetable growers; Forensic Psychology, which focuses on the role of psychology in the understanding of crime; and Earth Observation, which looks at the science behind Google Earth and making digital observations of the earth from space.

New weekend and day schools include: Willow Workshops, providing people with the chance to weave a basket or make a sculpture; Travel Writing, giving aspiring writers a taste of the art and craft of writing travel articles; and The Last Days of Pompeii, describing the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the excavation of buildings and artefacts from Roman times.

Local entrepreneurs get a boost from Business Hub

New funding from the European Social Fund enabled the Business Hub to launch three new programmes in Swindon: Enhancing women into enterprise, Coaching & mentoring for all, Leadership & management for small to medium sized enterprises. Enhancing women into enterprise is for women in the south-west who are considering setting up their own business. The course, which is fully subscribed, focuses on personal development, and how to write marketing and business plans.

The coaching programme, which incorporates a series of seminars, aims to create a pool of volunteer mentors with varied business backgrounds to support women on the enterprise course.

The leadership course, which is partly delivered in Bath, aims to improve the management skills of leaders, managers and owners of small businesses in the South West region.
ICIA performance listings: March to June 2007

DANCE / THEATRE

Darkin Ensemble
Augustine
Sat 3 March, 7.30pm
ICIA Arts Theatre, £9, £7 concs
Through beautiful, intricate choreography, the Darkin Ensemble create a compelling new physical language telling the story of Augustine and the severe hysteria outbreaks in 1890s Paris. An ICIA commission.

Henri Oguike Dance Company
Sat 24 March, 7.30pm
ICIA Arts Theatre, £9, £7 concs
Leading choreographer Henri Oguike returns with an eight-strong company in a mixed bill of expansive dancing and intuitive choreography. Includes two new pieces, featuring live music from jazz man Iain Bellamy. An ICIA co-commission.

EXHIBITIONS

Deborah Robinson
Recent Work
Fri 2 March – Fri 29 June, 10am-5pm
ICIA Art Space 1, free admission
Atmospheric photographs taken in molecular biology labs, capturing the poignant beauty of a clinical space where traces of human activity suggest absence and loss.

Deborah Robinson: Artists Talk
Thurs 1 March, 6pm
ICIA Art Space 1, free admission
Join the artist for an informal guided tour of the exhibition.

Gala
Art Societies Showcase
Sat 28 April, 7pm
ICIA Arts Theatre, £15, £10 concs
The University's arts societies join forces to showcase the best of their work in this cabaret style evening of fun, energy and excitement.

STUDENT MUSIC – JAZZ & CLASSICAL

Solo & Chamber Lunchtime Concert
Weds 2 May, 12.30pm
The Choral Society performs Fauré's Requiem, and the University's Orchestras make their debut concerto performance supporting talented young pianist, David Keefe.

STUDENT PRODUCTIONS

Bath University Student Theatre
An Ideal Husband
Thurs 1 – Sat 3 March, 7.30pm
Mission Theatre, Bath £7, £5 concs
Sparkling wit and piercing observation in this timelessness comedy exposing social and political hypocrisy, and the illusions men and women have about marriage.

University of Bath Dance Society
City Of Angels
Wed 14 – Sat 17 March, 7.30pm
ICIA Arts Theatre, £7, £5 concs
Film noir meets the musical, with a terrific story and fantastic jazz numbers, this show positively pulsates with rhythm.

VISUAL ARTS WORKSHOPS

Making Large Scale Work
Sat 3 March, 10am-4pm
Studio 2, ICIA Arts Complex £60, £48 concs
A chance to explore ceramic hand building techniques and produce pieces for the garden and for interiors.

Throwing on the Wheel
Sat 24 March – Sat 24 April, 10am-4pm
Studio 2, ICIA Arts Complex £80, £60 concs
An opportunity to focus on throwing techniques.

Raku
Sat 28 Sun 29 April & Sat 5 May, 10am-4pm
Studio 2, ICIA Arts Complex £80, £60 concs
Make, fire and glaze pots using this spontaneous, traditional Japanese rapid firing process where pots are removed red-hot from the kiln.

STUDENT MUSIC –

Solo & Chamber Lunchtime Concert
Weds 2 May, 12.30pm
Holburne Museum of Art, Bath Free for staff and students
Lunchtime recital in the museum’s stunning top gallery.

Solo & Chamber Lunchtime Concert
Weds 21 March, 12.30pm
ICIA Arts Theatre, £5, £3 concs
Symphonic wind band pieces, swinging big band jazz and upbeat, roof-raising American gospel from the 40 strong GASP choir.

Choral Society & Orchestra
Weds 2 May, 7.30pm
Prior Park College, Bath £5, £3 concs
The Choral Society performs Faure’s Requiem, and the University’s Orchestra makes its debut concerto performance supporting talented young pianist, David Keefe.

www.bath.ac.uk/icia
Box Office 01225 386777