Welcome

Welcome to the Candlemas Edition of Link. We hope you will enjoy reading this semester’s selection of news from around the University, which includes, the completion of the David Russell Apartments, the opening of the new Computer Science building, the launch of the Department of Film Studies and the University’s excellent ranking in The Guardian’s recent league tables. For those whose students will be graduating this summer, we trust that you have enjoyed sharing in the St Andrews experience and hope that your links with the University and town will continue beyond their graduation and into the alumni community of the University.

With best wishes for a lovely summer.

Elaine Cartwright (MA 1985) 
Alumni Relations Officer

Sandra Doig 
Alumni Assistant

Scotland’s Leading University

According to The Guardian, the University of St Andrews has maintained its status as the highest-placed Scottish University, climbing four places to 10th in the UK.

A number of subjects received rankings in the UK top 10 – Biosciences, Business Studies, Computer Science, Classics, English, Geography and Geosciences, History, History of Art, French, German, Spanish, Philosophy, Psychology and Theology. St Andrews was also recognised as the best place to study Chemistry in the UK.

Principal, Dr Brian Lang commented, “We are pleased to see that our ranking as the leading university in Scotland has been maintained. To have retained this position in the face of such strong competition is testimony to the hard work of our staff and students.”

Scotland’s First Minister Opens Two State-of-the-Art Buildings

In the Martinmas edition of Link, we reported on the University’s acquisition of the Gateway Building, the new home of the School of Management. With facilities for over 600 students and 26 staff, the School offers some of the best teaching and learning facilities in the UK.

In this edition of Link, we are pleased to announce the opening of another new University development, the Jack Cole Building, named after the founder of Computer Science at St Andrews. This state-of-the-art building, which, together with the John Honey Building houses around 300 students and 18 academic staff, contains innovative technology with wireless networks and the very latest in locks and lighting.

First Minister, Jack McConnell, officially opened The Gateway and the Jack Cole Building at the University’s North Haugh in March this year. During his visit, Mr McConnell met the Principal, Dr Brian Lang, and Heads of Schools, Professors Peter McKiernan (Management) and Ron Morrison (Computer Science), who introduced him to key members of staff and students.

Mr McConnell was shown the latest developments in electronic voting, and talked with students who demonstrated for the first time, their dancing robots project. He also spoke to researchers about using technology to make credit card use more secure. Other topics for discussion included the mathematical model behind working out a woman’s ‘biological clock’ age, and facial ageing techniques, which could be used to help trace long-term missing persons.

Mr McConnell commented: “St Andrews may be an ancient University, but it is one that is forward-looking and willing to meet the challenges of the future head on; these openings are concrete proof of this. In these two new buildings the University has some of the finest teaching, learning and research facilities to be found anywhere in the world. They will enhance St Andrews and they will enrich Scotland. I congratulate everyone involved and wish staff and students alike every success for the future.”
Completion of the new David Russell Apartments

Following the demolition of David Russell Hall, the £27m redevelopment is now the largest of our University residences and can accommodate up to 740 students within its 12 houses. These contemporary facilities contain five-bedroomed flats, each with a spacious kitchen-lounge, en-suite shower rooms, study space and connections to the University’s data network. Twelve flats have also been specifically designed for students with disabilities.

As a result of ‘very good environmental practice’, the accommodation has already achieved a Green Tourism Silver Award. Its buildings have been designed and built to offer exceptional levels of insulation, and sophisticated climate control and water conservation systems. The central building, which provides social facilities for students from both David Russell Apartments and nearby Fife Park, also has an environmentally-friendly, grass-surfaced roof.

University of St Andrews Open for The Open

With more beds available than anyone else in the Town, and within walking distance of the Old Course, the University remains open during the Open Golf Championship, which takes place from 14-17 July this year.

Peter Guthrie, Sales and Marketing Manager in Conference and Group Services, believes the standard of rooms now available during the summer months is one of St Andrews’ best-kept secrets: ‘to those of us who were students in bygone ages, it is quite a revelation. The rooms at David Russell Apartments, for instance, are bright, modern and very comfortable. With en-suite facilities, the standards rival those of the better quality budget hotel chains. They are ideal as bases for golfers throughout any summer but, in particular, during The Open.”

To check availability of University residential accommodation during The Open, please contact Mary Lorimer – Tel: +44 (0)1334 462222 or Email: open@st-andrews.ac.uk

Film Studies Launched at St Andrews

It may come as a surprise to learn that Scotland’s oldest University is launching a new department focusing on the modern medium of film. However, when you consider that film is the definitive art form of the twentieth century, and one of the biggest businesses, it begins to seem a little less so. In fact, for many years, Film Studies has been internationally recognised as a growth area in the university sector, with new departments springing up in King’s College London, Stanford and Harvard, due to increased demand from both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants.

The new Film Studies Department at St Andrews is part of the School of Modern Languages, and considers cinema from a wide range of cultural, political, aesthetic, historical and theoretical perspectives. It has particular strengths in the areas of national, transnational and world cinemas.

Originally from Bulgaria, Professor Dina Iordanova was appointed Head of Film Studies in 2004, having previously worked at the University of Texas in Austin, the University of Chicago, and recently at Leicester University. She is a leading specialist in Eastern European and Balkan cinema, and is joined by Scott Mackenzie, David Martin-Jones and Belen Vidal, who between them specialise in a variety of international cinemas.

At the moment, Professor Iordanova and her team are developing both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and, from autumn this year, a range of joint MA degrees will be offered which combine Film Studies with in excess of ten other subjects. Emphasising its new staff’s strength in research, four fully-funded PhD scholarships are on offer, and a major international conference is planned for St Andrews in 2006, as is a regular student exchange with the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris.

The wider academic and local community will also benefit from the establishment of this new department, with a state-of-the-art screening room in School III, a new video/DVD collection in the Library, and dedicated screening and viewing facilities in the department. Links are also being established with the Dundee Contemporary Art Centre, and the New Picture House, to increase the range of films screened in St Andrews.
Polar Populations

The University’s Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling (CREEM), the only research centre of its kind in the UK specialising in wildlife survey techniques and modelling population dynamics, has assisted The Norwegian Polar Institute in what is likely to be the largest population survey of polar bears in Arctic Europe. The Barents Sea polar bears wander large distances across the Arctic ice from Svalbard across to Franz Josef Land and beyond. Norway has an obligation to monitor its polar bear population through the International Polar Bear Agreement of 1973 and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment funded the research project.

The first large-scale survey of polar bears in the Barents Sea region estimated 3,000 bears, which was at the low end of previous estimates of 3–5,000. Scientists have warned that global warming is causing rapid loss of Arctic habitat, threatening polar bears with extinction in the next few decades.

The survey, which was carried out last year, used specialist world-leading software developed by CREEM to provide an estimate of the polar bear population before the effects of climate change remove much of their ice-sheet habitat, thus providing the clearest picture ever of numbers of the animal vulnerable to pollution and global warming. St Andrews PhD student Tiago Marques, who took part in the five-week trip surveying polar bears by helicopter, felt privileged to be part of the team undertaking the project: “Personally it was the experience of a lifetime and it was fantastic to feel that my background biology degree, combined with a more recently-acquired statistical knowledge, could be used together to provide answers in this study.”

CREDIT: Tiago Marques

Tsunami Research

A group of staff and students from the University’s School of Geography and Geosciences will travel to the Malay-Thai peninsula in May this year as part of a project aimed at better managing sudden and intense environmental change. The team, led by Professor Michael Bird, aims to carry out the work “before memories fade further and perishable evidence disappears”.

Along with examining the physical evidence left by the tsunami, the team will interview local leaders, teachers and retired officials in the communities affected, in an effort to produce a clearer record of environmental change in the area. They also hope to meet villagers who remember a tsunami that hit the area in 1941, before developing maps which local planners can use for rebuilding houses, hotels and other properties. These maps will be used to plan better evacuation routes and response plans in the event of a future tsunami.

“The 2004 tsunami provides access to unique and perishable data which we can use to assess future risk and, ultimately, save lives,” said Professor Bird.

The team, which has been awarded National Science Foundation funding, also includes lecturer Dr Lisa Law, visiting fellow Dr Sue Dawson, PhD student Pedro Costa and Masters student Susan Cowie. Professor Bird also confirmed that the research will involve a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students, “allowing them to engage in hands-on scientific and social research which is critical to their development as the next generation of researchers and educators.”

‘Super’ Microscope Wins £750,000 of EPSRC Funding

Scientists at the University have won a £750,000 grant to develop a new ‘super’ microscope to be used for cutting-edge research into Alzheimer’s disease and cancer.

The biophotonics work station will be the first instrument of its kind to offer a wide range of functions for cell research in a single tool. It will allow scientists to image, sort, separate and punch holes into cells as small as 1/100th of a millimetre. The work will have a crucial role to play in developing technology for the early diagnosis and treatment of a range of illnesses.

The new development will draw together research at the University from leading academics including physicist Professor Wilson Sibbett, cancer researcher Professor Andrew Riches and Dr Frank Gunn-Moore, a neurobiologist investigating how nerve cells are affected by neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s.

Leading the project is Professor Kishan Dholakia, Head of the Optical Trapping Group at the School of Physics and Astronomy, who is pioneering a number of cell-based research techniques based on light. Of the recent funding, supplied by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), he said:

“We are very excited about this project. Standard microscopes can usually do one or two things but this biophotonics work station will offer the whole range of functions in a single tool. It will combine the latest advances in optics with some really cutting-edge biology and ultimately could help save lives.”
A new initiative at the University of St Andrews to create innovative ‘talking books’ for blind students is being led by new member of staff, Paresh Raval. Amongst those classed as ‘print disabled’ are the blind, partially sighted, dyslexics, sufferers of ME and those suffering from short or long-term blindness as a result of injury. The development will provide such students with vital course material in alternative formats, including digital ‘talking books’, large-print texts, electronic text and Braille. The ‘talking books’ are far removed from typical audio tapes, with a number of enhanced options including the ability to skip chapters or search for a particular section. The software, which incorporates the Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) standard, has transformed the reading experiences of ‘print-disabled’ readers all over the world. If you would like to volunteer your help, or want further information, please contact Paresh Raval - Tel: + 44 (0)1334 461167  Email: pr19@st-andrews.ac.uk

The Canadian Robert T Jones Jr Foundation was established by businessman Roger Thompson in 1992. Aware of an existing exchange with Emory University, which was established as a living memorial to the great golfer Bobby Jones, Roger wished to pay a similar tribute on behalf of his own country.

The Canadian Jones Foundation provides exchange opportunities for students from the University of St Andrews and two universities in Canada, Queen’s and Western Ontario. Patroned by HRH the Duke of York, the Foundation has so far provided almost CAD $1M financial support for 210 students going to Canada from St Andrews or vice versa.

Current scholars are pictured here with the Principal, Dr Brian Lang (centre right), who spoke to the students about their time at St Andrews in advance of his visit to both Canadian universities in June this year, and Dr Frank Quinault (centre left), who was involved in the establishment of the Foundation more than ten years ago.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and families for supporting learning at the University through the Family Book Fund, whether in response to a mailing or, more recently, through the telephone campaign.

In 1993, the University conducted its first telephone campaign, employing a team of student callers to make contact with our graduates. Twelve years later, due to the gradual disappearance of the student grant, the introduction of tuition fees for home students, and the resultant growth of student debt, there is a much greater acceptance of and need for universities to fundraise.

Since late last year, we have sought to maintain contact with, and seek the support of, almost 10,000 graduates and parents of current students. Parents have been invited to contribute to the Family Book Fund and our graduates to support student scholarships through the Appeal Fund. The callers have been able to engage with the parents of their fellow students, and have enjoyed sharing their experiences of being a student at St Andrews with our alumni. Since the establishment of the Family Book Fund eleven years ago, a total of £195,000 has been raised to fund much-needed extra copies of the most heavily-used text books for the University Library. On behalf of the University and the many students who have benefited from your generosity, please accept our sincere thanks.

Information for families of current students can be found at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/develop/families

Link is published by the Alumni Relations Office, University of St Andrews, St Salvator’s College, North Street, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9AL. Tel: +44 (0)1334 467194  Fax: +44 (0)1334 462590  Email: alumnus@st-andrews.ac.uk

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### Session Dates

#### 2004/2005

- **Examinations:** Sat 14 May 2005 – Wed 25 May 2005
- **Graduation:** Tues 21 June 2005 – Fri 24 June 2005
- **Re-Assessment Diet:** Med Sci Mon 29 August – Fri 2 September 2005
- **Others Mon 5 September – Thu 8 September 2005**

#### 2005/2006

- **Pre-Sessional Week:** Week commencing Mon 19 September 2005
- **Martinmas Semester:** Mon 26 September 2005 – Fri 20 January 2006
- **Reading Week:** Week commencing Mon 7 November 2005
- **Raisin Monday:** Mon 21 November 2005
- **Graduation:** Wed 30 November 2005
- **Christmas Vacation:** Sat 17 December 2005 – Wed 4 January 2006
- **Revision Period:** Commences Thu 5 January 2006
- **Examinations:** Wed 11 January 2006 – Fri 20 January 2006

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