



Minutes of the 23rd Annual Meeting held at Conway Institute, University College of Dublin 2005 (confirmed)

Thursday 31st March

Welcome

The meeting began with a welcome from Dr Philip Nolan, Registrar UCD. He briefly outlined the history of the University since its foundation in 1851 as a Catholic institution in just one building to the current day, a 132 hectare campus with some 22,000 students and a major investment programme. More information can be found at the UCD website <http://www.ucd.ie/aboutucd.htm> Dr Nolan went on to outline the founding of the Conway Institute of Biomolecular and Biomedical research in 1999 which conducts research in three main areas:

Conway Synthesis and Chemical Biology

Creating and understanding new molecules, leading to the discovery of new or refined drugs and the development of innovative tools to investigate biological problems

Conway Integrative Biology

Examining the role of individual molecules in the overall function of cells, tissues and organs

Conway Molecular Medicine

Investigating the molecular basis of disease, unravelling the causes of important disorders and explaining their effects on the body

The development of this institution has involved designing, constructing, equipping and staffing a new building and demonstrates Ireland's recognition the importance of scientific research. Dr Nolan paid tribute to Michael O'Sullivan for his role in the process. More information can be found at http://www.ucd.ie/conway/about_overview.html

Presentation

'The Development of a Purchasing and Intranet Solution for the Conway Institute'

Mr John O'Grady

john.ograde@legacywebservices.com

Mr John O'Grady of Shared Perspective (formerly Legacy Web Services) outlined the development of a system designed for the Conway Institute. Shared Perspective is a small software company based in Ireland that helps companies re-purpose existing systems to help people get the full value from their IT systems. Their brief for the Conway Institute was to develop a Purchasing System, and then a Website and finally an Intranet, all tailored to the needs of the research and support staff.

The **Purchasing system** had to integrate with the existing financial management system, CFACs (built for accounting, not for use by research staff). The original process was a cumbersome, paper-based system, prone to delay and error. This has been replaced with a streamlined, computer-based process which speeds progress, eliminates errors, allows audit, spend limits, reporting and approval lines and full tracking of the status of orders both for research and technical staff. Supplier catalogues are on the system, but the system will cope with unique products ordered from new suppliers. Requisitions are created, approved, amalgamated into orders on line and the system fully integrates with CFACs (the University accounting system) allowing researchers a user-friendly means of monitoring their spend.

The **Website** was developed for the Conway Institute to provide research information in a fresh and original form with a quick process for putting information onto the site (especially important for publicising events and news). The system is underpinned by a database that is the source of the

information, and templates are used for adding/updating information such as the home page, researcher profiles, events and news. A site-build process feed the information from the templates into the database from which the WebPages are generated.

The **Portal** is being developed to streamline operations within the Institute, making information available internally and providing simple application to researchers both quickly and easily. Examples include providing information about events, allowing quick and easy registration for events, allowing room booking, breakdown reporting *et cetera*.

Using the Shared Perspective platform across all three aspects (Purchasing, WebPages and Intranet has allowed integration of all the systems increasing organisational agility and adding value to the existing IT investment, especially as it integrates with existing business systems

The meeting thanked Mr O'Grady for his interesting talk that showed computerised systems could be made to make life easier for people

AGM and Association Business

Part 1 of the AGM started at 1015h with reports from officers and representatives

23/1

Welcome

The Chairman (Alan Willcocks) welcomed members to the first international meeting. He expressed the hope that although a lot of business may be parochial and apply solely to the UK, there would be something of interest to everyone.

It was noted there were no trade stands, although suppliers have sponsored the meeting.

23/2

Apologies

Apologies were received from Basil Boam, Peter Whelpdale, Kim Lainson, Colin Chinnery, Mike Gover, John Cull, Trevor Pitman, Jim Noble, Neil Weston, Terry Croft, Roger Haslam, Eric McAvoy, Felicity Veasy, Alison Bate, Jayne Bromley

23/3

Minutes of the previous meeting and Matters Arising

22/7.4 Paragraph 2, should be NVQ 1-3, and delete 'NEBOSH certificate'

Subject to these amendments, the minutes were proposed, seconded and approved.

23/4

Chair's Report

.1

Welcome

On behalf of UBMA, Alan expressed his delight to be in Ireland and thanked the officers and committee members for their work behind the scenes.

.2

Discussion Items

The business items for discussion include

- a) recruitment
- b) links with other organisations
- c) use of funds
- d) attendance at meetings (out of a membership of eighty, only thirty are attending the Dublin meeting which is lower than at previous meetings)
- e) the structure of meetings:- retain the current format; hold one day regional meetings possible at six-monthly intervals; hold broader-based meetings involving other organisations such as NABBS and BUCLAS
- f) there are two members who could not get funding to attend the meeting from their employer – should or can UBMA say or do anything as an organisation?

Some discussion took place round the above points with the following points emerging:

- g) these matters have been raised before
- h) whilst the association should be membership-led the committee should formulate a strategic plan
- i) technical staff training is seen by some institutions of being low importance and this should be challenged, although some institutions do have excellent Human Resources departments with a strong commitment to staff development
- j) there is a risk that offering financial support to members may drain funds (two people applied this year, one was supported and one declined)
- k) people may get support from suppliers (Secretary's note – this would have to be checked against the employer's financial regulations)
- l) a letter could go out to Heads of Departments in UK and Eire to raise awareness and thus support of UBMA
- m) the timing of this year's meeting (Easter week may have affected attendance)

.3

Officers available for re-election

Basil Boam (President) is elected for life

All other officers are willing to continue except for the Treasurer. Next year's meeting will be in Aberdeen so Audrey Jeffries (Aberdeen) will be on the committee as host leaving a vacancy for another committee member. The Secretary and Chair are only willing to serve one more year.

23/5

Membership Secretary's Report

The association now has 78 members (76 full and 2 associate members). This is a small increase. Five members have left in the past year due to retirement or job changes, and eight new members have joined. There have been several applications from African countries but there has been no follow-up endorsement from the subject heads

23/6

Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 December 2004

The Treasurer presented the accounts which showed a healthy and increased balance.

Expenses included the committee meetings, and charges to 4-Sight for maintaining the WebPages and sponsoring a member to attend BUCLAS. The current subscription charges cover the annual running costs (the committee meeting and the grant to the host organisation).

The treasurer's report was accepted, subject to audit by UBMA's auditors.

This part of the meeting closed at 11.15 (coffee break)

Presentation

'Communicating Science to the General Public'

Professor William Reville, Biochemistry Department, University College Cork and science columnist for 'The Irish Times'

Conducting scientific research is one thing and explaining it to a lay audience, quite another especially as the perception of scientists is that they are slightly inhuman. Some approaches to changing the public's perception have created more problems as more information has been given (for example, genetic modification and environmental issues)

Why enhance the public understanding of science? This is important

- to satisfy people's natural curiosity
- to abolish technological bewilderment (for example, PCs, microwaves, cell

- phones etc)
- to allow participation in public scientific debate (for example, genetic modification, stem cell research, global warming)
- to oppose emerging irrational tendencies (for example, astrology, new age)
- and to counter declining interest amongst young people in studying science subjects.

Science should be seen as being just as important part of our culture as are music and literature. People should understand the origin of the universe, the existence of the 92 natural elements, the birth of the solar system, the origin of life on earth, the four basic forces that rule the world (gravity, electrical and strong and weak nuclear forces). Science is therefore important for understanding the structure of the universe, the world as we know it and the future of the universe as well as understanding the science-based technology that runs the world.

Current scientific understanding amongst the general public is comprised of

- passive interest and passive goodwill
- a low level of general understanding
- high expectations (for example in curing diseases)
- significant reservations and a poor stereotypical image of scientists. This extends to uncertainty about careers with respect to job opportunities and salary levels.

Communicating Science – Problems

Scientists are seen as dull and aloof and have problems communicating science. They are perceived as being

- too technical (in presentation)
- cold and unemotional
- seeming guarded and uncertain on controversial issues
- giving the impression of the ‘otherness’ of science

Communicating Science – Ideally

- present an easily understandable message (no jargon)
- communication should be two-way
- come across as an expert scientist but still an ordinary, decent, warm person
- it’s OK to have emotions, tell a story, tell a joke, express a wish, give an opinion
- avoid showmanship

It used to be frowned on by academics to be a ‘popular’ speaker or writer, but this view will not promote the wider understanding and enjoyment of science.

The meeting thanked Professor Reville for his entertaining and thought-provoking talk. (Secretary’s note – he did tell jokes, but she felt they would be lost in the minutes)

12.45 LUNCH at Perk, Conway Institute

13.45 Breakout sessions

The following sessions were held in the afternoon with the facilitators who would report back to the meeting the following morning. Members were invited to sign up for the two sessions of most interest to them during the lunch break.

- 1 Restructuring – change management
- 2 Job evaluation
- 3 Energy management
- 4 Security – anti-terrorism

1445 – 1715 Tour Guinness Storehouse

19.15 – 24.00 Johnny Foxes Hooley Night – Conference Dinner

Friday 1st April 2005

AGM and Association Business

Part 2 of the AGM started at 09.15

23/7

UBMA Representatives Reports

7.1

HUBS

No report. Peter Hague is not attending the Dublin meeting

Some exchange took place as to whether it should be the committee's or the individual's responsibility to ensure a report is submitted. It was noted that people volunteer and cannot be forced to do things or deliver.

Secretary's note – HUBS actually met 20-21 April 2005 AFTER this meeting

7.2

NABBS

John Dwyer attended this both as a member of NABBS and a committee member of UBMA

The AGM took place 22-24 September 2004 at Imperial College, London

The emphasis was on professional facilities management including laboratory design, the use of a facilities management tool (Pythagoras Space Database used by London University) and negotiating skills. The meeting was hosted by Kenneth Cope. The next meeting in September 2005 will be the 25th anniversary

The meeting thanked John for his report

7.3

Leadership Foundation

The Leadership Foundation was created in 2003 and formally launched in 2004. HESDA (Higher Education Staff Development Association) became part of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education on 1 August 2004. The provision for training and developing technical staff has therefore transferred from HESDA to LF, including ULF (Union Learning Fund) courses and Leadership courses (previously HESDA).

A meeting was held on 9 February to discuss the implications for the HE technical sector. This was attended by Alan Wilcocks, John Dwyer and John Robinson. The main speakers were Martin Barnes and Bob Hardwick. A brainstorming session was held to try to identify the key skills for a proper technical staff development programme. It was concluded that further funding was needed to take this forward, and develop a web-based national programme (based on the Bristol scheme)

John Robinson's perception was that there was a negative feel to the meeting. Bob Hardwick was left to do the report and had received no feedback from Leadership Foundation between the date of submission and the date of the UBMA meeting.

The Institute of Science Technology (IST) is the professional body for all technicians working in science. The aims of the Institute are: "to encourage and develop the science and practice of laboratory science technology and to further the recognition of laboratory science technology as a profession". It does not run a lot of courses because it does not want to duplicate HESDA's/LF's provision and wants to concentrate its efforts elsewhere. However it does run a CPD programme, developed with University of Exeter and funded by HESDA, which is web-based and is suitable for HE technical staff. IST also offers

NVQs but these are probably more suitable for FE and school technicians rather than the HE sector. IST is hoping to promote its CPD programme and is going to approach HEFCE for funding.

The Association for Science Education (ASE) operates a training and exchange program for school technicians. ASE is a large organisation with good funding although this is concentrated on the teachers rather than the technical support. CLEAPPS supports ASE in providing training and a career structure for school technicians.

The Leadership Foundation is supposed to be promoting skills for all levels of staff, not just managers, but there is nothing in place for support staff

(NB For information, Bristol University can perform a training needs analysis which will report on your training needs by department or by university, for a fee. Zoomerang is a free on-line service which people can use to do their own training needs analysis.)

It was noted that UBMA supports staff development under its constitution.

The meeting thanked John Robinson for his report

7.4

BUCLAS

British University Chemistry Laboratory Administrators/Supervisors

Mandy Taylor attended their last meeting. Chemistry is declining in British universities with departments closing or being absorbed into other areas. BUCLAS membership is therefore declining. BUCLAS is interested in joint meetings (not joining with UBMA) with possibly a joint conference with joint talks and then the groups separating for business. It was noted that all the higher education groups, including BUCLAS, were represented at the Leadership Foundation meeting. The Chair suggested a joint meeting should be held under the auspices of the Leadership Foundation

The meeting thanked Mandy Taylor for her report. (NB UBMA funded Mandy's attendance at the BUCLAS meeting to sound out their views on future joint meetings. UBMA does not normally have a report from this meeting)

7.5

Biosciences Federation

John Robinson explained how the Biosciences Federation (BF) had grown out of the UK Life Sciences Committee. This originally was founded when scientists discovered by chance that moves were being made to ban the use of tetrodotoxin (a valuable tool for neuroscientists in therapy and research).

Biosciences Federation is growing. This year it enrolled the Institute of Biology. It hopes The Royal Society will join in the future. Nancy Rothwell, a member of the Executive Committee of BF is now a Fellow of the Royal Society so this may help.

Secretary's note UBMA had applied for membership before its 23rd meeting and has since been accepted for membership.

The meeting thanked John Robinson for his report.

23/8

Election of Committee Members

The following officers were re-elected unopposed

Chair	Alan Willcocks proposed by John Dwyer, seconded by Audrey Jeffries
Secretary	Anne MacMahon proposed by Jon Dwyer, seconded by John Robinson (NB Anne will stand down next year)
Treasurer	Paul Phillips, proposed by Joyce Macmillan, seconded by John Dwyer
	Thanks were expressed to Mark Cosgrove for his good work

Membership Secretary

Steve Parker proposed by John Dwyer and seconded by David Stanton.

Committee members (two in addition to the host)

Audrey Jeffries will be on the committee as next year's host

Ila Patel was nominated by Robert Campbell and seconded by Haydn Morris.

Mark Cosgrove was nominated by Joyce Macmillan and Paul Phillips but declined because he had served as an officer. He is willing to be co-opted on to the committee to ease handing over the accounts, but this is a matter for the committee

John Dwyer was nominated by John Robinson, seconded by Peter Crosby.

Ila and John were elected as committee members.
(Ila may be willing to stand as Secretary next year)

Auditors

Alison Bates and Jayne Bromley have still to audit the latest accounts. Will need to elect auditors next year. It was suggested that if Alison or Jayne cannot do the auditing, Paul Phillips could be asked. This was **AGREED**

23/9

UBMA Representatives

.1

HUBS representative

Peter Hague was nominated by John Dwyer, seconded by Steve Parker.
Robert Campbell was nominated but declined
John Robinson suggested the committee investigates and sees if Peter is willing to do it.
Joyce Macmillan seconded this. It was **agreed** to leave this to the committee

.2

NABBS representative

John Dwyer was nominated by Peter Crosby and seconded by Mark Cosgrove (NABBS has set a condition that they want a member of the UBMA committee to attend) this was **AGREED**

.3

Biosciences Federation

John Robinson - nominated by Joyce Macmillan and seconded by John Dwyer -
AGREED

23/10

Changes to Constitution

None proposed

23/11

Subscription for 2006

Mark Cosgrove proposed this should continue as £20, Audrey Jeffries seconded and this was **CARRIED**

23/12

Recruitment

Alan Willcocks and Mark Cosgrove have done some work on this.
Alan approached Mandy to see if she could do some groundwork on building a database of contacts but she did not have the time.

Rachel Wilkins, an independent scientific sales representative who represents three different companies and has her own business, approached Mark Cosgrove. She wants to publish a quarterly newsletter directed at Bioscientists and therefore she needs to compile a database of contacts which could serve both her and UBMA. She has suggested a price of £1.25 plus VAT for an initial contact and £0.85 plus VAT for a further contact with a university. If UBMA agreed to go ahead with this, there would have to be a ceiling on it.

This would be part of a two-stage process in increasing recruitment;

- firstly get a database
- secondly, contact individuals with literature

This was a task set for the committee and cannot be achieved without committing some funds. However, if UBMA spent £500, it would be in profit for that year on recruiting the 26th new member.

Some discussion ensued

- John Robinson – IST would be happy to run advertisements for UBMA
- Robert Campbell – important to see recruitment as an investment, would prefer to see a commercial enterprise involved
- John Dwyer – UBMA is recruiting quite well – do we need new members?
- Alan Willcocks – increasing recruitment was a decision of the last AGM.
- Would she promote UBMA, could her quarterly newsletter be a forum for advertising?
- June Freel – could UBMA produce its own glossy brochure and ask Rachel to send it out?

It was agreed to leave this to the committee.

23/13

Use of UBMA funds

Suggestions included

- Recruitment campaign (see 23/12)
- John Robinson's proposal for the IST. John Robinson will come back to UBMA with a finite plan. If IST and UBMA put funds in, then could ask for matched funding from HEFCE. This will be considered by all members electronically

23/14

Future Meetings

.1

2006

Aberdeen was confirmed as the venue for 2006, Tuesday to Thursday 4th to 6th April 2006 (Easter is 12th to 15th April 2006) Thanks to Audrey for this.

.2

2007

2007 will be the 25th anniversary meeting, and the proposed venue is Royal Holloway, London, hosted by Jacqueline Kolkowski.

Because this will be the 25th meeting, it was suggested that this could be a joint meeting with BUCLAS with separate business meetings

This will be a totally different meeting. It was suggested the committee looks at this and reports back

23/15

Any other business

None

The AGM closed at 1030

1030

Feedback from Breakout sessions

Changed Management presented by Michael O'Sullivan

This is affecting many institutions at the moment. The following points arose from the discussion

- There is a difference between the vision and the reality, so beware of imposing a solution
- Skills Audits are vital especially if roles are changing at a senior level
- Senior staff may maintain responsibility but have a more defined role
- Academic structure generally comes first, and the technical structure is then mapped onto this
- There is no easy way of moving staff or changing their role
- The timescales may be very long (Manchester has been evolving their changes for ten years)
- Present versus future activity has to be assessed (going back to skills audit and skills needed)
- Voluntary severance and early retirement may be only options for people who cannot or will not change

Job Evaluation presented by Joyce Macmillan

Equal pay for work of equal value legislation has been in place since 1970. In the UK, the National Framework Agreement has imposed a deadline for universities to complete a job evaluation process and move to a single spine. Some are using Hay, some HERA. All are at different stages

Southampton has completed implementation of Hay after a full pilot of HERA. (HERA thought to be more time-consuming.)

Glasgow plans to base their Hay on the Southampton model again after having carried out a pilot of HERA

Southampton reported that clerical staff came out worse than technical staff but the university has made every effort to minimise dispute (don't want appeals). Problems arose with some people not paying enough importance to their job descriptions. Staff who were red-circled are working towards retraining to improve their job description. They have salary protection for 4 years. Staff who were green-circled, ie who are underpaid for their level of work, get an immediate increase, up to 10% in the first year. However, if they were green-circled due to discriminatory practice (ie gender) any increase could be back-dated for up to 6 years.

In Southampton most departmental superintendents have been regraded to academic-related scales. This has created unforeseen problems with membership of pension schemes.

In Bath it is alleged that IT technicians have not been valued equally, with there being differences between academic departments and the computing department, which would be against the whole ethos of the evaluation exercise.

Universities not using HERA often cite the amount of time it requires for the interviews.

Those using HERA are looking for shortcuts to reduce this, for example, group interviews.

York is using HERA, and staff have generally been happy with the interview process (volunteers have been used to conduct these)

Leeds have completed the implementation of HERA for support staff

Even after the completion of the job evaluation process, local negotiation will determine the points range allocated to each grade.

Imperial College has fitted all its technical staff into Grades 1-3 by splitting 3 into 3A and 3B.

Every university could have different grades for jobs resulting in much less transparency between institutions.

Even the costs vary between institutions, from 0% to up to 15%

Energy Management presented by Mel Flemming

In Irish institutions there has been a drive to reduce energy wastage both because of the cost and environmental issues. Ireland is above its target CO₂ emissions. The problem in universities is exacerbated by weekend occupancy – whole buildings have to be heated to accommodate a few people. Improvements can be made through:

- Occupancy sensors to control lighting, air changes etc.
- Housekeeping – turning off lights, not leaving fume cupboards running (heat loss) and not leaving equipment running (including PCs)

The Conway Institute President is promoting the idea of moving to a 24 hour campus (currently probably 12 hours). This will result in changes in energy use and requirements, and costs may be devolved to department budgets.

In any new build or major refurbishment, the design is very important. Building Management Systems can be designed to monitor occupancy and make adjustments accordingly, even to fume cupboard flows at night)

Security presented by Michael O'Sullivan

This centred on access control, but most institutions do not audit the times people leave the building

Most university managers have experienced problems in being notified of people finishing contracts, especially research students, which may cause problems in controlling access. We are all facing the same issues – perceived threat of terrorism, Home Office regulations, radioisotopes and biohazards.

Coffee Break

Presentation

Behaviour and Motivation in the Workplace

Professor Patricia Casey of the Department of Psychiatry, Mater Misericordiae hospital, University College of Dublin

What motivates people?

- Reward systems (Personal satisfaction; Benefits to career; Material benefits)
- Personality, attitudes (the work ethic)

How to motivate people

- Human approach – praise (important for sense of self-worth), taking an interest
- Structure – provide clear guidelines
- Promotion prospects
- Autonomy – people work best if they have responsibility for their own area
- Supervision – must provide clear goals but not be too intrusive
- Developing skills – training, courses
- Ownership – involvement in implementing change (eg in working out roles)

Behaviour change – can be very difficult to deal with

- Confront the problem – generally better than moving it (eg by moving person)
- Clear guidelines – be specific, eg timekeeping
- Clear appraisal mechanisms – agreed, with realistic timescales
- Identify personal problems – these may impact on people's work
- May not be effective because of lack of insight, or because of personality or personal problems

Stress is used to describe any sense of being under pressure, and also to refer to psychiatric disorders

Stress is defined as the adaptation or attempted adaptation of the person to circumstances/events which threaten to disrupt their physical or psychological well-being. It happens over a period of time

Burnout is an increasingly intense pattern of psychological, physical or behavioural dysfunction in response to a continuous flow of stressors (for example, can't write, feel overwhelmed)

Stress reactions may be normal or abnormal. Stress may be good for you – anxiety may improve performance (Yerkes-Dobson Law). However, the improvement in performance will plateau out with increased anxiety, and may decline if the anxiety levels are too high.

Therefore, if someone says they are stressed it is important to find out how they are affected (eg if

they are not sleeping or making mistakes, then the stress is abnormal). If there is no impact, the stress is not abnormal, but it should be watched in case it becomes abnormal.

Sources of Stress

- Personal – family, illness etc
- Interpersonal – personnel conflicts, harassment
- Organisational – change, management style
- Symptoms may not be work-related but may impact there leading to a false attribution (may be coming from a family problem or a psychiatric illness)

Effects of Stress in the Workplace

- Absenteeism
- Punctuality decline
- Performance decline
- High turnover of staff
- Anger/irritability
- Depression
- Commitment to organisation falls
- Litigation

Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) can cause psychological distress and may have an impact on mental and physical health.

Primary and Secondary Prevention of Stress

- Visible Occupational Health Unit for referral of people with symptoms
- Increase awareness of possible sources of stress and solutions through staff training programme
- Encourage help-seeking behaviour
- Encourage staff support
- System for dealing with grievance and clear policies on harassment, bullying etc
- Permission to acknowledge abnormal stress and seek resolution (eg facilitator) it is healthy to acknowledge problems

The meeting expressed its thanks to Professor Casey for her interesting talk which touched on issues regrettably familiar to many present...

Closing remarks and vote of thanks

Anne MacMahon thanked Michael, Michelle and Jo for hosting a wonderful meeting in an exciting and dynamic city. Highlights included the glimpse of Ireland's and University College Dublin's vision for the future which recognises the importance of science and technology as shown in the investment in and development of the Conway Institute. Despite the fact it is still very new, it is already facing major change, something familiar to most Higher Education institutions. The hospitality and entertainment were excellent, the hotel was comfortable; people appreciated the outstanding beauty of Powers Court Gardens, the chance to sample Ireland's arguable most famous export at the Guinness Store House, and thoroughly enjoyed the food and entertainment at Johnny Foxes. The speakers were thought-provoking and interesting. Mr O'Grady proved IT systems can be user-friendly and intuitive, Professor Reville demonstrated that the understanding of science by all is important and its communication to the public should be improved, and Professor Casey outlined the importance of recognising and dealing with stress in the workplace. It remains to look forward to next year's meeting in Aberdeen

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