

Imperial suffers in HEFCE allocations

On Thursday, 2 March 1995, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) announced the allocations of grant for the 1995-96 academic year.

Imperial was awarded only a modest increase in its grant for teaching and research, up by 0.5 per cent on the current year. Imperial's total HEFCE grant will increase by about 1 per cent.

"The main reason for the disappointing result was connected to the funding of research, for which our grant declined by 2.25 per cent," said Dr Rodney Eastwood, Deputy Managing Director.

One cause was the new method HEFCE uses to distribute funding across three groups of disciplines: medical; science and technology; and non-science. HEFCE has shifted funding from the richer to the poorer units within each group.

"The effect on any institution depends on its mix of units," Rodney explained. "We have the 'wrong' mix and so we lost grant. Unfortunately, there will be a similar effect in 1996-97."

The other main reason for the decrease is that Imperial's volume of research has increased only 0.9 per cent, as compared to the national average of 4.5 per cent. Since funding partly depended on percentage increases in research volume, Imperial's share has been affected, despite the fact that the research volume here is already high. The University of Manchester, which also has a strong research base, suffered similar cuts.

However, there is one bright spot, Rodney said: the College's contribution to the University of London will be lower next year.

Public sector MBA course

In October 1994, the Management School was amongst 16 business schools invited by the Cabinet Office to tender for a new public sector MBA programme aimed specifically at civil servants.

Several months, presentations and interviews later, Mr Robert Hughes, former Junior Public Service Minister, announced that the Management School had won the contract, along with a consortium made up of Cranfield School of Management, Manchester Business School and the Civil Service College.

The public sector MBA programme was launched on Wednesday 1 March 1995, at the Cabinet Office in Whitehall. The initial agreements with Imperial and the consortium will be for three years.

Up to 60 civil servants will join either the full-time or Executive MBA course at Imperial. The target group for the programme will be staff at middle management level who are expected to fill senior posts later in their careers. They will study alongside other MBA students for the core of their programme, and will also take a public sector specialisation.

"We believe that our experience working in partnership with industry, commerce and the public sector qualifies us particularly well for this role," said Professor David Norburn, Director of the Management School. "The Management School seeks to promote the best management practice, regardless of where it originates: the public and private sectors have much to learn from each other."



Professor David Norburn (far right) at the launch of the new public sector MBA, with (from left) Vice Chancellor, University of Manchester; Director, Cranfield School of Management; Robert Hughes MP, former Junior Public Services Minister; and Sir Robin Butler, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service.

Short-term contracts spark controversy

Carrie Golus investigates

"Contract research workers are exploited," Adrienne Aziz from the National Association of University Teachers (AUT) told a meeting of Imperial College AUT on Monday 6 March. ICAUT had called the meeting, attended by about 60 people, to campaign against the two new waivers included in short-term research contracts.

One waiver states that short-term contract staff who have worked at Imperial for less than seven years waive their right to any redundancy pay. As a trade-off, staff who have worked more than seven years can claim redundancy money equivalent to that given to permanent College staff, which is about two-and-a-half times the statutory amount. The other waiver states that all staff employed on short-term contracts waive the right to complain of unfair dismissal if the dismissal coincides with the end of their contract.

Staff only waive these rights at the time that their contract expires. At all other times they can claim redundancy pay and unfair dismissal. The new scheme has been operating since October 1994.

Imperial currently employs about 880 short-term staff for research, and about 100 short-term staff in other areas.

According to Rob Letham, Senior Personnel Manager, "There was unease in departments about the way we treated longer-serving fixed-term contract staff." In the past, at the end of a contract these employees were given statutory redundancy, defined as one week's pay (maximum of £205 per week) for every year of service.

"The College was anxious to benefit these long-serving staff," said Rob. "At the same time it seemed appropriate to recognise the fact that many staff were on short contracts which everyone expected at the outset to expire at the end of their fixed-term."

"To ask these staff to sign waiver clauses would enable the College to recognise the longer-serving staff appropriately," Rob continued. "There is no free money here. Whatever is paid out the College has to find, because redundancy payments are not allowable as an element of a research grant application."

The use of such waivers is common practice in universities and other employers throughout the UK, Rob commented.

In September, the Personnel Division sent a note to all staff on short-term contracts announcing the change in policy. According to Dr Julian Borrill, who chaired the

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GETSET 95 Search for mentors

This two-day event will be held at College on 28-29 March, to encourage 13-year old girls to consider a career in science, engineering and technology, prior to selecting their GCSE options.

GETSET aims to show that working in science, engineering and technology can be fun. This message is reinforced not only with the help of TV personalities, such as Johnny Ball and Kate Bellingham, but also through the provision of 'mentors': young female role models who will work with small teams of girls over the two days.

Imperial College postgraduates can be mentors. You would be fully briefed about the projects and be there to lend support and guidance but not solutions.

If you are interested please contact Melanie Thody, Schools Liaison Officer, extension 58042/3 for further information.

BMS building funds

Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for Health, announced to the House of Commons (20 February 1995) that she is 'prepared in principle to commit a substantial capital contribution' to the building of a medical school on the IC campus at South Kensington.

The Deputy Managing Director, Rodney Eastwood, is encouraged by the announcement. He explained, "It is a significant and welcome step forward as it is the first time a public statement has been made to this effect". He continued, "Nothing is definite until the cheque has cleared, but the chances of Government funding are now much higher than before".

Final approval by the Department of Health and the Treasury is expected shortly after the Higher Education Funding Council's decision, which will be made by the end of this month.

IN BRIEF

New dean for RSM

Professor Rees Rawlings, Department of Materials, has been elected Dean of the Royal School of Mines for the period 1 September 1995 to 31 August 1998.

BA 2000

Imperial College is expected to host the British Association Festival of Science 2000. The BA annual meeting is the foremost event in the UK scientific calendar, attracting thousands of participants each year.

The Rector said he is 'delighted' with the proposal. The BA annual meetings are usually held outside London, except on very special occasions, such as the millennium.

Discussions are taking place to resolve the organisational and financial aspects of the meeting.

RA wins fellowship

Christina Young, a research assistant in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, is the first winner of the Gerry Hedley Research Fellowship. This is awarded by the Courtauld Institute of Art, and funded by the Pilgrim Trust, the Getty Museum and trustees of the Courtauld Institute. The Fellowship aims to further the research, begun by Gerry Hedley (an IC alumnus), into the mechanical properties of paintings. Understanding these properties has direct relevance to the way in which paintings should be displayed, stored and transported.

Judd Prize

Zhong-Min Song has been awarded the Judd Prize. This is awarded annually to a graduate student for original work undertaken in the Department of Geology within five years of obtaining their first degree.

ICU election results

The election results for the Students' Union officials are as follows:

Sarah White - President
Matthew Crompton - Deputy President (Finance and Services)

Tim Townend - Deputy President (Clubs and Societies)

Rachel Walters - Felix Editor

Media mentions

Racial discrimination at medical schools

A study led by Professor Chris McManus and Professor Peter Richards from St Mary's Hospital Medical School has shown that applicants to medical courses may be subject to racial discrimination.

The report, published in the *British Medical Journal*, looked at the application forms of almost 7,000 students, and found that in 12 out of 28 schools applicants with non-European surnames were significantly less likely to be accepted.

Newspapers reporting on the study were *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *the Evening Standard*, and *The Daily Telegraph* (24 February).

Russell Group advised to disband

The Independent reported on 1 March that the Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Professor Graeme Davies, had advised the elite band of 17 universities, known as the Russell Group, to disband. The group includes Imperial College and is named after the hotel where it meets. Professor Davies said: "There has been a lot of in-fighting which has not been at all constructive."

Computer hacker arrested

Arthur Spirling from the Centre for Computing Services discussed the arrest of a leading American computer hacker on Radio 4's, *The Big Bang* on 23 February.

Management School MBAs

Under a new initiative announced last week high-flying government employees will develop their business skills by spending time at a management school. The *Financial Times* reported on 2 March that Imperial's Management School was chosen from 15 other business schools as one of the providers of the new public sector Master of Business Administration degree.

Gene patenting

Dr John Normanton from IMPEL was interviewed on BBC Radio World's Science in Action on 26 February about gene patenting. In the interview Dr Normanton said that patenting would ensure the official disclosure of information to interested parties.

Electromagnetic pollution

On Radio 4's, *The Big Bang* (1 March), Professor Ernest Freeman from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering discussed electromagnetic pollution and the many sources of radio waves.

The next 'Facing the Media' course will be held on 29 March. The course offers practical training of radio and TV interviews for academics and senior administrative staff. Contact Kim Everitt, Training Manager, on extension 45518.

STAFF NEWS New post

Mr John Foster joined the College on Monday 6 March in the new position of Head of Catering and Conference Services.

Since 1987 John has been at the University of Westminster. During the last two-and-a-half years he was Director of Commercial Services. His work experience encompasses hotels, catering and conferences, training, consulting and commercial management.

John spoke to *IC Reporter* on his first day at work so he had yet to be introduced around College and see his office. However, he outlined briefly his plans for the future: "I must establish the present level of College service by speaking to staff and students, then determine what needs to be done". He hopes to see an increase in external business at the College. "This will generate more finance so service and facilities can be improved which will be better for IC staff and students. Imperial College also gains valuable publicity when conferences are staged here."

John lives near Woking, and enjoys golf and gardening. He is married and has a daughter.



Neville Miles, College Photographer



Neville Miles, College Photographer

Technician describes forty-two years spent at IC

Mr John Pickett started work in the Department of Mechanical Engineering in 1953, when he was 15 years old.

"I've been running the carpenters shop for nearly 22 years now. Before that I was in the main workshop."

John (pictured above) enjoys the work he does here because it is so varied. "It's not just a basic carpenters shop - it's more like a manual workshop. One minute we could be working with wood, then plastic the next. I'm a carpenter-cum-engineer, really. We do work for the students, research staff and academics, making specimens and test pieces for them."

Changes that have occurred over the forty two years John has spent at IC include campus alterations. "Hardly any of the department buildings were here when I started; and Sheffield wasn't built - the admin staff used to work in 170 Queen's Gate. There could only have been about 20 of them."

A strict dress code also existed. John explained, "We used to have to come into work neatly dressed, wearing a tie and polished shoes. It was expected by the Head of Department, so that was that".

The type of work John does in the lab has altered too: "There is more research now than there was, but less practical work. A lot of the students' work is done on computers so you don't see them so much in the lab".

John intends to stay at IC until he is 65. "I enjoy it here - I like working with the students. You see them get on and become doctors. Like our Head of Department, Professor Williams. He was a student here when I started work, doing his PhD."

John's son, Kevin, has followed in his father's footsteps and works at Imperial College as well. "He's been here for about ten years now. He started as a junior technician, like I did."

The view from the tower by Don

"This fortnight's niggle is about money paid to external examiners - not enough of it. I know it's a terribly old chestnut but a recent event made me stand up and take notice. A university way north of here invited me to examine a PhD thesis, offering a fee of £60. In the small print it said that I was invited to travel first class. Great! I thought. I can spread out, take my laptop, get that paper finished in comfort. I cheerfully paid the best part of £200 for the return ticket, then realised the university was paying BR over three times more than it was paying me.

The theory behind the reluctance of universities to pay proper fees for examining is that it is 'part of the job' and the fees are nominal. Is this merely a euphemism for collusion between institutions to keep costs down? Clearly, I would rather get the £200 and travel on a cheap ticket. There probably is no reason why both the fee and the first class travel should not happen without breaking the bank.

IC might score by being the first to start paying proper fees for external examining. It would have an immediate effect on the quality of our examiners and the attention that the process receives. A proper fee would make this a businesslike request rather than begging a favour.

There are also agencies outside the universities who prey on our kindness, such as the British Council. They will happily send a don halfway across the world without the slightest thought of how the university might be recompensed for the loss. Returning jet-lagged and out of pocket due to spartan cover from the sending organisation, the joys of travel rapidly vanish.

Nevertheless, comfortable train travel is wonderful. I probably get more done on long train journeys than in any other environment. Perhaps departments should set funds aside for sending each of their members on a long train journey once a term. It could have a fantastic effect on research productivity and marking."

Defective Pentium chip

Dr Dan Moore explains what went wrong

In October 1994 Professor Thomas Nicely of Lynchburg College, Virginia emailed a colleague to say he was getting different results between his Intel 486-based computer and the new Intel Pentium-based computer he had bought for his research.

His new computer did not calculate 1/824633702441 correctly. When his colleague confirmed his machine made the same error, Professor Nicely posted their findings on the Internet, inviting other scientists to check if this was a widespread problem.

The result was a £300 million loss and a public relations disaster for Intel Corporation. As word spread on the Internet, it became apparent that this flaw was in all Pentium chips.

Intel Corporation played down the significance of the bug at first, saying it occurred only once in every 10,000 million divisions and the average user would encounter it only once in 27,000 years. They decided to replace only those Pentium chips where the machine

Obituary

Professor Peter Lynn Pratt
10 March 1927 - 2 March 1995

"Peter will be remembered fondly as a colleague of considerable charm and unshakeable loyalty, whose support in the frequent debates and crises of academic life could often prove to be decisive," said Professor Malcolm McLean, Head of the Department of Materials.

Professor Peter Pratt was an influential figure in the evolution of Materials Science as a discipline that underpins much of modern technological development.

In 1959 he took up a readership in the Department of Metallurgy at IC, where he spent the remainder of his scientific career. He was appointed Professor of Crystal Physics in 1963. He held appointments as Dean of the Royal School of Mines, Member of the Governing Body, Director of Continuing Education, and Director of the London Centre for Marine Technology.

Professor Pratt was involved in the radical rationalisation which merged the disciplines of metallurgy, ceramics, polymers and glasses into the new academic discipline, materials. The role he played was influential, both through the national professional societies which now form the single Institute of Materials; and in guiding major curriculum and research changes at Imperial.

Professor Pratt's scientific contributions have been widely acknowledged through numerous awards from professional societies; these include the Sir George Beilby Gold Medal and the A.A. Griffiths Medal and Prize of the Institute of Metals. His scientific bequest is in the form of both extensive literature and a network of students throughout the world who continue his studies.

was used in 'critical' calculations (a decision that Intel, not the Pentium owner, would make!)

Intel reversed this policy after a month of adverse stories in the press, a world wide Internet campaign of unprecedented proportions and announcements by several companies (most notably IBM) that they were dropping the Pentium chip from their product line until it was fixed. Intel announced that it would replace any defective chip upon user request (when defect free chips became available) and posted a record 'special charge' against their corporate profits for 1994 to cover its losses.

What went wrong? According to the software model, the Pentium chip does long division much like pre-calculator people do with a pencil and paper. It 'guesses' trial divisors by a table look up using an algorithm developed by two Imperial College researchers in 1968. Intel mis-wired the table look up so that in some cases the wrong divisor is accepted.

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Space - the final frontier

Professor Bill Wakeham examines Imperial's estate

Having recently become Shadow Director of the Estates Division, I have found myself grappling with the intricacies of everything from the maintenance of electrical switchgear to sports fields. Within the ambit of Estates lies a set of issues only dimly glimpsed by most College staff.

No sooner had I realised this than the Rector asked me to present the issues to heads of departments, and to write this article. It just shows how little you need to know to become an apparent expert and newspaper correspondent!

Magnitude of the problem

The value of the South Kensington buildings is difficult to ascertain, but the insured value for rebuilding purposes is £600 million. Each year IC spends £25 million on maintenance - a sum which represents 20 per cent of the total annual expenditure of the College. Heat, lighting and power cost about £3.7 million a year. These sums make the budgets of even some large academic departments look small.

Reducing these expenditures by even a small fraction could have a dramatic effect on the College's budget. For example, a saving of just 10 per cent on energy costs would free £370,000 per year, enough for about 10 more academic staff.

The issues

It may seem odd that despite the substantial expenditure on maintenance, buildings are in a poor state of repair. To a large extent this is a result of earlier economies. The net effect is that academic buildings are now old, with poor standards of ventilation, heating and insulation.

There is only a little scope for further construction beyond the proposed Basic Medical Sciences building, because of planning regulations and lack of land. However, many departments have areas which are inefficiently used. Sometimes special facilities are no longer needed, or it costs too much to convert the areas into something useful, or territorialism and tradition are involved.

Over 7,000 students could be seated simultaneously in lecture and tutorial space within the College. It follows that the College could accommodate much of its planned future development within existing buildings. However, such action would require an investment once the space had been prised from its current holders.

Another difficult issue is accommodation, which is relatively old, in poor condition, and conveys a poor image of the College to prospective students. Unfortunately, local government and quangos limit College options. For example, it is not possible to tear down Southside and start again because English Heritage in its infinite wisdom has determined that Southside has special architectural merit. It is described as a

'perfect example of a certain style of 1960s architecture'. Obviously one cannot disagree with this statement, though one might wonder about the corollary that the building is therefore worth preserving!

In addition to these constraints on the College, more investment would be necessary to ensure that the halls provide the standard of accommodation our students deserve, as well as allowing a summer rental scheme that provides income for further refurbishment.

The questions

In order to make the most effective use of space it should be treated as a College resource to be managed and distributed centrally. Within the present College structure, it is evident that a price is being paid for departmental autonomy. Whether the central management of space is achieved by financial incentives or some other way, its introduction is unavoidable.

In any event, refurbishment of academic space from central College funds will impact upon departments. The money to finance such refurbishment must be deducted from the funds distributed to departments to run their existing activities.

Many questions remain about the future of Imperial's estate.

Should IC sell or lease some of its property to fund the construction of new accommodation?

To what extent should the College listen to local councils which make the College's tasks more difficult? For example, one council wants the College to reduce the number of parking spaces as a contribution to environmental improvement. Can Imperial afford the bad publicity that might attend fighting this or other issues?

As the quality of the accommodation diminishes so does our ability to attract students. How much are we prepared to lose in potential income from a residences policy that enshrines past practice as the norm for the future - for example with respect to communal areas and wardening?

The College also owns a number of playing fields. Should the College consider the sale of these assets to realise capital to meet other needs, or to provide sports facilities closer to South Kensington? How much weight should be given to tradition? That there is a voice for tradition among alumni is undeniable; to what extent it should be listened to is less clear.

The academic community should not leave these decisions to the Estates Division. So far academics have placed these decisions in the tray labelled 'too hard!'. However, we cannot put off decisions much longer and avoid an impact on our academic mission.

Professor Bill Wakeham is Head of the Chemical Engineering and Chemical Technology Department

REVIEWS

Women and power

Dr Rosalind Miles talks to the Women of Imperial College Review by Louise McIvor

The first Women of Imperial Lunch of 1995 took place at 170

Queen's Gate on 22 February.

The speaker was Dr Rosalind Miles, author and broadcaster, who delivered the lecture *Elizabeth I: Women and Power*. Dr Miles is the author of *I, Elizabeth*, a highly-acclaimed novel recreating the life and times of the Queen.

Elizabeth I was an 'almost self-created woman', Dr Miles said. She had to overcome a traumatic childhood (including the execution of her mother, Anne Boleyn) to hold a position of such power. Dr Miles described Elizabeth I as 'so many things to so many women' - as well as being a powerful figure, she had a collection of 3,000 dresses.

Dr Miles also mentioned her book *A Woman's History of the World*, which she called the 'greatest story never told'.

The talk was most informative and a lively question and answer session followed, when Dr Miles spoke of such issues as the difficulties of juggling career and motherhood. In reply to a question about feminism, she talked about how feminism strove towards 'complementarity' of the sexes.

Please contact the HUB Office on 48740 or 48741 if you would like more information on the Women of Imperial College. There will be another lunch on 3 May (speaker to be announced).

Louise McIvor is Publications Assistant in the Personnel Division

Inaugural lecture

'Deafness and Dystrophin - Mouse Models For Human Disease' Professor Steve Brown

In his inaugural lecture on Wednesday 15 February, Steve Brown, Professor of Genetics, reported recent work by his group on the discovery of genes for deafness.

This work is being carried out in collaboration with the MRC Institute of Hearing Research in Nottingham.

Studies of mice that carry mutations causing deafness have led them to uncover a gene necessary for hearing. The gene codes for a form of the protein myosin. In collaboration with scientists from France and USA, it has also been possible to show that the same gene in humans is responsible for Usher syndrome type 1b - a condition that causes children to be born deaf and progressively lose

their sight. Around 1,500 people are affected in the UK.

Professor Brown hopes the findings will help pave the way for a better understanding of all the factors leading to genetic deafness.



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Pentium chip

One in every 100,000 numerators and one in every 100,000 denominators can cause the fault so indeed they can occur once every 10,000 million divisions. However, the Intel Pentium chip can do 2,000,000 divisions a second and 10 million additions, subtractions or multiplications every second. In a calculation where ten per cent of the arithmetic is division, an error should occur once every four hours!

Many scientific calculations run for days on a work station. The existence of this divide flaw poisons the output from any program run on this chip. Some of the numbers where this flaw occurs are not that obscure. The Windows calculator on my Pentium based computer reveals $4.999999 / 14.999999 = .3333292$. An HP pocket calculator gets $.33333289$ for this ratio. Such 'bruised integers' are common-

place on computers, hence the decision of several companies to drop the chip until the flaw is cured.

Machines with this bug removed arrived at IC in the middle of February. Those of us with defective machines are now going through the paper work necessary to get Intel to supply replacement chips - a very frustrating process.

Are there other flaws in this chip? Probably, but now the Pentium chip floating point unit is the most widely tested bit of silicon in existence. The silence on the Internet about other Pentium bugs suggests that no further errors have been found. Intel have just announced the next, faster chip in their CPU series, the P6. This too will have been heavily tested to avoid a repetition of the Pentium problems. Both chips can be regarded now as having no obvious bugs.

Dr Dan Moore is a reader in the Department of Mathematics

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Short-term contracts

ICAUT meeting, this note explained that the waiver scheme 'has been discussed with the College trade unions' - a statement which he said implied AUT's support - when in fact the union was strongly opposed to the scheme. The letter also stated, 'To ensure that there is no delay in salary payments, it is therefore imperative that the copy of the contract of employment is signed promptly' - a statement which Julian said 'many staff had interpreted as a veiled threat'.

Heads of departments as well as the Management and Planning Group had discussed the policy, Rob Letham said. 'The AUT were consulted on the proposals and accepted the new arrangements. If they did so reluctantly I would understand, because it would not have been an easy decision for them,' Rob said. The division of seven years was 'about the break-even point', where increased benefits for long-term staff would be balanced by not paying statutory redundancy for short-term staff, he said.

A small number of staff members have asked to be re-employed on the basis of their previous employment contracts and been allowed to do so. They would then be in exactly the position they were before and suffer no detriment, retaining their right to statutory redundancy pay for their entire time at the College. 'It would be unfair, however, on those foregoing statutory redundancy to allow staff who had not signed waivers to have access to the enhanced compensation, should their contracts take them beyond seven years,' Rob said.

Julian Borrill was concerned that departments might implement a 'glass ceiling' of six years' employment, so they would not have to offer redundancy pay. 'Departments will be under pressure not to employ the best person, but to employ the cheapest person,' Julian said.

Those present at the ICAUT meeting expressed their support for a formal proposal to Personnel based on the following points:

1. No member of staff should have to sign any waiver.
2. Improvements for one group of staff should not come at the expense of another group.
3. Redundancy pay should be financed centrally, not through departments, as is currently the case.

4. Contract research staff should have the same rights to redundancy pay as permanent staff.
5. Members of staff who have already signed waivers should be allowed the chance to re-sign their old contracts. This point was added after one member of the audience explained that he had signed a waiver and now regretted doing so.

Many people were under the impression that contract employees were just starting out in their careers, Adrienne Aziz told the meeting. In fact, the average age nationally for such staff is "late thirties," she said, "while many are over forty." Figures provided by Personnel show the average age of short-term research contract staff at Imperial to be 32.

Carrie Golus is the Media Liaison Officer in the Press Office

D I A R Y

March

COLLEGE EVENTS

Friday 17 March

The launch of *National Science Week 1995* will be held in Prince's Gardens. Further information from Melanie Thody, Schools Liaison Office, extension 58042/3.

17 - 18 March
BAYSDAY

Further information from Melanie Thody, Schools Liaison Office, extension 58042/3.

28 - 29 March
GETSET

This two-day event is aimed at encouraging 13-year old girls to study science and engineering. Further information from Melanie Thody, Schools Liaison Office, extension 58042/3.

CONFERENCES

Saturday 18 March

The Philosophy and Ethics of Science

To be held at South Kensington from 10.30-18.00. Ticket price £3. Further information available from David Cohen (dyc@doc) or Samin Ishtiaq (si@doc).

DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS

Tuesday 14 March

Management School Alumni Association AGM

To be held in Room 202, Management School at 18.30. Further details from Helen Frewer, extension 49135.

Wednesday 15 March

Book launch

'The Physics of Immortality' Professor Frank Tipler. To be held in the Clore Lecture Theatre, Huxley Building at 13.00.

Thursday 16 March

Department of Chemistry seminar

'The Synthesis and Structure of Polysilanes (Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue)' Dr R. Jones. To be held in Lecture Theatre C, Department of Chemistry at 16.15.

Wednesday 22 March

South Kensington Institute for the History of Technology seminar

'Successful Deindustrialisation, The Ultimate Achievement of Technological Progress?' Ulrich Wengenroth. To be held in the Collections Division Seminar Room, The Science Museum at 16.00. Tea served at 15.45.

Wednesday 22 March

Wellcome Research Centre Symposium - 'From Epidemiology to Molecular Biology, Five Years of the Wellcome Research Centre for Parasitic Infections'. The symposium will take place in the Clore Lecture Theatre from 10.30 to 17.45.

Thursday 23 March

Book launch

'The Fate of Schrödinger's Kittens' Dr John Gribbin. To be held in Lecture Theatre 1, Blackett Laboratory at 12.30.

27 - 29 March

Interdisciplinary meeting

'Structural Geology in Reservoir Characterisation and Field

Development'.

Further information available from Professor Coward, extension 46460.

29 - 31 March

Biology 2000 - a special series of lectures, demonstrations and visits designed for first year A level biology students. Organised by the Department of Biology with support from ZENECA PLC. Further information from Dr Ava Yeo, extension 45375.

LECTURES

Tuesday 14 March

Inaugural lecture

'Mud, Matrices and Megabytes' David Potts, Professor of Analytical Soil Mechanics. To be held in the Clore Lecture Theatre, Huxley Building at 17.30.

Thursday 16 March

Eighth Schrödinger Lecture

'Should Science Studies be X-rated? Revisiting the Pasteur Case on the Centenary of his Death'. Professor Bruno Latour. To be held in the Great Hall, Sherfield Building at 17.30.

Wednesday 22 March

Inaugural lecture

'Seeing the Light: Good Practice in Photon Management' Brian Morgan, Professor of Physics. To be held in the Blackett Laboratory Theatre 1 at 17.30.

MUSIC & HUMANITIES

Thursday 16 March

Lunch-time concert

Gerard Lefevre (cello) and Nigel Clayton (piano). To be held in the Read Theatre at 12.45.

Friday 17 March

Imperial College Choir

Bach Mass in B Minor. Conductor: Eric Brown. To be held in the Great Hall at 20.00. Ticket price: £2.50 for students; £5 for non-students. Available from members of the Choir or at the door.

April

CONFERENCES

20 - 21 April

T.H. Huxley: Victorian Science and Culture. To be held in the Huxley Building. Booking forms available from Dr David Edgerton extension 49351.

DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS

Wednesday 5 April

South Kensington Institute for the History of Technology seminar 'X-Rays in and on Physics' John Heilbron. To be held in the Collections Division Seminar Room, The Science Museum at 16.00. Tea served at 15.45.

EXHIBITIONS

19 - 28 April

T.H. Huxley Victorian Science and Culture

Organised by Archives to accompany the Conference. To be displayed in the Consort Gallery at Imperial College.

NOTICE BOARD

Central Library

A small PC cluster has been set up on level 2 of the Central Library. The cluster has general software, access to networked library and information databases, and wide area network connections. There is no booking procedure.

You now need a barcoded library card to go through the turnstile in the entrance to the Central Library. This procedure has been introduced to improve security and provide more statistics on use of the library by different departments.

Leonardo Society
Art Exhibition 1995

The Exhibition will be on display from 17 May to 16 June. Staff and students are invited to bring their work for exhibit to Sherfield ante room on Friday 12 May from 15.00-16.30. Please contact the Leonardo Society if this time is inconvenient. For further information please write to ICU SCAB, or email leonardo@ic.ac.uk

Royal Society

The Royal Society invites applications for four vacant professorships tenable from 1 October 1995. Application details are available from Mr K. Wylde, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG. Fax 0171-930 2170. All applications must be received before 16.00 on 7 April 1995.

Lesbian, Gay and
Bisexual Society

The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Society has recently been set up and membership is open to IC staff and students and members of the museums, the Royal College of Art and the music colleges. The Society meets every Tuesday at 19.30 in the Brown Committee Room on the top floor of the Students' Union building.

Scientists for Labour

A new organisation, Scientists for Labour (SfL), has recently been formed. It aims to increase the awareness and understanding of scientific issues within the Labour Party. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in encouraging the Labour Party to understand, value and support science. Further information available from Kevin O'Hare in the Department of Biochemistry (k.o.hare@ic.ac.uk), or the SfL Secretary, Robin Walters (R.G.Walters@sheffield.ac.uk).

Letters to the Editor

College mail

Dear Don

There is a system of quality control in operation to check the amount of time it takes for internal post to go through the system. Approximately every month over 100 test letters are sent to heads of departments, centres and administrative divisions and TSMs. The time they take to be delivered to, and returned from, the addressee is logged.

Some delays are down to us and we are always trying to improve, but letters that are incorrectly addressed or illegible can prevent our service from being as efficient as we would like.

The newly combined Post and Distribution Office, located on the ground floor of Sherfield, handles 72 sacks of mail per day. Each sack can contain up to 1000 items of mail, internal and external. They try to provide a first class service but need College help.

All you need to do is print the addressee's full name and department clearly on the envelope, and remember to tell the Post and

Distribution Supervisor, Sheila Bhatt (extension 48908), when staff leave or move department.

Any suggestions as to how the service could be improved are always welcome.
Yours sincerely
Val Straw
Facilities Manager

Research student
supervision

Dear Don

I'm glad to know that you read Board of Studies papers. I agree that good practice in this (and other matters) should be discussed widely.

Let me help the process by pointing out that the later MPhil to PhD transfer examination which you seem to favour is fine for a good student, well-supervised on a suitable subject. Even here, however, things do sometimes go wrong, and in my short time in my present job, I have come across too many examples where a department has postponed an embarrassing decision for too long.

Humanity and other considerations require that, on the rare occasions when research students have to be told that a PhD is not for them, they should be told as soon as the evidence for the decision is clear.

Yours sincerely
Alan Swanson
Pro-Rector (Educational Quality)

Environmental policy

Dear Editor

I was encouraged to read that the College is considering the development of an environmental policy statement and action plan (College goes green? Issue 2).

Perhaps this plan could include a significant reduction in the number of car parking spaces provided by the College and their replacement with secure bicycle parking, or even with more green space?

This principled action would demonstrate a real commitment to improving the quality of our shared urban environment.

Recycling is obviously sensible, but relatively few of us live adjacent to landfill sites. On the other hand, we all have to breathe.

Yours asthmatically
David Evans
Department of Computing.

IC Reporter

IC Reporter is published fortnightly during term time. This is the last issue of the spring term.

The next issue publication date is Tuesday 25 April.

Contributions and letters for this issue should be received by **Friday 7 April**.

These can be sent to Victoria Browning via email (v.browning) or internal post (Room 546b, Sherfield Building). Extension 46697. Fax 0171-594 6700.

Please note the editor reserves the right to cut or amend the articles as necessary. Information correct at time of going to press.