

This issue of the SCEI newsletter is about our professional skills - what they are, where they come from and how we deploy them. Working in SCEI, it is easy to imagine that academics have a single set of professional skills acquired after years of toil within some ivory tower. The truth is much more interesting. Our staff have acquired a range of complex transferable skills from a fascinating list of occupations. They have inhabited many other worlds of work and now they use their abilities and proficiencies to enrich their current roles and this edition will explore some of these roles. Students also come to us from many different occupations that have equipped them with invaluable knowledge skills and understanding that complement and augment their experience of our degrees. You can read about one of those multi-skilled students in these pages.

Our programmes aim to equip students with the professional skills they need to launch their chosen careers. Professional skills that they will be able to adapt and apply wherever they choose to work. This edition also explores what those skills might be and how you can acquire them. When you were five, if I had asked you what you wanted to be, you might have said 'a bus conductor' or perhaps 'a milk man' and had a reasonable expectation that that's what you would be for your entire working life. Times have changed, milkmen and bus conductors are fewer and further between. Now we desire and sometimes are required to fulfil many different roles and occupations. I think this is a very good thing and allows us to build up a stronger, more adaptable set of professional skills that we can deploy in very different contexts.



Jean MacIntyre Formerly.....

BBC Radio 4 presenter
and writer (age 12)

Clerk to the print
department of the
National Gallery of
London

Manager of antique
stamp and postcard shop

Co-ordinator of toy
library for handicapped
children

Peripatetic teacher in
multicultural centre in
Inner London

Education Welfare Officer

National Education
Co-ordinator-the Design
Council of Great Britain

Education Consultant for
English Heritage

Editor in Chief of award
winning national
magazine for primary
teachers

and now...

Head of the Department
of Culture and the
Environment at Bishop
Grosseteste University
College Lincoln!





Barbara Murphy

Lecturer in
Education Studies

It's the smell of disinfectant – the thick, almost oily and carbolic kind that instantly transports me back to the days of 'the lab'. 'The lab' was the Microbiology department

of the Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham, where I worked during the 1970's and early 1980's as a biomedical scientist, specialising in Microbiology.

Have you ever had a 'specimen' taken when you've been for a check up? Well, the job of a biomedical scientist is to analyse that specimen – in all its glory!!

Aromas of a past professional life

I began this career (rather by default, it has to be said) as a junior scientific officer in Inverness (where else!). In those days there were no degrees in biomedical science and so we all learnt 'on the job', studying on a day-release basis and rotating round the various departments until choosing a specialist area. I began in Histopathology, which was a bit grim, dealing as it did with various larger bits and pieces that had to be processed, sliced microscopically thinly and stained ready for microscopic analysis. This sounds better than it actually was, but we juniors did have some rather macabre fun!

In Microbiology, juniors began on the benches, which were organised by specimen type. Our job involved processing samples – plating these out onto agar jelly dishes, incubating these in giant warm rooms and identifying the resulting bacterial growth by

smell, growth characteristics and microscopic appearance. In time I moved into a specialist area – antimicrobial agents – and it was here that I had the privilege of working with Professor Francis O' Grady. Under his guidance and supervision I began using and writing BASIC programmes for the very first computers (BBCs and Commodore PETs) in order to develop semi-automated systems for determining optimum levels of antibiotics necessary to kill bacterial infections. It was around this time that I presented and published my first scientific paper, albeit as one of a long list of names.

Although the disciplines of science and teaching are very different, my scientific career taught me skills of persistence and the rigour of scientific research undoubtedly has helped me to take a very thorough approach to my present work. More surprisingly,

perhaps, is that it taught me the value of creativity and free experimentation as core components of original thinking. I still remember coming into the lab one morning and finding the professor at the sink, surrounded by tubing, water and wires. It was quite obvious that he had been there most of the night and the lab was chaotic. He was literally playing with ideas which were then translated into a formal research project and subsequently into something very tangible; the first automated system for detecting bacteria and the precursor for most of today's fully automated devices.



Barry Ablitt

Academic Co-ordinator
for Mathematics

I joined the RAF in 1974 at the age of 16½. I originally hoped to fly aeroplanes, like my Dad, but instead left school without any formal qualifications and joined the ranks as an Assistant Air Traffic

Controller. Over a period of years I did something about the qualifications and went on to become a controller in 1986. I was actually paid good money to drive blips around a radar screen! The blips

would often be numerous and fast moving – great fun!

Taking a professional interest in scanning the sky long before joining SCEI

I have many fond memories and tales I could tell about life at a number of interesting locations including Highland Radar (Aberdeenshire), the Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre (Ayrshire) and the Falkland Islands. The most challenging tour was certainly at RAF Honington in Suffolk, where we were responsible for the control of air traffic not only at our own airbase, but also at two neighbouring US airbases at Lakenheath and Mildenhall; this meant three traffic patterns in close proximity and lots of blips to keep apart!

In 1992 I became a commissioned officer in the Education and Training Branch. I was subsequently an Education and Training Officer at RAF Cottesmore and then RAF

North Luffenham (both in Rutland). I retired from the RAF in March 1997, having reached the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

Joining the RAF at such a young age I became conditioned to work according to strict routines. As an Air Traffic Controller I needed to make quick decisions based on the constant re-assessment of situations and priorities; this required one to be prepared and organised at all times. Officer training taught me that "personal standards" were paramount and certainly necessary for one to lead effectively by example. I like to think that I am still an extremely organised individual and continue to set high standards for myself and expect a similar effort from others.



Barry with his young wife Yvonne, his mum and dad at the commissioning ceremony at RAF College Cranwell.





Al Muir

Theatremaker and Visiting Tutor for SCEI

Turning up at the school gate to drop off or collect children from school is a familiar daily experience for thousands of parents, often on a journey

themselves to or from work. But what's it like when your dad drops you off one day with shoulder length hair extensions (as Prince Sigismund) and on another

collects you dressed in First World War military uniform and what are the other parents, children and teachers to make of it all?

A day in the life of Al Muir

You can hear the adult's murmured questions ('what does he do? Where does he work?') though rarely, if ever, from any of the youngsters, who seem to accept you as a character who has strayed 'off set' from Alice in Wonderland. And then, just when they've come to expect the unexpected, hey ho, you're just a parent in a fairly ordinary shirt and jacket with a BG University College ID card hanging on your chest, evidently briskly making your way to teach a module on the Drama and Education or Drama in the Community degree courses.

Teaching on those degree courses, there's an obvious link between my practice as an actor, director and producer of theatre, (or 'theatremaker'- the label I use as an umbrella term to cover all of those roles). My hunch is that it's the range of my professional experience - creating theatre with and for different groups of people, acting as a particular character (Haig) or playing a

variety of roles (workshop leader), that informs my work at BG. So, although at the school gates it's a bit of a giggle as to what I'll look like and who I'm supposed to be, actually it's the less obvious 'interior' acting skill – foregrounding those aspects of self that connect with the role you are playing that is the key to inducting the next generation of applied theatre graduates. Indeed, with drama in the community, it's often necessary to diminish aspects of self that would be unhelpful and irrelevant in a particular setting – adopting behaviours and working methods to engage all sorts of different people in all sorts of places. In fact, rather like teaching, where the really rewarding work often happens unseen in the moments when shifts in understanding occur, skills are grasped and new knowledge is brokered, so it is with theatre making – in rehearsal, in performance, or indeed where the participants are audience to themselves.



Al Muir as Prince Sigismund in 'the Journeys of Captain John Smith' and as Haig (Below).





John Sharp
Head of Research

It all started when I was in the third year of my geology degree at Edinburgh University. I decided to do my undergraduate mapping project in the fossiliferous black

shales of mid-Wales, a bunch of neat rocks full of 400 million year old graptolites and trilobites. That was in the days when you could scoot off to the hills and mountains

on your own without the requirement for acres of paperwork to prove you were safe and sound.

From shales in Wales, sediments in Scotland to classrooms in Colorado.

The black shales opened the door. I was approached soon after the fieldwork by Roy, my Director of Studies (now retired but we still keep in touch), and asked if I might be interested in a junket to Canada to work on a black shale project for BP Minerals, the mineral exploration wing of the BP empire. I still don't know why he asked me really but there you go. Canada? You bet! But as with all these things, the money evaporated before I got on the plane. Rolling forward, it was near the end of my degree course when I was phoned up by BP Minerals directly and asked if I might be interested in prospecting for gold a bit nearer to home, in Scotland in fact. Well, in those days, it would have been 'rude' to say no. So there I was, 20-something years old, working with a bunch of other 20-somethings, led by a guy called Tim. We went out into the hills every day, rain or shine, and collected stream sediment samples which were sent away regularly for analysis. Awesome!

Not long after that BP offered me a full-time job as an exploration geologist working again in Scotland with Tim but this time also with a young lad like me called George and a small team of other full-timers, men and women, posted all over the UK. It was a blast. Geochemical and geophysical surveys till you dropped. Moving up the ranks I eventually got to lead and manage my own 'prospects' somewhere in the Southern Uplands and central Highlands where we eventually got enough of a sniff of some gold to start drilling.

That's my lasting memory of BP Minerals, well

that and the educational trips to the gold and silver deposits of Nevada and California and a quick hike over to the Pyrite Belt of Southern Spain. Working with drillers is just such a unique experience. We started drilling that year in late October and didn't stop until March, right over the winter. Up at 5am to meet them at the foot of the hill at 6am, in the dark, then off in our four-wheel drive all-terrain vehicle. Drillers are hard men with a wicked sense of humour. While I sheltered in our little 'porta-hut' at each drill site making the tea, they would be busy breaking up the neat anti-freeze we'd run through the exposed hydraulic system of the drill every night with hammers and melting it with blow torches (neat anti-freeze!). They never complained.

Then it was off to other things. A Master's at the Camborne School of Mines (went down each and every working tin mine before they all closed) and then a jaunt to Colorado which would change my life (and where Jane and I got married). It was in Colorado that I got invited to talk to kids in a local elementary school and that led me into primary teaching. The rest, as they say, is history. I still keep in touch with George who works as a geologist in the Andes of Chile, and I still keep in touch with Tim who heads up North American exploration out of Vancouver. I still find it hard to go for a walk without looking at rocks, thinking about the history and evolution of the landscape, and occasionally stopping to look for gold.



A graptolite.



A trilobite



Panning for gold.



The Colorado High Peaks.



Angela House

Head of the Department of Applied Studies for Lifelong Learning

I was once asked by a wealthy business man, who wished me to establish a nursery and prep school in the Middle East, as he leafed through my academic portfolio,

which was my most important achievement. After some consideration I plumped for the smallest and oldest piece of paper in the portfolio dated 1976 about a

short course I had taken with the Open University called 'the Pre-School Child'.

Reflecting on the real meaning of 'Professionalism' in her own career and for all those who work with children.

I explained that this was where it had started for me and, in actual fact, it was my first academic achievement of all after leaving school. What I really wanted to show him was a lovely card which had been made by a group of children and given to me on Valentine's Day, because this was one of my most treasured achievements.

There is a difference between being professional and being a professional. The former is about how people do their job and the latter is more concerned with qualifications. Working with young children has always been regarded as a caring profession but not in the same way as nursing or teaching because of the level of qualification required to do the job. Over the many years I have been employed working with children and their families, I feel that I have had the time and experience for reflecting on what being professional means both as a person and as an employer.

An effective communicator

Being an effective communicator is the most important skill to have especially when working with other people. To be an effective communicator also requires the ability to listen. When you listen to young children especially, a whole world of possibilities opens up and memories flood back of what it means to be 'that age'. Listening shows interest and allows for questioning. It develops respect through shared understanding and provides the opportunity to respond. This lies at the heart of being a professional who wants the best for the children and families s/he works with or the organisation where s/he is employed. Effective communication provides the necessary climate in which relationships can flourish and integrity develops.

Understanding of child development

Child development is an area that I have

studied and observed. I have achieved qualifications in applied social sciences studying the effects of the environment on the individual and the individual on the environment. Understanding the influences which affect the development of the individual in childhood through adolescence to adulthood is unquestionably the most important skill that I can offer as a professional. I've always been interested in others and what makes us tick. Having an insight into the causes of human actions and what underpins behaviours together with the ability to reflect and adjust to situations allows empathy to develop. This is especially helpful when sensitive judgements have to be made when working with children and their families and also with work colleagues.

Developing a personal philosophy

Of course I really didn't know that I had a personal philosophy until much later in life and after I had studied the 'greats' including such early childhood philosophers as Rousseau, Froebel, Steiner and McMillan. However John Dewey has long been a favourite. His ideas seemed to provide me

with the necessary belief in what was right for me and, at a deeper level, combined my interest in the individual and society within an educational framework, in which I found myself working at a professional level. Dewey has been, for some, the father of 'experiential learning'. He believed that education and educators must take account of the uniqueness of individuals and their experiences. His belief that education had a 'broader social purpose' to enrich the community and that each individual could be part of that experience in a democratic society, has always had resonance for me and underpins my professionalism at all levels.





Kate Adams and Andrew Jackson

Prior to teaching Kate worked in academic publishing, culminating in the role of marketing manager for a list of books at Pergamon Press in Oxford. Her career has now come full circle and the insight into how a

publisher works has proven to be invaluable since becoming an author of academic books herself! Before becoming an academic Andrew Jackson has been a churchyard memorial surveyor and archivist, an art history bookseller

off the Charing Cross Road, a walking tour leader in the South of France and further afield, and also a local government transport policy and enforcement officer.

Top do's and don'ts in professional research practice

Do

Challenge the boundaries and conventional theories of your discipline; journals want original and thought-provoking work. Make a difference.

Present your work to the leading lights in your field, either at conferences they are attending or through peer review for the key journals. Critique can be hard to take but their comments will make your work stronger – they may even become your fans!

Try out ideas and material in a short non-peer reviewed article before building up a related, fuller peer-reviewed one, in order to widen the reach of your research, as well as to allow thoughts and approaches to be formed before committing and exposing your work to the peer-review process.

Pick and choose. Chase externally-funded project work that ties in with your research, even if the funding body is not funding academic research outputs.

Build external networks of academics also interested in your field of research. This can be crucial to finding encouragement, mutual support, collaboration, a readership and possibly funding.

Don't

Underestimate the sacrifices you will need to make in order to achieve your maximum potential. High quality research takes time and focus, so other things in your life will need to be sacrificed in order to achieve excellence.

Settle for your second or third draft when writing a paper. Rewrite over and over again until you cannot bear to look at it any more. Strive for the absolute best you can do. Underestimate how much time it takes to write up, redraft and proof read.

Put quality over quantity in academic research. For many reasons less (done excellently) is more.





Heather Hockling

A third year student of Heritage Studies

Many of our students apply professional skills learnt in previous contexts to their current degrees to carve out brand new career paths. Before starting her

degree course in SCEI, Heather Hocking studied photography and worked for Elm Grange interiors designing their adverts and flyers. Heather realised that what she

really liked taking photographs of was country houses so her interest was sparked by an advert for the Heritage Studies BA.

Professional life and University College a career - made better by design!

The course promised visits to heritage sites and many of the county houses I have always wanted to visit. My camera became omnipresent on these visits and gave me the material needed for essays, exhibitions and design interpretation.

Using my design skills has also helped me find a useful place within my cohort. Poster design, interpretation boards and press releases have become my speciality.

As a direct result of working towards my degree, I have forged important and fruitful partnership in my chosen industry. One particular module last year proved to be the catalyst for making an important contact in

the museums sector. The Henry VIII, "Dressed to Kill"" exhibition, at The Collection in Lincoln, was for me, the start of a new business relationship. This exhibition and the success of our team allowed me to show what I am capable of in a professional setting.

I have now started to develop a career pathway which is far removed from my initial ideas of joining a team in a country house. With an understanding of how the heritage industry functions, combined with my technical skills, working as a freelance graphic designer in museums and for the National Trust is becoming a real possibility.

My most recent success is to be commissioned by The Collection to create the interpretation boards for a new exhibition in November of this year. Networking within the industry through the Heritage Studies BA, has become a valuable tool to finding my place and hopefully my future employment within the industry.



Lorna Piatti-Farnell

In Lorna Piatti-Farnell's forthcoming publication for Routledge Food and Culture in Contemporary American Fiction she investigates the significances of food and eating in major literary works, from 1980

to the present day. In identifying different incarnations of the 'American culinary', the study unveils how culturally-coded representations of food illuminate contemporary anxieties about

class, race, tradition, immigration, nationhood and history.

As American as Apple Pie

Here's an extract to whet your appetite..... From Don DeLillo's indigestive burgers to Fannie Flagg's nostalgic cornbread, from Tom Wolfe's outrageous chow to Amy Tan's traditional dyanisuin, food in contemporary American fiction continues to fascinate, gratify and disturb. Lavish descriptions of corporate gourmet meals, the luxurious taste

of dishes from the Old Country and an array of modernised fast-food appetites: eating pervades contemporary literature. The appetising partnership between food and American fiction has all the right ingredients and proves to be a provocative mixture of hope, love, regret and undying doubt'.





Helen Durham

Sandford Co-ordinator and MA Student

The organising of the Sandford ceremony was the most challenging, interesting and rewarding task I have ever had

to carry out. An eclectic mix of professional skills was vital and each skill had to be of a high standard.

Professionalism in action at a Royal palace.

The Sandford Awards ceremony took place on Monday 15th February, in St. George's Hall, Windsor Castle. His Royal Highness Prince Edward kindly agreed to present the awards and it was a great honour to meet him. Working at a Royal Palace, with a member of the Royal Family involved is a wonderful experience but professionalism is at its highest and it is expected that all staff follow the set protocol carefully. All of the staff at Windsor Castle were efficient and possessed excellent communication skills. This created a very relaxed and happy working atmosphere. Staff worked well in their teams, as well as being expected to use individual initiative when necessary. They were always welcoming to the visiting public.

Whilst organising the awards ceremony, I dealt with many other organisations. For example, the caterers, metropolitan police, photographers, media and hotels, as well as assisting people directly connected to the Sandford Awards organisation and the award winners themselves. As I had a wide range of people to deal with, it was necessary to use good negotiation skills, especially when

dealing with financial, timing and people management issues.

Clear and concise communication was essential, especially knowing how to deal with particular people at certain times.

When speaking with the staff at Bagshot Park, Prince Edward's official office, one must adopt a different tone to when ordering drink at the local Lidl store. Having said this being friendly, understanding and polite with everyone always produces positive results.

Apart from using telephone, email and various media, I enjoyed actually meeting people and as an ambassador for the Sandford Awards, it was always advantageous to look smart, be well prepared and have a 'smiley' face. Everyone was always interested to learn about the 'Sandford Awards', so to have a good knowledge about your subject is imperative.

Organisational skills and time management were also very important. We started arranging the ceremony at the beginning of November, so realistically we had very little

time. However with good planning right at the start and knowing how to piece each task together at specific times, it can work smoothly.

Professionalism demands a strong personal interest in the subject supplemented by good skills in IT, maths and literacy

I have always enjoyed working within the heritage sector, the people, the places and the theory behind it all, so this was a fantastic experience and one where I had to implement all of my professional skills as well as learning and adapting to new skills with speed and accuracy.

