

## Conference Reviews by John Marsh and Peter Yeandle, postgraduate research students in History at Lancaster University

Paul Hyland and Alan Booth introduced the conference, the first day of which would focus on the relationship of research and teaching.

### Briefing Paper 1

Paul outlined recent scholarship on general research into the relationship between research and teaching. This was especially interesting and valuable for delegates, since he drew attention to the sources that had been cited in the government's White Paper 'The Future of Higher Education' (2003), and those that had evidently not been influential in devising the new UK strategies for higher education (see link for Briefing Paper 1).

### Briefing Paper 2

Alan's paper raised seven thematic questions that would inform group discussions (see link for Briefing Paper 2). He spoke about the potential impact of the White Paper for history departments and historians. In particular he asked:

- How do we define research? Might 'work' other than that traditionally submitted for RAE be considered - especially that concerned with linking teaching and research (eg, textbooks, software, classroom research)?
- Why is teaching often thought of as less intellectually demanding than research? Could delegates think of any reasons for this division of the perceived intellectual merit of teaching and research?
- There is an assumption/rule that excellence in teaching is directly related to excellence in research? Why? How?
- What does research-led teaching mean? Are there differences between this and research-led *learning*?
- Can a non-researcher in History be an effective History teacher?
- What do research and teaching have in common? What role do students play in 'our' research?
- Does emphasis on research negate attention to teaching and learning? Has/does the RAE discouraged pedagogic innovation?

Feedback from groups raised some interesting topics for further discussion.

- Teaching what your research is may be a method for bridging the teaching and research gap. That is, is there a need to teach more about how we know what we know, rather than persist with the 'knowledge-transfer' model. Alan Booth's phrase - 'a discovery-led curriculum'.
- There is pressure on young academics to stay abreast of both subject/specialism research and research into pedagogy.
- The role of postgraduates (with training) in provision of undergraduate courses is of growing interest and importance.
- Student interest is often in staff 'expertise' as much as staff involvement in research.
- The need to raise the status of teaching.

- The need to reconceptualise the dichotomy between research and teaching - research, after all, is 'advanced learning'. Perhaps teaching students as if they were apprentice researchers. Further, it is a disservice to students to assume that they are not interested in research.

Delegates then discussed whether or not the Subject Centre should send a 'cohesive, unified' response to the White Paper. Paul Hyland directed to the Generic Centre's website ([www.ltsn.ac.uk](http://www.ltsn.ac.uk)) where there are many papers on the relationship between teaching and research.

## Group Discussions

During the discussion in Group 4, it was suggested by some participants that there was generally a positive and strong relationship between research and teaching in the discipline of history in higher education. However, it was also suggested that the understanding of this link between research and teaching was weak, with little or no existing literature on the subject, especially in comparison to other subjects and disciplines. Historians' understanding of the link was felt to be weak.

Concerns were also raised with regard to what might be termed the 'shock effect' of the government's White Paper, and how exactly the relationship between research and teaching should be defined. In particular, History departments which aspired to success in research (but were not yet rated as excellent) were felt to be vulnerable.

The issue of the bi-polarity of research and teaching was also raised, and it was suggested that there was an overemphasis on research, which resulted in a distortion of institutional priorities.

A further issue considered was that of the position of students, and in particular, the argument that experienced researchers were able to teach well. It was felt that it was experienced researchers who best enabled students to develop their skills.

The four main conclusions that emerged from this discussion group were:

- 1) The need to put more effort into establishing institutional equivalence for teaching and research.
- 2) That teaching should model how we *think* in the subject, rather than what we *know*.
- 3) The role of students in our research activity should be made *explicit*.
- 4) That there was a need to break down the dichotomy that has been set up between research and teaching, which has created a continuum of learning in which research was seen as 'advanced learning', while teaching was simply bringing along 'novice' learners.

In addition, it was also felt that it would be beneficial to have more emphasis on the development of research skills in students, taught by those who themselves were experienced researchers, and thereby demonstrating the positive relationship between research and teaching. Furthermore, it was also felt that tutors should have some greater awareness of how students actually learn.

## Using ICT in Teaching History

### Why run a web discussion forum?

Andrew Dawson (*University of Greenwich*)

Andrew's website for his Hollywood course (a recent LTSN site-winner) has links to a forum for student discussion, out of which he has been developing the use of the e-seminar as a method of enhancing student interaction and participation.

### Envisaged learning outcomes

- Supplement weekly seminars by giving students a forum to continue discussion/share preparation/ideas
- Encourage student participation and interaction by delimiting the role of tutor as information-source
- Enhance student awareness of peers' contributions
- Use as a method of monitoring 'the flow of ideas', especially when large seminar groups have to be broken down into buzz groups
- Provide a link to other sites/online documents, etc, that students recommend to each other

### Problems encountered

- As in seminars, hard to get all students to participate
- How to tell if students have accessed the forum if they have not commented
- Issue of time in both establishing the forum and demonstrating how to use it, but also in monitoring comments and providing feedback

### Unexpected positive outcomes

- Positive influence on the conventional seminar: a means into discussion
- Allows reflective learning - comments are archived for posterity - but also to return to
- Boosts students' confidence
- Allows 'shared' learning
- Empowerment - this is a student-led resource
- Assists in administrative issues

Finally, Andrew stated that *the* significant benefit was that, since the forum is archived/'archivable', this allows a more rigorous and effective assessment of seminar contributions which would normally be impossible because of lack of alternative tutor presence.

### Comments from the floor

- Issue of time was raised, some commenting that they could see the pedagogic value of such an exercise but had reservations about implementation and maintenance
- Issue of those students that didn't use the forum. Student access to machines in order to access the forum. Is this fair if contributions are to be assessed?

## Learning Technology and the Relationship between Teaching and Research

Graham Rogers (*Edgehill College*)

Graham built on his presentation last year. The main focus of this paper, in drawing from his use of ICT in HE history teaching, was to explore the extent to which this aided the bridging of the gap between research and teaching. Graham drew attention to the fact that much undergraduate history teaching has regrettably been forced in recent years to become 'result-led'. In his view, this has undermined the importance of sharing with

students the 'process' of doing history. It is the function of 'process' that is key to his use of ICT.

In 'the classroom', ICT enables the development of the link between sources and inference, and encourages independent thinking. As a problem-based learning experience, this approach is a counter to the 'transfer model' of teaching. In this way, by encouraging students to, in effect, become 'researchers' themselves, the teaching and research nexus may be strengthened.

Questions from the floor, as with Andrew Dawson's paper, focused on the issue of the time required for implementation and maintenance. Other areas for discussion included:

- Students are notoriously product-oriented – might shifting the focus from result to process be problematic?
- Is there proper room within such teaching to allow for issues of ability differentiation? How to pitch such a resource. Implications for tasks set and for assessment.

### **'No Teddy Bear's Picnic': History Students and Reflective Diaries** **Carole Mallia (*University of Nottingham*)**

This stimulating session began with a role-playing session in which participants who did not know each other worked together on a given topic to produce a 5-minute presentation that would be assessed by other groups. Participants then spent a minute or two (alone) reflecting on their role in the group. Besides noting that this was in microcosm the experience of undergraduates (i.e., pressure to work with strangers, time constraints, focus on the end-product), the benefit of this was that attention was drawn to how little students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning and working processes. The idea was posited that reflective engagement with the 'process' of learning would enhance the learning experience.

Areas for discussion included *how* it would be possible to assess reflection, how the 'task' of reflecting could be set-up and moderated, what year of study to implement such a programme, and whether or not the teaching/research nexus could be bridged by modelling ourselves as reflective researchers/practitioners.

### **Museums, Archives and the Student Experience** **Ronald Barr, *Chester College***

This session outlined the relationship between Chester College's History Department and the Cheshire Military Museum, and how this collaborative partnership has been beneficial to both parties. From the perspective of Chester College History Department, this relationship has created opportunities for the integration within the degree structure of experiential learning in the military museum. At a first-year undergraduate level this may simply involve the observing and handling of artefacts; at a second-year level, it can take the form of a work placement in the museum, which provides the opportunity for students to design displays and catalogue artefacts. In addition, the rich archival resources of the military museum are utilised by final-year undergraduates in their dissertations, and also at a postgraduate level by taught MA and research students. Ronald also outlined further benefits that the partnership has brought, such as broader educational and transferable skills for students, and in some cases career benefits, as several students have subsequently begun a career in the armed forces.

The key issue that was stressed in the paper itself, and the discussion following it, was the importance of creating a healthy relationship between the institutions involved in this partnership – or indeed any similar partnership between a higher-education institution and

a museum/heritage site. Ronald stressed the need for written agreements and a stated agenda of benefits for both parties; an agreement of which parties deliver which resources, and the need for a willingness for both parties to deploy the necessary resources to ensure the success of the partnership. Like Billy Frank in his talk, Ronald stressed the importance of creating 'structures' to ensure a successful partnership, and not simply relying upon personalities and personal contacts.

### **Life in the Real World: Supporting History Students Undertaking Work Placements in the Heritage Industry**

**Billy Frank, *Edgehill College***

Billy outlined the progress made by his students undertaking Edge Hill's 'History@work' module, which sixteen students took as a unit of their degree programme. These students are working in a variety of heritage industry sites in Merseyside and south-west Lancashire, and the module is assessed at 1/8<sup>th</sup> of their degree programme. Billy – like Ronald Barr in his session – placed particular emphasis upon the need for carefully-constructed relationships and partnerships between academic institution (and academic tutor in particular) and placement provider. As well as explaining the background to the development of this module, Billy also outlined what he believed to be the benefits for both students and department, and outlined the nature and format of assessment for this unit. The session ended with a short video presentation featuring several of Billy's students being filmed while carrying out their placement work and giving their thoughts and observations upon their experiences. The students' observations were positive, and many of them stressed how their transferable skills had been developed during their placements; one student indicated that her placement work had encouraged her to seek a career in the heritage industry. But perhaps the most enlightening student comment was that the experience was 'stretching my brain in another way'.

Questions and observations from the floor concentrated upon the logistics of the placement scheme at a micro-level – how long the placements were; whether students were assigned placements as individuals or in pairs. In contrast to Ronald Barr's placement scheme at Chester, Billy's students experience a much geographically wider diaspora. The issue of the quality and level of placement provided by heritage sites was also discussed, while at a macro-level, it was wondered what would happen if all (or more) universities in the region provided such schemes – would the 'History@work' module still be viable? In addition, the important issues of whether there was a task/time dichotomy for students, and following on from that, whether there was actually a placement/study dichotomy were also discussed. A further important issue that was considered was that of the difficulty of measuring the academic quality of students' placement work.

### **The Role of the European History network, ClioHnet, and innovation in teaching and learning**

**Ann Katherine Isaacs (*University of Pisa*); Joaquim Ramos de Carvalho (*University of Coimbra*)**

This plenary session essentially outlined the structure and aims of ClioHnet. All information delivered is available via the website – <http://www.clioh.net>. ClioHnet, as an organisation, seeks to broaden shared learning and knowledge of effective teaching practice across Europe. ClioH is an acronym for: "Creating Links and Innovative Overviews to Enhance Historical Perspective in European Culture". Part of this includes workshops (out of which publications are produced) and task forces. Joaquim gave us an example of ClioHnet in action from the perspective of his institution, concentrating specifically on TEEP (the trans-European evaluation project).

### **'Never the Twain Shall Meet?' Techniques for Teaching History in Schools and Universities**

**Peter Davies, *University of Huddersfield* and Rhys Davies, *Longcroft School Beverley***

This session attempted to discover whether the same techniques could be used to stimulate the teaching of history at school and university levels. The speakers placed great emphasis upon learning style theory and the importance of catering for 'multiple intelligences' – be they creative, dramatic or kinetic, as well as logical and linguistic, and how it was important to utilise teaching methods and techniques which motivated the various 'multiple intelligences' of students and got them to participate more actively in the learning process. The session was ended with an exercise in which delegates paired off and attempted to assess the usefulness at degree level of a particular technique - drawing an historical concept for example, or constructing genealogies.

This talk stimulated a lot of reaction from the floor. In particular, the nature of history as a discipline which 'is necessarily linguistic' was emphasised by one delegate, and that students who lacked the requisite linguistic skills must obtain them; by implication, the use of methods to stimulate 'multiple intelligences' while serving to motivate students, did not compensate in this respect. This point was followed up by another delegate who expressed concern over whether such techniques would actually demotivate students in the long run due to the linguistic and logical intelligence bias of history. It was also queried whether students actually understood how they learnt. In addition, the needs of mature students with a different point of view in their learning career were also commented upon. As the speakers admitted themselves, 'not all methods work' in attempting to motivate students.

### **Developing Learning and Teaching in the Secondary School: Tradition and Renewal in a Subject Community**

**Christine Counsell, *University of Cambridge*.**

This keynote paper sought to identify and account for the 'teacher-led' revival in secondary school pre-GCSE history teaching that has taken place since the late 1990s. Amongst the factors that were identified were teaching methods such as encouraging students to hypothesise, enquiry-led teaching which challenges pupils, and the significance of building students' knowledge with a sense of period and depth. It was suggested that knowledge and learning in depth which creates a sense and understanding of 'period' in school history is the essential prerequisite for an overview of history. In addition, emphasis was placed upon the important role played by extended argument and writing, and perhaps extended reading too, in pre-GCSE level school history for pupils, the benefits of which are perhaps diminished by the reductive effect of the small-sources-based approach at GCSE level.

### **On-line Resources and the Teaching and Learning of History**

**Mike Winstanley, *Lancaster University* and Janice Taylor, *North West Museums, Libraries and Archives Council***

This paper introduced and demonstrated some of the major developments that have taken place recently in archive cataloguing, especially the digitisation of documents in the form of on-line research resources, and discussed how these developments could be utilised in history teaching in higher education. One key issue to emerge from this paper was the difference between the needs of schools and local/family historians and those in higher education. While schools (by virtue of the syllabus) and local/family historians (by narrow self-determination), are easy to provide digitised archival sources for, the demands of higher education are far less easy to predict and provide for, due to the 'research-led' emphasis in this sector, which sees staff with diverse interests and knowledge and students with diverse origins, levels of ability and interests. Additional issues that were covered included accessibility, the importance of experiential learning for students in using archives, and what the future might hold for higher education in its use of electronic

archives, in the form of student research projects, on-line archives courses and work placements. A significant selection of major on-line archival websites was also provided.

The main question to emerge from the discussion that followed this paper was what archival sources would be the most useful for higher education. It was suggested that because archives classify by source and not by subject, it is easier for them to cater for the *source-based* demands of schools and local/family historians, while they sometimes struggle to provide for student (and generally speaking higher education) needs which are invariably *subject-based*. One possible solution was for higher education to produce guides for students to enable them to use archives more effectively.

### **Why Study Sources?**

Michael Hicks (*King Alfred's, Winchester*)

In this session, Michael drew from research undertaken in conjunction with Christopher Aldous (also of King Alfred's) into the ways in which university history departments teach and value 'sources'. Copies of the LTSN report were provided for delegates. The paper was grounded in the questions arising from the following results: Out of 39 departments that answered the question 'What do your students get out of sources?' 39 answered 'analysis', 38 'technical skills', 32 'Familiarity and Atmosphere' and 32 'Illustration'. The focus of the paper was to explore the meaning of these phrases, especially in relation to the 'examined source' – gobbets.

Emphasis was placed on the incompatibility of instructions and practice in gobbet exercises; not only nationally across departments, but also within departments. For instance, the distinction between how medievalists and modernists use, and, crucially, *value* the gobbet exercise was drawn out. This was related to questions of what learning outcomes (viz skills) it was expected that students attain.

Subsequent discussion raised the following issues for further thought:

- The purpose of gobbets? The need for a method of assessment. The distinction between source-use in coursework and examination. Do we need marking criteria that transcend module matter to enable 'fair' assessment across the board?
- Interestingly, and perhaps highly pleasing given the theme of the day, schoolteachers present enabled a discussion of the relationship between the teaching of sources in schools and Universities. As with Christine Counsell's keynote and Michael Riley's parallel session, emphasis was placed on just how 'spot-on' is the Key Stage 3 approach to historical *enquiry*. From GCSE to undergraduate level, it was observed that because sources are 'narrower', they might actually be detrimental to historical learning since they potentially divorce sources from the question of historical enquiry. Additionally, it was agreed by all that more emphasis needs placing on the role of sources in the relationship between students' independent thinking and their constructions of their own historical argument. This applied not only at undergraduate level, but also at AS/A1 and GCSE.

### **Questioning In History: Planning for Quality Learning in the Secondary School** Michael Riley (*Bath Spa University College*)

This interactive session was attended by an equal number of those in the schools and university sector. This provided for an interesting discussion. Although the paper took as its subject the issues surrounding the theme of 'questioning in history' at Key Stage 3, it soon became clear that the problems and possibilities discussed transcended the age at which history was taught. Those in the universities commented that the 'Knowledge, Skills and

Understanding' elements of the KS3 programme would lend themselves well to undergraduate programmes. Similarities were especially apparent when looking at a piece of extended-writing work, when Michael demonstrated the 'beginnings' of the development of the writing skills of structure, relevance, writing style and substantiation.

On questioning (i.e., asking the right questions) in particular, Michael drew attention to his belief in the crucial importance of the following factors:

- The need for more interactive rigour in setting the right question: systematised not only to age but also ability;
- Visual stimuli;
- The question, where possible, should engage the student's imagination, by linking to human issues;
- It should be motivational and directed to an end question; and
- Use 'rich' resources.

What was particularly illustrative in this session, as it was in Michael Hicks', was that there should be a dialogue between schools and universities because, essentially, at all levels – historians know what it is they want to teach. That is, Enquiry, Significance, Cause and Consequence, Similarity and Difference and Interpretation. In a paraphrase of Michael's words, we, as historians, should build together on our fundamental understanding of our subject – from KS1 to the postgraduate level.

### **The Relationship between School and University History: the missing links**

Eric Evans (*Lancaster University*)

Eric raised a number of important points valid to both the school and university sectors. He began by paying attention to two general problems. First, that focus is too much on assessment; that there needs to be rigorous enquiry into how assessment can be effectively 'threaded', rather than just positioned as 'hoops', which students are aware they need jump through. Secondly, that because of issues of finance, many of today's undergraduates are, in effect, 'part-time' students.

Eric's keynote covered 5 themes:

- he outlined the key features of university history provision, and then
- the key features of school history provision (with an especial focus on AS/A2 level, commenting on the likeness of AS/A2 criteria to the History benchmark statement);
- Parallels between school and universities – more similarity than difference;
- why do university historians know little about what is going on in schools?
- a warning comment on History in the media and its relationship to school/university history provision. Although History is given a sense of 'romance' by its various media representations, we need to be cautious since 'ignorance is no bar to influence'.

Eric suggested that school and university historians should work closer in the future. In his opinion, 'we are a fragmented community' that 'needs to be put together', in order fully to realise 'the good we separately do'. In particular, he proposed that there should be thinking about the potential merits of a 16-21 curriculum, and the combined thinking about how to address the imbalance between learning and assessment.



## **In summary**

Paul summarised the Friday with the wish that the divide between school and university history be 'properly put into history'.

Overall, the following key themes emerged as areas for further dialogue between school and university historians:

- more attention needs to be paid on the process of learning, rather than the attaining of an end-result;
- that Key Stage 3 history was clearly doing very well – especially regarding the question of encouraging historical enquiry. It would not be regressive for academics to learn from the innovative techniques of schoolteachers;
- given the above point, it was also apparent that many of the issues that blight undergraduate history also pose problems at AS/A2 and GCSE levels;
- the role of sources in historical learning may well be an avenue in which historians from schools and universities can work together in formulating best practice.