



The Open
University

Annual Report // 2008/09



Vice-Chancellor's foreword



“The future of open and distance learning lies with technology – a technology that combines with human ingenuity to deliver ever more possibilities”

This year The Open University marked its 40th anniversary and it has been a year of celebration and reflection as well as an opportunity to bring to the attention of the public the enormous strides we have made in a variety of fields – not least in harnessing what Harold Wilson called the “white heat of technology”.

He conceived of the OU originally as “a university of the air”, a university without walls, and imagined it in partnership with a host of institutions including, of course, the BBC. He could not have foreseen the internet and the joys of sharing educational and research material with millions of people, even beyond the BBC, from virtually every country in the world. He could only be enthralled, as we are, by the opportunities the internet brings for reaching the unreached, for collaborating, for participating in the knowledge production process, for including voices that have not been heard in these ways before, for partnering with institutions all around the world.

As you read through the pages of this report you will be lost in admiration at how the staff and students of the OU have found ways to harness the technological possibilities available and set them to work in furthering our founding mission and goals – and in so doing demonstrated our leadership in the open and distance learning movement and indeed our leadership in the sector generally for innovation in education.

Quite apart from our marvellous Virtual Learning Environment (an open source initiative using Moodle) and our students’ heavy use of its myriad opportunities, there are astonishing numbers of people visiting our OpenLearn site and downloading our material from the iTunes U store (all free). We were one of the first universities to establish an online repository of our published research. Some OU research is using the capacity of the web to involve people from all

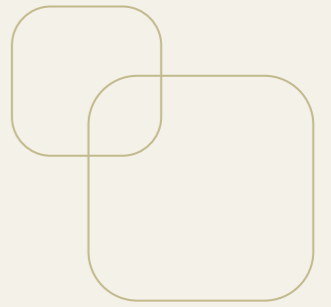
around the globe in projects a vast majority of them would never before have had the opportunity to participate in. We have seized the moment and made a huge contribution to the celebration of Charles Darwin’s anniversaries and in the process enrolled students on new courses on the subject of evolution.

All this and a whole lot more. Read all about it – either in this report or on our website.

I would like to pay tribute to those alumni, friends, trusts and corporations who have so generously supported the University in its ambitions over the years. They have directly contributed to the success of this institution and The Open University is grateful for their support.

This is my last Annual Report as Vice-Chancellor. As Harold Wilson and his colleagues knew all those years ago, the future of open and distance learning lies with technology, a technology that combines with human ingenuity to deliver ever more possibilities. As I hand over the reins to Martin Bean, I leave secure in the knowledge that the OU is in good hands – and I wish him and the institution well.

Professor Brenda Gourley
Vice-Chancellor



Pro-Chancellor's foreword

By the time this report is published Brenda Gourley will have retired as Vice-Chancellor and been replaced by Martin Bean. Brenda has steered the OU through some very difficult times – intense competition, rapid technological change, a significant change in the OU's funding arrangements and the worst economic crisis any of us have experienced



Despite all this, the OU is stronger than ever; the leader in the "part-time" market, the champion of social justice as it affects higher education, a strong balance sheet and a global brand. Brenda must take the major share of the credit for this situation, but she would be the first to acknowledge the contribution of all her colleagues. We all wish Brenda well in her retirement.

Her successor, Martin Bean, will have to tackle some daunting problems; the impact of tight control over public expenditure, the effect of a depressed economy on potential students and even tougher competition. But the OU with its unique basic values coupled with its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, will, I believe, under Martin's leadership, and through the continued support of our friends and donors, emerge stronger than ever when the dust eventually settles.

Baron Haskins of Skidby
Pro-Chancellor

New Vice-Chancellor

Martin Bean started his new role as Vice-Chancellor of The Open University on 1 October. He joins the OU from the Microsoft Corporation, having more than 20 years' experience in training and education, and holding senior executive positions in North America, Asia Pacific and Europe. He recently moved to the UK from the US with his wife and three daughters.



Image: Andy Pini

Chancellor's foreword

The OU occupies a very distinctive position in the digital age

Thanks to its structure, and its early relationship with broadcast technology, it can legitimately lay claim to having been a 'virtual institution' long before the term had even been invented

Consequently, the OU is ideally positioned to seize the vast opportunities of the digital age which are allowing millions of learners to gain access to a vast and dynamic 'web' of information, people and digital tools.

We live in an environment in which learners of all ages and backgrounds expect an entirely new form of engagement with the world around them; one that doesn't simply rely on accessing knowledge, but on creating and sharing new forms of understanding.

For the OU, this is a quite extraordinary moment – we are seeing the model of virtual and distance learning, which we have championed for so long, take off on a scale well beyond anything Jennie Lee and her colleagues could ever have dreamed of.

I believe that the OU, by taking ownership of the ethos that drives these new means of learning, can help produce a generation of creative people capable of dealing with the immense challenges of this new and extraordinarily difficult century.

As Chancellor, I'm incredibly proud of the record of achievement set out in this report. I am confident that the OU will continue to prosper and grow in a digital environment that offers outstanding opportunities for its staff and students by enabling them to use digital tools to share their learning in ways that weren't remotely possible in an analogue era.

I'll certainly be doing everything I can to make sure that the OU is at the forefront of learning in this digital age; that we help equip all of our students with the knowledge, the understanding and the skills to triumph over both the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead.

Lastly, I'd like to pay my own tribute to our retiring Vice-Chancellor, Brenda Gourley.



I first heard Brenda speak at a conference in Hong Kong some 15 years ago. It's no exaggeration to say that she electrified the room that day, and she's been doing the same wherever and whenever I've had the privilege of watching her in action ever since.

The Open University owes Brenda an enormous debt of gratitude, the full magnitude of which may not be immediately apparent. It lies in the heroic work she did in stabilising our financial position, fighting our corner against all-comers and creating an institution that is in every respect 'fit-for-purpose' for the 21st century.

Along with all of her colleagues I can only thank her, and wish her a fulfilling 'retirement' in whatever cause she decides to throw herself into.

Lord Puttnam of Queensgate
Chancellor

The Open University continues to act as a beacon in the global open access movement, exploiting a wide range of digital and new media in delivering its mission of making high-quality educational resources available to all



Digital round-up

Platform

December 2008 saw the soft launch of the OU's community website, Platform. Providing a vibrant virtual community for OU students, alumni and staff – and anyone else with an interest in education and learning – the site has attracted close to one million unique users. Platform considers its community to be not only formal members – current and previous students, retired and active staff – but also anyone with an interest in learning and education in its broadest sense, in line with the OU's mission and web 2.0 philosophies.

www.open.ac.uk/platform

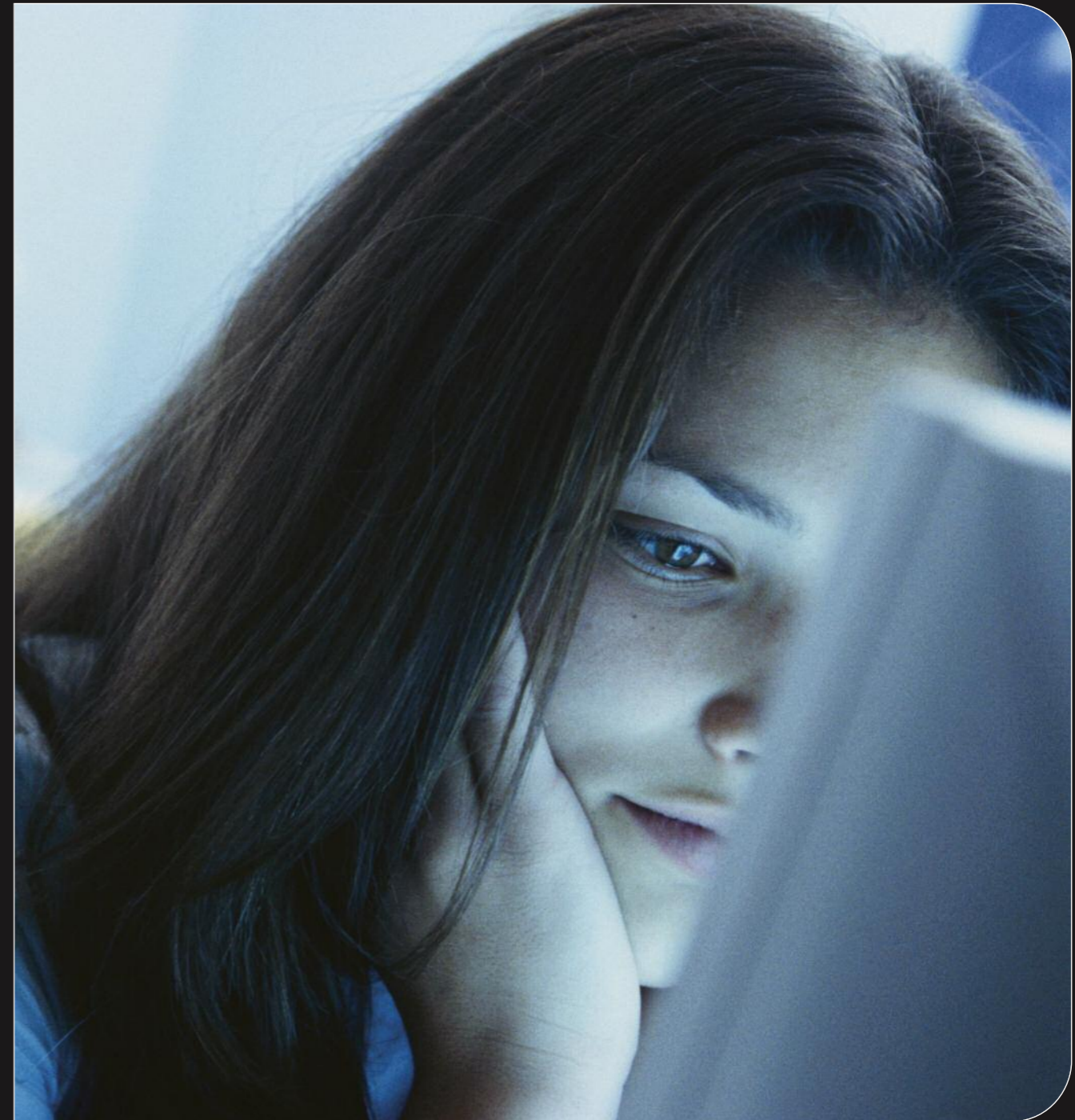
Bridging the Digital Divide

In September 2008 the OU launched a new six-month pilot scheme entitled Bridging the Digital Divide which aimed to encourage students in 10 locations across the UK to gain access to new and advanced computer technology at participating libraries or online centres. Will Swann, Director, Students at the OU, said: "Being open to all is fundamental for the OU and that means making sure no one is excluded from the opportunity for higher education that we offer because they can't get online."

VLE

A software system designed to support teaching and learning in an educational setting, the VLE – the Virtual Learning Environment – grew considerably in 2009 with more than one million visits being recorded for the first time in March and sustaining a 60 per cent higher level of use than 2008.

“Being open to all is fundamental for the OU and that means making sure no one is excluded from the opportunity for higher education that we offer because they can't get online”



Digital round-up



iTunes U

Open University content reached number one on the iTunes U downloads chart with the video *Bottled Water* achieving 19,471 downloads in just four days. *Bottled Water* is an animated video which looks at where bottled water comes from and its impact on the environment. It forms part of the OU course, U116 *Environment: journeys through a changing world*.

Some 156 albums were produced for iTunes U during 2008/09 and in July 2009 the OU reached five million downloads, now averaging 140,000 downloads per week.

www.open.ac.uk/itunes

YouTube

In September 2008, The Open University launched its own YouTube channel with more than 300 videos to extend its commitment to broadening access to education. Dubbed OUview, it contains four distinct areas, or channels – OU, Learn, Life and Research. The OU was one of the first UK universities to launch on YouTube, and in its first year has achieved 1.5 million video views across the four areas. It is currently the largest university collection on YouTube.

www.youtube.com/ou

OpenLearn

Sixty-four new course units – 419 study hours – were published to OpenLearn, a website giving free access to Open University course materials, which, in 2009, has seen its six millionth visitor.

www.open.ac.uk/openlearn

Open Research Online

A research paper which argues that mobile phones and other portable devices can lead to new perspectives and practices in learning became the 10,000th item to be deposited in the OU's research repository – Open Research Online (ORO). ORO is visited by 7,500 people across the world each week and is the 10th largest higher education repository in the UK.

<http://oro.open.ac.uk>



Virtual microscope

The OU's Knowledge Media Institute (KMi) in collaboration with the Science Faculty developed a world-leading virtual microscope – the first of its kind – for use in the new S276 *Geology* course. The new web-based microscope enables students to view high-quality images of a rock on their computer screen without having to go to a laboratory. The virtual microscope can also be downloaded onto iPods and iPhones.

<http://news.kmi.open.ac.uk/11/1112>

G20 Summit

The Open University Business School hosted the academic debate for the London G20 Summit via forums. The forum includes a video of academics and Foreign Secretary David Miliband discussing topics and proposing initiatives for the Summit.

www.open.ac.uk/forums/londonsummit

ESSENCE: World's first Climate Collective Intelligence Event

E-Science/Sensemaking/Climate Change (ESSENCE) is the world's first global climate collective intelligence event, organised by the Global Sensemaking network founded by KMi. It is designed to bring together scientists, industrialists, campaigners and policymakers, with the emerging set of web-based sensemaking tools, to pool and deepen our understanding of the issues and options facing the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

<http://news.kmi.open.ac.uk/11/1047>



iSpot

Anyone with even a passing interest in the natural world will be fascinated by the OU's new iSpot website. The site enables everyone, from casual observers to experienced wildlife watchers, to post photos of flora and fauna, and have them identified by an expert or other users. A link to Google Maps enables users to see where else the species have been spotted around the UK. The OU is working with 14 other institutions to develop iSpot as part of the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) initiative. The site is part of the University's Biodiversity Observatory.

www.ispot.org.uk/

KMi technology helps to assess the severity of MS

With a bit of help from KMi technology, researchers at the University of Bologna developed a new decision support system, called AEDSS (Automatic Expanded Disability Status Scale) which helps neurologists measure the disability caused to a patient by the onset of multiple sclerosis.

<http://news.kmi.open.ac.uk/11/1076>



OU's FlashMeeting breaks down distance barriers

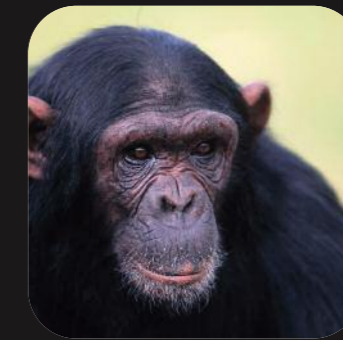
The Open University's FlashMeeting project is breaking down barriers to distance by providing a real-time video conferencing tool for students and staff through their desktops using a plug-in to Adobe Flash 8.0 software. To date, the technology has been used for student discussions, tutor-moderated meetings, virtual seminars, webcasts of physical lectures and project meetings.

<http://kmi.open.ac.uk/index.php>

ReLIVE08

Virtual worlds such as Second Life, CyberTown, There and Twinity are increasingly popular environments for augmentative and immersive business, education and artistic activities as well as the leisure and entertainment activities for which they first became known. ReLIVE08 conference, hosted by The Open University in November 2008, was one of the first international conferences to bring together educators and technologists to explore the potential of such virtual worlds.

www.open.ac.uk/relive08



Devolve Me

Twitter user Stephen Fry prompted a surge of traffic to an Open University website after posting a message that the OU's online evolution tool Devolve Me was "Coolissimo". The number of unique visitors to the game peaked at 52,523 on 12 February 2009, Darwin's bi-centenary, with many of those directed to the website from social media networks. The site has seen over 400,000 visitors, 460,000 photos have been devolved and the Darwin activity has generated 282,000 enquiries and 1,331 course registrations.

www.open.ac.uk/darwin

Live mobile teaching aid wins prestigious award

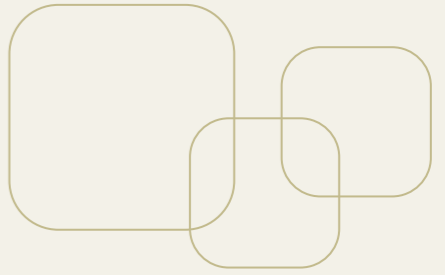
The Enabling Remote Activity (ERA) project, which helps mobility impaired students participate fully in fieldwork activities, won the Special Needs category of the Handheld Learning 2008 awards. It uses commonly available equipment to set up a wireless network at very remote locations, linking the mobility impaired student to the group undertaking fieldwork.

<http://projects.kmi.open.ac.uk/era/>



People

Satisfied students... of all ages and right across the social spectrum



The OU is once again in the top three Higher Education Institutions in the UK for student satisfaction in the latest National Student Survey. Ninety-four per cent of the 9,000 OU students who participated in the survey said they were satisfied overall with the quality of their course.

The University also saw a 36 per cent increase in the number of 18- to 21-year-olds studying higher education courses with the OU.

Both ends of the scale

With its aim of being open to people, places, methods and ideas, The Open University has one of the most diverse range of students in the world. This includes students covering all age brackets.

More and more young people are turning to the OU for higher education – one of them is Emma Pye. Emma, 21, spent two years at a conventional university and then transferred to the OU to complete her degree. She said: "Because I wasn't earning, the OU paid 75 per cent of my tuition fees, and there was a great choice of courses. I didn't have to start my degree again from scratch." Emma achieved a first class honours degree and is now working in her 'dream job' as a countryside management warden for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

At the other end of the scale, 91-year-old Margaret James from Shropshire is now the proud possessor of a BA Honours degree in English Literature. The former bank clerk spent six years studying for the qualification and finally quenched her thirst for knowledge when she completed her first degree. She graduated at a ceremony in Derby in May 2009.

The numbers game

The OU's Faculty of Health and Social Care celebrated its first cohort of social work graduates in 2009. More than 350 students successfully completed the BA (Hons) Social Work across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The OU is one of the largest providers of social work education training with more than 10 per cent of social workers in training.

Robert Wiltshire, a father of two from Cornwall, has been named The Open University's 100,000th Openings student. Openings courses are short introductory courses covering a broad subject area that have been designed specifically to bridge the gap between further and higher education. Robert said: "The Openings course looked like a really good way of getting into studying again. In fact, it helped me learn how to learn."

Dr Chris Martin, Associate Director in Strategic Alliances of international pharmaceutical firm Pfizer, became The Open University Business School's 20,000th MBA graduate. Chris combined the pressures of a full-time senior managerial position with part-time study to earn his Master of Business Administration.

“Because I wasn't earning, the OU paid 75 per cent of my tuition fees, and there was a great choice of courses. I didn't have to start my degree again from scratch”

Student success

Back to health

A road accident left Melanie Morgan-Jones with both physical and learning difficulties, but thanks to the OU – which assisted Melanie by providing funds to buy synthetic voice software and a Dictaphone to help her memorise information – she completed her BA (Hons) Open degree in the same year she completed the London Marathon. She now runs her own healthcare practice.

Shining diagnosis

For the second year running, an Open University student has won the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Student Nurse of the Year Award in Northern Ireland. Avril Montgomery picked up the award – which recognises and rewards excellence in professional education – at a ceremony in Belfast in June 2009. Avril works at the Antrim Area Hospital and is a third year student at the OU.

Road to recovery

Studying with The Open University gave 26-year-old Kelly Furlonger a focus to aid her recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Going through the early stages of recovery, Kelly, from Godalming, Surrey, turned to learning. She began by studying an Openings course on *Understanding health* with The Open University. And her dedication and commitment to learning has been recognised with a Regional Individual Award as part of Adult Learners' Week in May 2009.

Excellence

Maintaining excellence in teaching and research is essential in ensuring The Open University continues to take great strides in offering first class education



Image: G.M.B. Akash / Panos Pictures

Climate change in Bangladesh

An Open University short film, which gives a voice to the people of the Khulna district in southern Bangladesh, has won international recognition in a major new film competition run by The World Bank.

The film *Climate Change in Bangladesh – Who Will Pay?* explores how the lives of those in rural Bangladeshi communities are affected by storms and flash floods.

The Open University's Dr David Humphreys and Dr Jessica Budds travelled to Bangladesh in May 2008 to advise on the production of the film.

The film forms part of a DVD on climate change for OU course DU311 *Earth in crisis: environmental policy in an international context*.

OU Languages department wins awards

The Open University's Department of Languages has been given two prestigious European Awards for Languages in recognition of its 'Outstanding contribution to language learning'.

The European Awards for Languages are given yearly by CILT, the National Centre for Languages. A spokesperson for the centre said of the department: '[The OU] stands out for consistently delivering projects which take language learning one step beyond.'

The Department's *Andante: beginner's Italian course* received the Italian Embassy Language Prize.

Forefront of technology

The Open University's Knowledge Media Institute (KMi) plays a key role in placing the University at the forefront of research and development in Cognitive and Learning Sciences, Artificial Intelligence and Semantic Technologies, and Multimedia.

During the past year, members of the team behind the Enabling Remote Activity (ERA) project won the Special Needs Innovation category at the 2008 Handheld Learning Awards in October 2008. The project was set up to enable physically impaired students access to remote locations during geology summer schools as part of their undergraduate Geosciences degree.

The institute also excelled at the Asian Semantic Web Conference, winning both the award for best research paper for the submission entitled 'Identifying key concepts in ontology' as well as the best poster award.

And at the Storage Awards 2009, KMi was presented with an award for Green Storage Solution of the Year, part of the institution's drive to encourage greener IT solutions.



Academic accolades

The 2009 Institutional Audit by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education confirmed confidence in the University's management of the academic standards of its awards, and of the learning opportunities available to students, identifying a number of significant areas of good practice.

Below are just some of the accolades our academic and academic-related staff have received...

Professor Gerard Hastings, Director of the Institute of Social Marketing, Centre for Tobacco Control Research at The Open University Business School, has been awarded an OBE for services to healthcare.

Dr Jacqui Gabb, a Lecturer at The Open University, has been named joint winner of a prestigious prize from the British Sociological Association (BSA) for her book *Researching Intimacy in Families*.

Ian Fribbance, Associate Dean in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and **Pam Shakespeare**, Professor of Practice-based Open Learning in the Faculty of Health and Social Care, have been awarded National Teaching Fellowships from the Higher Education Academy.

Tim Benton, Professor of Art History at The Open University, is the joint winner of the Prix du Livre by the Academie d'Architecture in France for his book *Le Corbusier conférencier*. The award is the most prestigious prize for books about architecture in the French language.

Professor Jeremy Gray, who teaches the History of Mathematics at The Open University, has been awarded the prestigious 2009 American Mathematical Society Whiteman Prize.

Wendy Rose, Senior Research Fellow in the OU's Faculty of Health and Social Care, has been awarded an OBE for services to children and families in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Bob Owens, Professor of English Literature at The Open University has been awarded an Outstanding Academic title by *Choice*, the review journal of the American Library Association, for his work *The Novels of Daniel Defoe*.

Peter Syme, Director of The Open University in Scotland, has been awarded the OBE for services to higher education.

Sue Hooton, Assistant Director of Governance, Performance and Patient Safety, has been awarded an OBE for services to nursing.

Research

The OU continues to grow its reputation for research excellence



A year of celebrations

In 2008, the excellence of OU research was confirmed through the UK Research Assessment Exercise (2008 RAE) which placed this institution in the top 50 of UK HEIs. The scale and reach of the world-class research we undertake in Design, Computing, Development Studies, Earth Systems and the Environment, Education, Mathematics, Technology, Social Policy, Social Sciences and the Humanities was acknowledged by expert reviewers for being problem-focused and people-centred.

Another cause for celebration was the continuing expansion of Open Research Online, our open access repository for research publications. The 10,000th deposit, which was noted by the world press, was a research paper on the subject of pervasive technologies and the learning experience by Professor Agnes Kukulska-Hulme.

<http://oro.open.ac.uk/16987>

In 2009 *Wasafiri* celebrated 25 years as a renowned literary magazine at the forefront of mapping new landscapes in contemporary international literature. Since its inception it has provided consistent coverage of Britain's diverse cultural heritage and supported a range of diasporic and migrant writing worldwide by seeking to extend the borders of international contemporary writing, creating imaginative spaces and publishing some of the most promising new literary voices.

www.wasafiri.org

The use and application of digital technologies underpins not only our teaching but also our research. Novel technologies allowing us to probe other planets and help tackle climate change, through to new devices to diagnose and treat infectious diseases, form a central element of OU research. The specific impact of digital technologies is also an OU focus, for example, research to explore the changing nature of human identities within increasingly complex societal models as multimedia platforms and social networking evolve.

Is what you see what you get?

Harnessing the advantages from human computer interactions is a key feature of several major research programmes. Signature work around the use of state of the art eye-tracking software is being used to develop a range of interactive tools to aid assimilation and analysis of large data sets from both audio and visual feeds with applications from medicine and healthcare, to security, retail and social gaming.

Pharos (*Platform for search of Audiovisual Resources across Online Spaces*) is a multinational research consortium lead by Professor Stefan Rueger from KMi, formed with the objective of developing new infrastructures to enable the control, creation and sharing of multimedia by a diverse range of users. At the OU our specific expertise in eye-tracking technologies is being deployed to resolve and aggregate visual images on the basis of their colour, shape and form.

<http://itunes.open.ac.uk/r/2DvITQ>

The use of eye-tracking technology to identify participant interest in emerging designs is a key element of the new 'Designing with Vision' initiative – a Leverhulme Trust funded project led by Dr Steve Garner from our world leading OU Design Research Group. Given that much current commercial design concerns definitions of product variations, knowledge from this project will enable the automation of the process of generating product 'families' through shape conjecture.

<http://itunes.open.ac.uk/r/JW0Sv>

These research strands align with the research of Dr Shailey Minocha from Maths, Computing and Technology who is pursuing an evaluation of interactive systems by eye-tracking analysis, building on support from British Telecom and the EPSRC. They also dovetail into research in Social Sciences where Dr Graham Pike is extending his earlier research into the development of facial recognition software for forensic applications.

<http://itunes.open.ac.uk/r/4lq0ft>



Capturing the past to inform the future

Scholars in Arts and Humanities also exploit digital tools as part of their continuing exploration of the methods and means by which technology can enable and facilitate innovative research.

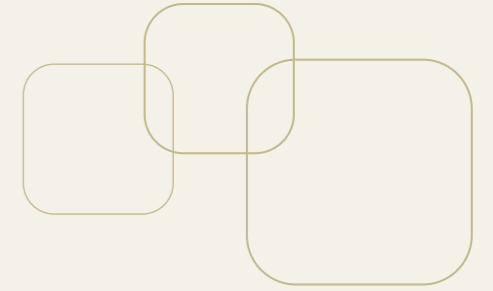
The **Reading Experience Database (RED)** was first launched in 1996 at The Open University with a remit to accumulate as much data as possible about the reading experiences of British subjects from 1450 to 1945. With support from the AHRC, this project has now morphed into an international resource, with sister projects being developed around the world (e.g. RED-Australia launched in 2009), as the benefits of the digital archiving protocols embedded within the OU project are shared with a wider community.

www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED

Building on History, an AHRC-funded Knowledge Transfer project involving The Open University, King's College London, the Diocese of London and Lambeth Palace Library, is deploying Web 2.0 technologies to capture and share the insights secured from historical research and from fresh enquiry into how this religious community responded to the social changes and pastoral challenges of the 19th century.

<http://itunes.open.ac.uk/r/rlrjJ>

Widening Participation



At the start of 2009, the University approved a revised strategy for Widening Participation which set higher targets for recruiting students from low socio-economic groups living in the most disadvantaged communities in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales

The Open University has always prioritised opening access to education to those less privileged or difficult to reach, and this action has been regularly supported by donations from alumni and friends.

The strategy is backed by new resources to extend the community partnership programme in English regions with the highest levels of disadvantage. It pushed ahead with the Bridging the Digital Divide programme, with the support of the Higher Education Academy, to find ways to ensure that such students are not disadvantaged by the increasing use of ICT and computers in education. As well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the University also set new targets for course completion and attainment of black and ethnic minority students, and initiated a number of research projects focusing on this area.

Underlining its national role in Widening Participation in higher education, The Open University was awarded a £7.8 million grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in June. The grant was part of an initiative to deliver more flexible provision in higher education and improve student retention. It is being focused on three projects led by The Open University, with its national reach. The Shared Returns project aims to help students in danger of dropping out of their courses by finding them alternative study options; SCORE, the Support Centre for Open Resources in Education, will promote the use of freely available learning resources and reduce universities' course development costs; and the Academic Partnership Hub will promote greater collaboration between universities to create more flexible routes to a degree.



Clubcard Partnership

The University's pioneering Tesco Clubcard Partnership was recognised with a *Times Higher Education* Award for Marketing Initiative of the Year in October 2008. For every £10 worth of Clubcard vouchers, Tesco's 13.5 million Clubcard holders were offered £40 towards OU course fees. The scheme was intended to communicate the message that 'the OU is open to all'.

New openings in Ireland

The Supporters' Fund has enabled 400 students to take part in the Cross-Border Openings project which is working across the political divide in Ireland. The project supports people from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds on both sides of the North/South border in entering higher education and increasing their employability. The University stepped in to create the Supporters' Fund after the project's initial funding from the European Social Fund ended. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Cross Border Opening project is continuing and a second stage, the New Openings project, has launched.

Widening Participation around the globe

The University expanded its use of new technologies, and in particular the development of educational resources which can be downloaded over the internet, to help bring skills training within the reach of more of Africa's workforce.

Supported by the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, the OU-led TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) programme won the Leadership Award for exemplary open education resources, one of three e-Learning Africa awards given annually by the MERLOT Africa Network (MAN). TESSA is developing free, open content, multimedia resources for some 200,000 teachers and teacher educators in nine countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The resources are downloadable via the internet.

And in September The Open University was invited by the Ethiopian State Minister of Health to lead the design and development of a distance-learning medical curriculum to help tackle the acute shortage of doctors. It will support medical students receiving face-to-face training at medical school in Addis Ababa, and when they go out to rural areas to continue their training.



Employer Engagement

In a time of economic uncertainty, The Open University has helped people to increase their employability by acquiring the skills that business and industry need. As well as courses leading to qualifications, the University added to its growing range of flexible Continuing Professional Development courses



Beating the recession

In January The Open University launched a new website to help people outsmart the recession. It shows how to top-up skills by accessing free educational resources, and secure financial assistance for fee-paying courses. It also offers advice in CV building, skills assessment and potential employment growth areas, as well as information on relevant OU courses and qualifications. The launch of the website coincided with the New Year's Jobs Summit hosted by Prime Minister Gordon Brown on 12 January. OU Vice-Chancellor Professor Brenda Gourley was among those attending.

www.open.ac.uk/recession

Engaging employers

A strategic forum entitled *Employment and Skills: How can the OU engage employers?* was hosted by The Open University in July. Speakers included Chris Humphries, Chief Executive of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, who described the OU as "still the most exciting educational institution in the UK". Professor Alan Tait, OU Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Curriculum and Awards, described how the OU is progressing its employer engagement strategy by increasing its capacity to work with employers and respond to the Government's agenda.

Learning at work

The OU teamed up with the Campaign for Learning to celebrate National Learning at Work Day across England on 14 May. It provided free activities to give employers and staff a taste of OU study and of the extensive portfolio of OU courses which can benefit businesses and organisations. The OU also sponsored a Learning at Work Day Award for Inspiring Learning with a cash prize for the winning organisation.

Technology skills for teachers

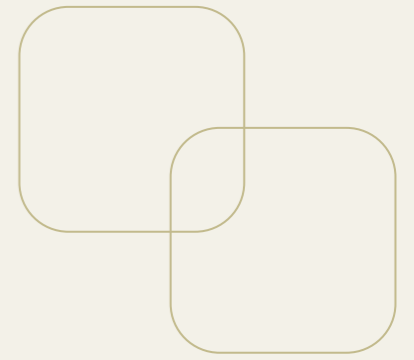
In July a nationwide programme to boost the ICT (Information and Communications Technology) skills of teachers was launched by The Open University and e-skills UK, the Sector Skills Council for Business and Information Technology. The £5.6 million programme is helping primary, secondary and college-level teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly technology-savvy generation of young people, and make better use of ICT to inspire their learning. There is a special focus on providing teachers with first-hand experience of the ways in which ICT is used in business and to drive innovation. The programme combines state-of-the-art distance learning with face-to-face teaching at local venues, and is supported by an online community.

Training nurses

For the second year running, an Open University student won the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Student Nurse of the Year Award in Northern Ireland. Avril Montgomery, who won the award in June, was one of many student nurses and practising nurses across the UK gaining qualifications with the OU while working.

OU graduates the most employable

Graduates of The Open University are among the most employable in the UK, according to figures published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency in February. Their Destinations of Leavers in Higher Education survey showed that more than 80 per cent of OU undergraduates are in employment within six months of graduating.



Worldwide

The continued growth in digital methods of communication offers new opportunities to connect with students



Open University Worldwide continues to develop means to deliver online learning through partnership to students across the world, incorporating projects combining the benefits of online courses with support, counselling and often tutoring on the ground.

New markets are also emerging for generating income from video and broadcast output through the sale of online streaming and downloading rights, complementing the mass interest in Open University production on open source sites and enhancing international brand awareness. Open University Worldwide continues to work with existing and new partners around the world to introduce and expand undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including several African and Arab countries during the past year.

The Arab Open University

The Arab Open University (AOU) is preparing to launch its first postgraduate programmes in 2010. The MSc in Software Development and the MA in English Literature will be offered through AOU branches across seven Arab countries, including a new branch opened in Oman in 2008. Graduates will receive an OU validated award alongside an AOU qualification.

The MA in English Literature has been adapted under a consultancy agreement for local cultural needs. The demand for this qualification is expected to be high in Arab countries owing to the recent expansion of the teaching of English in schools, the growth in the number of universities, and business and media opportunities for graduates proficient in both Arabic and English.

Africa

A new collaborative teaching partnership is to offer business qualifications in Africa. The Open University and eDegree, a South African private higher education provider, are offering Open University business awards in South Africa, Botswana, Uganda and Zambia. The initial collaboration will include the Certificate and BA (Hons) Business Studies, and locally recruited tutors will guide students through the same curriculum and timetable as UK students.

The collaboration will enable students to gain access to a UK qualification without having to leave their home country. The OU and eDegree aim to extend cost-efficient, supported blended learning opportunities to students in Africa, culminating in an internationally accepted qualification.

China

The Open University of China (formerly China Central Radio and Television University [CCRTVU]) launched three online distance education courses in 2009, provided in collaboration with The Open University, focusing on Student Support, Course Design and Teaching Online. The courses, written by the OU and translated/taught by The Open University of China, are aimed at online-delivery teachers, school teachers, university students and other professionals from related fields. Each six-week course includes 20 hours of learning, with online lessons provided in both English and Mandarin.

Bangladesh

English in Action (EiA) is a nine-year programme initiated at the request of the Bangladeshi Government, with the mission of "changing learning, changing lives". Implemented through a partnership between the UK and Bangladesh governments and a consortium of international and national partners, EiA will work with education partners in Bangladesh to reach a total of 25 million primary and secondary school children and adult learners.

The programme aims to bring innovative ways of learning communicative English to different sectors of society using a combination of traditional and new methods, including textbooks and supplementary materials, and information and communication technologies.

EiA is expected to contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh by providing English language as a tool for better access to the world economy. Its purpose is to significantly increase the number of people able to communicate in English to levels that will enable them to participate fully in economic and social activities and opportunities.

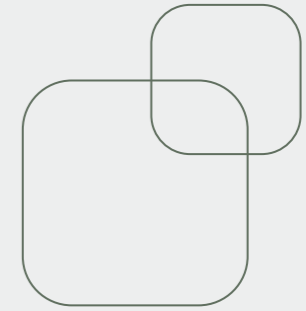
Santander-Abbey Fellowships

The Santander-Abbey Fellowship Scheme offers scholarships for academics from Higher Education Institutes in Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries, encouraging the transfer of knowledge around the world through curriculum development.

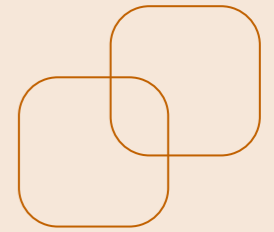
Joseph Hopkins of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya spent six months with the OU looking at how learners interact in Synchronous Audio-Graphic (SAC) environments. The research focused on how small groups of language learners used the FlashMeeting SAC tool developed by the OU's Knowledge Media Institute (KMi).

Broadcast sales and interactive media

Working with a range of media partners from BBC World, Discovery and local terrestrial broadcasters, Open University programming reaches a global audience of more than 270 million and is translated into more than 25 languages. The Open University has seen great interest this year in key programmes such as *Coast*, *Rough Science*, *Ever Wondered about Food* and the *African School* and *Chinese School* programmes.



Broadcasting



Broadcast

The University's Open Broadcasting Unit reported 150 million viewings of BBC/OU co-produced programmes on BBC channels in 2008/09. Notable achievements included the major primetime BBC One popular science series *Bang Goes the Theory*, launched in July; the Darwin season (see page 26) and the widely acclaimed landmark *History of Scotland* series screened on BBC One Scotland, and BBC Two UK-wide

Other major new series in this year included *The Barristers* (BBC Two), *Fossil Detectives* (BBC Four), *The Story of Maths* (BBC Four) and *James May's Big Ideas* (BBC Two), which won the Learning on Screen Award. This series also extended the OU's broadcast reach by becoming the first OU series to air on the UKTV Dave channel. The fourth series of *Coast* (BBC Two) achieved four million viewers at its peak – among the highest recorded audience figure for the programme in the past three years.

Broadband

The Open Broadcasting Unit began commissioning broadband projects with the objective of connecting with a wider audience than reached through traditional BBC broadcasting. A series of three-minute video clips was produced for YouTube around the key content of AA100 *The arts past and present*, the OU's new entry-level Arts course. A series of 14 broadband podcasts searching for answers to big ethical questions was made to support the *Ethics in real life* short course. And The Open University helped to pioneer *The Bottom Line* series on BBC Radio 4 and BBC News – the first BBC radio programme to become a successful broadband TV programme.

Interactive media

More interactive media linked to OU/BBC programmes was created. For the series *James May's Big Ideas*, presenter James May invited visitors to explore some of the ways of getting from A to B using a range of transport options. For the *History of Scotland*, The Open University in collaboration with the BBC created a series of audio walks around historic locations in Scotland, with narration from presenter Neil Oliver and input from local experts – all accessible directly from the OU or via iTunes. For *Bang Goes the Theory* there was a series of interactive science challenges with close links to OU courses, and behind-the-scenes videos for YouTube.



Image: BBC: *Coast*



Image: BBC: *Bang Goes the Theory*

The OU and BBC volunteering project

In June the OU began working alongside the BBC on *My Story*, a story-telling competition to find the UK's most remarkable true stories. The outreach campaign is aimed at ensuring a long-term and enduring partnership around the area of volunteering, which is a priority for both the OU and BBC.

40 years of the OU/BBC partnership

At the 40th anniversary Open Unlimited Day in June, the Open Broadcast Unit and the OU Faculty of Maths, Computing and Technology teamed up to present The Digital Age, a technology history exhibition based around the BBC4 programme *Electric Dreams*. A 40-second trail ran for four weeks on

BBC One and BBC Two celebrating the OU/BBC 40-year partnership. And a celebration of broadcasting history with an interactive timeline showing clips from 40 years of OU broadcasting was created on the OU/BBC website open2net – where downloadable ringtone remixes of The Open University's TV fanfare were also made available.

Darwin

The Open University took a truly 360-degree approach to marking the Charles Darwin anniversaries



Image: BBC: Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life

Units across the University worked together to produce material across a range of platforms to promote Darwin's legacy on the 200th anniversary of his birth and the 150th of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*.

The Darwin project was initiated in 2005, when the OU approached Professor Richard Dawkins to present a lecture at the Natural History Museum to coincide with the anniversary.

From there, the OU discussed the possibilities of programming to support Darwin year with the BBC. This resulted in a BBC Darwin season in which The Open University was a co-producer in a number of series.

Throughout the year, OU academics gave numerous TV and radio interviews about events, programmes and projects associated with the anniversaries.

The year kicked off with Sir David Attenborough sharing his views on the theory of evolution and its global significance in *Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life*.

A total of eight million viewers saw the programme, and when it was first aired an estimated one in four people watching television that night tuned in.

Other OU programmes were *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* in which Andrew Marr gave a contemporary context to how the theory influenced political and religious thinking.

And *Jimmy Doherty in Darwin's Garden* recreated a number of Darwin's experiments, which gave an insight into the hands-on science behind Darwin's great theory.

All three programmes were supported by a free *Tree of Life* poster, commissioned by the Open Broadcasting Unit, created by the consulting academics and produced by Learning and Teaching Solutions. So far, nearly 300,000 people have requested and received a copy.

Sir David even remarked that more copies of the poster had been distributed than the first edition of *On the Origin of Species*. The poster is still available via the open2.net website, which is linked to both the BBC site and an OU Darwin microsite.

The websites link closely together to ensure a relatively seamless journey from one to the other for visitors.

The OU's site features the evolution tool *Devolve Me* which enables users to upload a photograph of themselves and see how they may have looked 500,000 or 3.7million years ago.

The tool went viral with users morphing pictures of their friends and family, and sending them on, resulting in 500,000 visitors.

Stephen Fry described the tool as "coolissimo" on his Twitter page, in turn prompting an extra 1,500 daily visits to the site. *Devolve Me* was later developed into iPhone, Twitter and Facebook applications.



Image: BBC: Jimmy Doherty in Darwin's Garden

The Open University's Darwin web support also generated considerable interest in the 10-point course entitled *Darwin and evolution (S170)*, which is aimed at introducing the theory and its implications to us today, to those with little or no scientific knowledge.

So far there have been 1,331 course registrations as a result of Darwin activity.

The core of the course was a richly illustrated book, *99 per cent Ape: How Evolution Adds Up*, edited by Professor of Ecology Jonathan Silvertown, with sales of 18,000 copies.

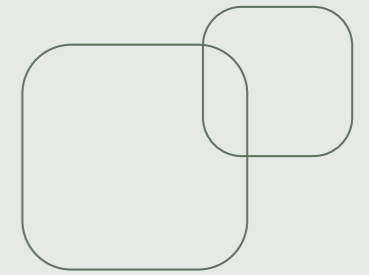
The book was accompanied by a DVD, including clips of the BBC/OU co-produced series *Jimmy Doherty In Darwin's Garden*.

Another book, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: Race Slavery and the Quest for Human Origins*, by Adrian Desmond and James Moore, revolutionised understanding of Darwin's path to human evolution through a massive investigation into unpublished letters, family correspondence, diaries and other official documents.

The OU's Evolution MegaLab gave an opportunity to people of all ages to see how Darwin's theories are at work in the natural world around them and that it is not a remote theoretical idea. To date more than 65,000 records have been generated by members of the public.

Earth and Environmental Science Project Officer Andy Tindle also digitised a number of rocks collected by Darwin on his Beagle voyage to the Galapagos Islands and Cape Verde to be used for the Virtual Microscope – a microscope that allows viewers to view rock samples online. *See page 10.*

In addition, the Open Broadcasting Unit produced a series of Darwin-related videos and podcasts for the British Council.



Strategy

The Open University is playing a leading role in the Government's drive to make the UK the global leader in online learning



In June, Vice-Chancellor Designate Martin Bean was selected to join a Government task force, advising on wider strategy to help other universities benefit from the OU's expertise in online distance learning.

The task force is backed by a new Open Learning Innovation Fund to enable other universities access and engage future markets that are expected to be worth £15 billion.

It aims to encourage universities to work collaboratively to bid for money to develop projects that help transform the way people gain degrees.

This came as HEFCE awarded the OU £7.8 million funding from its Strategic Development Fund (SDF) to capitalise on its national reach by encouraging universities to work together to improve student retention and promote a more flexible approach.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "The success of distance learning, pioneered 40 years ago by The Open University, has been nothing short of a revolution for higher education.

"It has opened the doors to a whole new audience of students who have not only seen academic success but reaped the wider rewards learning brings.

"An approach to higher education which emphasises accessibility and flexibility has put the UK at the forefront of e-learning and to build on this achievement with a new £20 million fund to support centres of excellence for online learning.

"I am also supporting The Open University with additional funding to further its role as a national leader, working with other institutions, to develop distance learning."

At present about 35,000 students a year in England do not complete their higher education courses and many are not aware of the options available to them.

The funding focuses on three OU-led projects: Shared Returns, a regionally based student retention initiative; SCORE (Support Centre for Open Resources in Education); and an Academic Partnership Hub which will move the sector towards more flexible education offerings.

SCORE will identify and promote good practice in educational technology and open resources, helping institutions develop new resources and services to enhance teaching and reduce course development costs.

The Shared Returns project will proactively offer students advice on continuing their studies in higher education.

The OU, UCAS and other partner universities in the North-West will work together to give information and guidance to students at risk of leaving, or who have left HE.

And the Academic Partnership Hub will bring about closer collaboration to deliver change and innovation that will move the HE sector towards more flexible provision for students.

This could see the introduction of a more adaptable degree with both distance learning and

face-to-face modules, which would support a smooth transition between part-time and full-time education according to a student's circumstances.

Professor David Vincent, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Strategy), said: "The landscape of higher education and the needs of today's students are changing rapidly and in order to address these challenges a collaborative approach is hugely important.

"Being open with resources and content has always been a part of the OU's mission to widen participation in education.

"We are extremely excited by the potential that these projects present for the sector as a whole and, most importantly, for students."

The OU is also at the centre of three major research projects to inform government strategy by investigating ways in which ICT can contribute to the ideal education system for the 21st century.

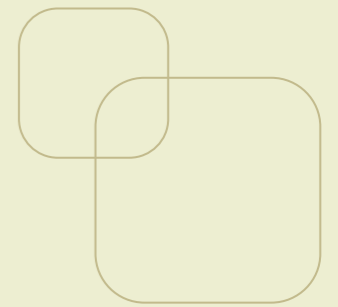


The Schome initiative looks at how new technologies can improve educational provision with a current focus on the use of virtual worlds, such as Second Life, to extend thinking about what education systems should be like.

dICTatED (Discussing ICT, Aspirations and Targets for Education) examines why substantial investments in ICT in education around the world does not seem to be having proportionally great impacts.

And eSIR (eStrategy Implementation Review) was commissioned from the OU by Becta (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency) with the aim of providing advice on the implementation of aspects of the DfES eStrategy.

The findings highlight that the most difficult issues are still people and the management of change within complex systems rather than the technology.



Support

Donations and volunteer support help us make a quality education available to anyone, anywhere

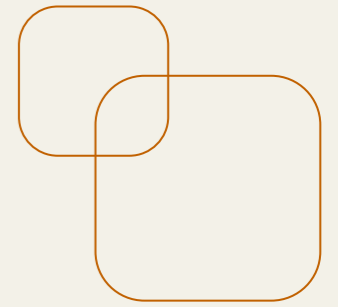


Image: Giacomo Pirozzi / Panos Pictures

The Open University is very grateful to those alumni, friends, trusts, foundations and corporations who have made donations to the institution in the 2008/09 academic year.

Charitable giving has become extremely important to the University in a climate of reduced funding from traditional sources. As the OU's ambitions increase and the University does even more to make education available to anyone, anywhere, so the need to seek support from others becomes more and more vital.

The Open University is very grateful for the support of nearly 7,000 alumni and friends who have generously donated to The Supporters' Fund in the 2008/09 year. In total, this has raised

more than £450,000, which, thanks to the Government's Matched Funding scheme, will increase donations to more than £610,000.

Every year we learn about the thoughtful individuals who tell us that they have remembered The Open University in their Will. We would like to thank those who have decided to remember the OU in this way and show our gratitude to those who have done so in the past.

The generosity of donors has a tremendous impact on the range and scope of the projects the OU has been able to undertake and on the number of students who will benefit from them.

Support for teaching and health education in Africa

With the support of The Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, the OU has been able to further develop the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) programme. The past 12 months have focused on embedding, monitoring and evaluating the approaches in materials in partner institutions across a wide range of programmes and courses.

The reach of TESSA is being extended to new countries such as Namibia and Togo, using partner institutions as catalysts and collaborators for change. An estimated 400,000 teachers and student teachers were using TESSA during 2009 and numbers are expected to grow in 2010.

Also with the support of The Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, The Open University has been able to begin work on the HEAT (Health Education and Training) programme in Sub-Saharan Africa. The programme aims to address the critical shortage of skilled community healthcare workers by creating an online bank of learning materials that are free to access, use, adapt and share with others.

During the first 12 months of development the aim was to identify and engage with programme partners through a series of workshops, begin the authoring of learning materials, and secure additional financial support towards the continuation of the work.

Support for research into the conservation of floodplain meadows

During 2008/09 The Open University received a further donation from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation towards the OU's Floodplain Meadows Partnership. The aims of this project are to promote the conservation of floodplain meadows through improved monitoring of their condition, analysis of data relating to their ecology, hydrology and management and dissemination of findings to and between all relevant stakeholders.

Flower-rich meadows are an integral part of our heritage, our landscape and our natural capital. Meadow was once the dominant land use on almost all the floodplains in England, but Britain has lost 98 per cent of its flower-rich meadows during the past century. The remnants, though protected by national and European law, are at risk from our changing environment.

In addition, the project received support from DEFRA's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, an integral part of the wider Floodplain Meadows Project which aims to encourage the restoration of floodplain meadows adjacent to existing sites and bring existing sites into favourable condition.

Support for 40th celebrations and student and alumni communications

Our 40th Anniversary has, as well as highlighting the dedication of our philanthropic supporters, brought us closer to other friends and supporters who have volunteered their time and expertise.

For example, many of our Honorary Graduates have taken this opportunity to be involved in the launch of the Platform website by being interviewed – Lesley Garrett, John Pilger, Tim Smit, Tony Robinson and Ian Rankin, to name but a few. Others have offered their time to speak at our lecture series – Jung Chang, Richard Dawkins, Kate Adie, Trevor Phillips, Trevor Baylis, Benjamin Zephaniah, Deborah Bull, Prue Leith and Philip Pullman.

The OU would like to thank everyone who has supported the 40th celebrations and to encourage others to join them in taking part in future activities.



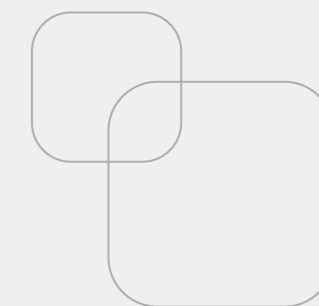
Financial highlights 2008/09

	Year Ended 31 July 2009 £m	Year Ended 31 July 2008 £m
Results, cash flows, assets and reserves		
Funding body grants	233.7	225.6
Tuition fees and education contracts	141.6	128.8
Research grants and contracts	15.4	14.4
Other income	24.3	21.5
Endowment and investment income	6.0	10.6
Total Income	421.0	400.9
Total Expenditure	411.4	388.4
Surplus for the year before taxation	9.6	12.5
Less: Taxation	0.0	0.1
Exceptional item	0.2	4.9
Surplus for the year retained within general reserves	9.8	17.3
Net cash flow from operating activities	12.9	13.7
Net returns on investments and servicing of finance	9.3	6.6
Net cash flow before Investing activities and tax	22.2	20.3
Fixed assets	178.8	175.0
Endowment assets	0.5	0.6
Net current assets	42.6	28.4
Total assets less current liabilities	221.9	204.0
Total reserves	140.0	130.2

Other key statistics

	Number	Number
Number of full-time students	78,110	76,135
Total number of students	251,639	226,071
Percentage of students satisfied with the quality of their course (taken from the respondents to the 2009 National Student Survey)	94%	94%

Results for the year



The Group's results are summarised in the Financial Highlights on page 32.

Total income increased by £20.1 million or 5% to £421.0 million.

Funding body grants increased by £8.1 million or 4% to £233.7 million. The recurrent grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was £182.0 million and represents 86% of all recurrent grants from the various funding bodies. It increased by £3.5 million or 2% from the total of £178.5 million in 2007/08 as a result of grant inflation and additional student numbers. The increase in recurrent grants from other funding councils exceeded inflation. Specific grants increased by £2.5 million or 18% to £16.7 million as a result of a number of initiatives across the three national funding councils.

Fee income increased by £12.8 million or 10% to £141.6 million. The bulk of the increase was in respect of fees paid by students, or on their behalf by their employers, in the United Kingdom, which increased by £10.2 million to £120.7 million. The overall increase results from a combination of general fee inflation and an increase of 11% in student numbers to 252,000, which translated into an increase of 3% in full-time equivalent student numbers to 78,000.

Income from research grants and contracts increased by £1.0 million or 7% to £15.4 million, due entirely to increased income from Research Councils. Other income increased by £2.8 million or 13% to £24.3 million. Endowment and investment income decreased by £4.6 million or 43% to £6.0 million as a result of lower deposits, following the repayment of the previous £60m loan, and lower interest rates.

Expenditure increased by £23.0 million or 6% to £411.4 million.

Total staff costs increased by £21.4 million or 9% to £262.8 million. £15.4 million of this increase resulted from the nationally negotiated pay awards and £1.5 million from the progression of staff up incremental pay scales, staff promotions and merit increases. The balance of £4.5 million arose from an increase and change in mix in full-time and part-time staff.

Other (non-pay) operating expenses, excluding depreciation and interest, increased by £1.9 million or 1% to £134.0 million. The University spent £3.6 million providing financial assistance to students in addition to the £11.0 million of funding councils' access funds and bursaries disbursed to eligible students.

The net result was a surplus before exceptional items for the year of £9.6 million compared to £12.4 million last year. In addition an exceptional item of £0.2m (year ended 31 July 2008, £4.9 million) relating to the transfer with effect from 31 May 2008 of the net assets of the Open University Foundation to the University increased the surplus after the exceptional item to £9.8 million (year ended 31 July 2008, £17.3 million).

40th Anniversary Milestones

In the 1960s Prime Minister Harold Wilson's vision of a 'university of the air' was met with some vehement opposition and was famously dismissed as 'blithering nonsense'.

Today that scepticism has proved to have been ill-founded as the OU has become an international trailblazer in online distance learning.

In its 40th year the University has celebrated with a number of events including an open day, attended by 4,000 visitors and a reception at Number 10 Downing Street, hosted by the Prime Minister Gordon Brown, a former OU tutor.

The Shetland Islands, where there is a high concentration of OU students, had its first degree ceremony, and there has been a series of celebratory lectures across the UK presented by honorary graduates.

The BBC also produced a documentary, entitled *Happy Birthday to OU*, presented by graduate Lenny Henry, which explored the roots of the institution.

“The Open University has turned an educational system devised in another age into a tool of the knowledge society, and used open and distance education to make the world a better place”

Professor Brenda Gourley
Vice-Chancellor of The Open University 2002-2009

1969-1979



Harold Wilson's brainchild became reality, thanks to the determination of Minister for Arts Jennie Lee, with The Open University being granted its Royal Charter on April 23 1969. In October that year the first OU staff moved to the Walton Hall Campus in Milton Keynes under the leadership of first Vice-Chancellor Walter Perry.



The closing date for the first courses on offer in August 1970 saw 42,821 applications for 25,000 places. The first OU course was broadcast by the BBC on January 3 1971, at 10am. In June 1973 the OU's first graduation ceremony, at Alexandra Palace, was broadcast live on BBC Two. The Queen visited the OU's Walton Hall campus in 1979 by which time the student body had mushroomed to 70,000.

1979-1989



In January 1981 Prince Charles officially opened the OU/BBC Production Centre at Milton Keynes, while the same year the OU launched the Cyclops "interactive blackboard".

In 1983 Willy Russell's play *Educating Rita* was turned into a hit film starring Julie Walters and Michael Caine – and the OU's Business School was launched. The OU won BBC TV's *University Challenge* in 1984 – it won again in 1999.



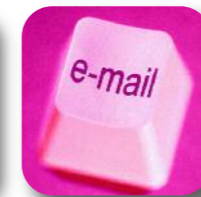
By the end of the 1980s the OU had expanded into Europe and worldwide and, harnessing the new technology of the day, the University sent out 321,840 floppy disks to students in 1989.

1989-1999



By 1990, more than one million people had studied with the OU and at least 100,000 had gained degrees. At the end of the decade, that number had doubled to more than 200,000.

The 1990s saw the arrival of the named degree, with new areas of study including law and modern languages. The Business School awarded its first MBAs and the University launched its Validation Services which enabled other institutions to validate OU degrees. It also saw the arrival of the Knowledge Media Institute (KMI), founded to create and study future technologies for the benefit of staff, students and industrial sponsors.



1999-2009



By the new millennium, more than 50 per cent of students were studying online. Computer-based learning and teaching material had expanded with more than 140 courses having a computing element.

The profile of the OU's European Space missions was given a boost with the Beagle 2 Mission to Mars in 2003 and the successful landing of the Cassini-Huygens probe on Titan a year later.



The decade saw the launch of OpenLearn, while iTunes U expanded the University's open resource of OU materials. The OU also launched its own channel on the online video community site YouTube.

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA
United Kingdom
www.open.ac.uk



The Open
University

Tel: +44 (0) 1908 274066
Fax: +44 (0) 1908 653744

For enquiries on how to support

The Open University:

The Open University Development Office
Michael Young Building
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA
Tel: +44 (0)1908 653786
Fax: +44 (0)1908 638145
Email: fundraising@open.ac.uk
www.open.ac.uk/fundraising

For student enquiries in the UK:

Student Registration and Enquiry Service
Tel: +44 (0)845 300 6090
Lines are open (UK time)
08.00 to 20.00 Monday to Friday
09.00 to 17.00 Saturday
Email: general-enquiries@open.ac.uk
www.open.ac.uk/nextstep

**For student enquiries in the
Republic of Ireland:**

Enquiry and Advice Centre in Dublin
Tel: +44 (01) 678 5399 or
The Open University in Ireland
Tel: +44 (0)28 9032 3722
Email: ireland@open.ac.uk
www.open.ac.uk/nextstep

**For student enquiries in other
EU countries and Switzerland:**

Tel: +44 (0)191 2131380
Email: europa@open.ac.uk
www.open.ac.uk/nextstep

The Open University in London

1-11 Hawley Crescent, Camden Town
London NW1 8NP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7485 6597
Fax: +44 (0)20 7556 6196
Email: london@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the South

Foxcombe Hall, Boars Hill
Oxford OX1 5HR
Tel: +44 (0)1865 327000
Fax: +44 (0)1865 736288
Email: south@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the South East

St James's House, 150 London Road
East Grinstead RH19 1HG
Tel: +44 (0)1342 327821
Fax: +44 (0)1342 317411
Email: south-east@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the South West

4 Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6ND
Tel: +44 (0)117 929 9641
Fax: +44 (0)117 988 8067
Email: south-west@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the West Midlands

66 High Street, Harborne
Birmingham B17 9NB
Tel: +44 (0)121 426 1661
Fax: +44 (0)121 427 9484
Email: west-midlands@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the East Midlands

Clarendon Park, Clumber Avenue
Sherwood Rise
Nottingham NG5 1AH
Tel: +44 (0)115 962 5451
Fax: +44 (0)115 971 5575
Email: east-midlands@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the East of England

Cintra House, 12 Hills Road
Cambridge CB2 1PF
Tel: +44 (0)1223 364721
Fax: +44 (0)1223 355207
Email: east-of-england@open.ac.uk

The Open University in Yorkshire

2 Trevelyan Square, Boar Lane
Leeds LS1 6ED
Tel: +44 (0)113 244 4431
Fax: +44 (0)113 234 1862
Email: yorkshire@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the North West

351 Altrincham Road, Sharston
Manchester M22 4UN
Tel: +44 (0)161 998 7272
Fax: +44 (0)161 945 3356
Email: north-west@open.ac.uk

The Open University in the North

Abbots Hill, Baltic Business Quarter
Gateshead NE8 3DF
Tel: +44 (0)191 477 6100
Fax: +44 (0)191 202 6968
Email: north@open.ac.uk

The Open University in Wales

18 Custom House Street
Cardiff CF10 1AP
Tel: +44 (0)29 2047 1019
Fax: +44 (0)29 2038 8132
Email: wales@open.ac.uk

The Open University in Scotland

10 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh EH3 7QJ
Tel: +44 (0)131 226 3851
Fax: +44 (0)131 220 6730
Email: scotland@open.ac.uk

The Open University in Ireland

40 University Road
Belfast BT7 1SU
Tel: +44 (0)2890 245025
Fax: +44 (0)2890 230565
Email: ireland@open.ac.uk

Produced by the Vice-Chancellor's Office and Communications Unit of
The Open University, December 2009
Copyright The Open University 2009

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (number RC 000391),
an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (number SC 038302)

SUP 015725