‘When I got to Sussex I felt as if I had found a home – a place of curiosity about, and engagement with, the world. It showed me the importance of citizenship, of gaining knowledge for a social purpose, of playing a part and not standing on the sidelines. It set the pattern for my life. I couldn’t be more grateful to it nor, still, more excited by it.’

Simon Fanshawe (ENGAM 1975)
Writer and broadcaster
From August 2007, Chair of the University of Sussex Council

FALMER
Meeting the energy challenge? Professor Gordon MacKerron expresses his reaction to the Energy White Paper/At the water’s edge: Richard Soulsby discusses some of the most compelling concerns of our planet/Making the message count: how mobile phones are at the forefront of conservation and development/Funny weather: Kate Evans shares her illustrative cartoons with Falmer
As Chancellor of the University for the past decade and with the gracious agreement of Falmer’s editor, I am wrenching this column from the Vice-Chancellor, for it is he about whom I wish to write.

Alasdair Smith has been our VC throughout that same decade, following his seven years as Professor of Economics, Dean of the School of European Studies and as our Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

His recently announced retirement, to take effect at the conclusion of the current academic year, is a matter of great sadness to us all. In addition to his status as a noted international economist, he has imparted his personality, his wisdom and the strength of his convictions to every aspect of the University.

Heads of academic institutions devoted to further education must find a route through incredibly complex issues, somehow managing to amalgamate passionate belief with practical organisation and pragmatic viability. I believe Alasdair has managed to combine all three with consummate skill.

Such a path requires not only wise and balanced decisions, but also the fortitude to see them through. This our retiring VC has in abundance and he has shown himself courageously prepared to face opposition in many different circumstances. His whole reorganising of the University could only have been achieved with sheer determination. Maintaining our own particular brand of intellectual curiosity, whilst instigating changes which might be interpreted as surrender to convention, was certainly no easy task.

However, we do continue to talk about interdisciplinarity, and that is due to his particular leadership. He boldly dealt with the major debate surrounding the retention of Chemistry, for example, in the light of falling numbers; so crucial in a university of the size of Sussex. How skilfully he assimilated the various pieces of advice, representing very divergent points of view, before arriving at a wise decision.

We have seen great progress under his leadership. Undergraduate applications have increased substantially over the past five years. And the recently established joint medical school has proved to be a truly major achievement.

I will remember that when Asa Briggs first asked me to be involved with Sussex some 40 years ago, he said we must always strive to be an international place of learning for all peoples. It seems to me that Alasdair’s period of tenure has more than exemplified that aspiration.

For me, as important as anything, has been the overall atmosphere that this Vice-Chancellor has created under his aegis. Our academic achievements are self evident but erudition, in my opinion, is not necessarily to the public perception of a university.

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For me, as important as anything, has been the overall atmosphere that this Vice-Chancellor has created under his aegis. Our academic achievements are self evident but erudition, in my opinion, is not but one part of education. Equally valuable but more difficult to define is the ambiance of the university.

I believe it has a sense of community that may well rival all others and this, I am certain, is due to Alasdair Smith.
Sussex appoints new Vice-Chancellor

Professor Michael Farthing has been appointed as the next Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex. Professor Farthing, 59, has a distinguished background in medicine, both as a physician and as an academic, in a career spanning more than 30 years. He is currently Principal of St George's, University of London, which specialises in medicine and health sciences and is also Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Medical Director of the University of London.

Professor Farthing takes up the post at Sussex following the retirement of Professor Alasdair Smith, who is standing down in the summer after nine years as Vice-Chancellor of the University. "I am delighted that the University has made an excellent appointment to the Vice-Chancellorship, and that Michael Farthing will come here with the strong and clear support of a broad-based and respected appointing committee," said Professor Smith. "It is a great privilege to join the team at Sussex. The University should be proud of its achievements over the last 40 or more years, but not satisfied. I would like to see the development of innovative approaches to education, enhancement of research quality, expansion of the enterprise culture, and steady sustainable growth through strong partnerships."

Professor Farthing has a proven track record in leading and developing academic institutions, in partnership with others. He has a strong vision, and is ambitious for the University. I am confident that Sussex will thrive under his leadership," said Simon Fanashawe, the University’s Chair designate of Council, who led the selection process for the University.

Student helps reveal children’s attitudes to disabilities

Outstanding psychology student Annie Goddard produced an award-winning study on how to improve children’s attitudes to those with disabilities for her final-year project, based on her background of working with disabled children.

Annie, who received a first-class degree, won a dissertation prize for her project from the British Psychological Society. She looked at two different age groups and found that, when compared to 10-year-olds, five-year-olds were more prejudiced towards children with visible disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, rather than hidden disabilities, such as autism.

"My aim was to improve children’s attitudes towards their peers with disabilities by reading them stories about a non-disabled child in a friendship with a disabled child, I found that my positive intervention did make a difference. The findings have implications for how to develop more positive, inclusive environments, notably within schools, and how to educate children about people with disabilities."

The RDO received an application for a new postgraduate certificate in e-learning design – the first of its kind in Europe – run jointly by the Centre for Enterprise at the University of Sussex and the University of Ulster.

"The RDO, alongside Sussex IP Centre, which is the University’s regional office for intellectual property, and the College of Business and Economics, has also secured a £250,000 grant from the University of Sussex Foundation to support the development of a new programme in e-learning design."

SPRU celebrates 40th Anniversary

More than 300 international scholars attended a three-day conference to celebrate the 40th anniversary of SPRU – Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Sussex.

The conference, titled ‘The Future of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy: Linking Research and Practice’, was opened by the Vice-Chancellor Alasdair Smith, and co-chaired by Professor Ben Martin and Dr Petra Melsche. It featured keynote speeches by Harvard Professor Sheila Jasanoff, one of the world’s leading authorities on science and technology in law and politics, and saw more than 150 papers presented.

Research into climate change, the effect of changing diets, and rising levels of obesity, are among the projects taken up by SPRU in recent years. Current studies include innovation in vaccine treatments and examining alternative energy sources.

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The RDO is also leading the creation of a new postgraduate certificate in e-learning design – the first of its kind in Europe – run jointly by the Centre for Enterprise at the University of Sussex and the University of Ulster.

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Engaging with business

The past year has seen the University’s Regional Development Office (RDO) further its mission as a bridge between business, research and the University.

Among recent successes has been the creation of a new postgraduate certificate in e-learning design – the first of its kind in Europe – run jointly with the University of Brighton, West Sussex and the Brighton E-Learning Alliance. Another new partnership is the Sussex-wide Cancer Group, sponsored by the RDO in support of Brighton and Sussex Medical School and the Genome Damage and Stability Centre, which is now facilitating new collaborations in clinical and scientific research. The RDO, alongside Sussex IP Centre, has also secured a £250,000 grant from the University of Sussex Foundation to support the development of a new programme in e-learning design.

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Sussex businessman receives honorary degree

Michael Chowen, friend and benefactor of Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS), was awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Sussex winter graduation ceremony on 30 January. The founder of Sussex Stationers, Mr Chowen has taken a particular interest in local educational and health needs since he retired in 2005. He has helped create BSMS’s ecology department and the Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre, housing two of the most modern and complex scanning machines. Unlike traditional scanning methods, they are able to show function as well as structure, enabling more effective diagnosis and treatment of diseases like cancer. The scanners will provide extra capacity for the NHS as well as being used for medical research.

At the ceremony, Mr Chowen said, ‘I want to thank Professor Jon Cohen (the Dean of BSMS) and his colleagues for their friendship and for allowing me to become involved in those two visions which are very close to my heart. What makes me so excited is that the focus of the ecology department is to exploit the research that is being done for the benefit of local patients.’

"I am delighted that the University’s recognition as a major knowledge-transfer centre, also helped secure £5 million for Sussex and 11 partner universities to create a world-class funding framework, Commercialise. That is also the University’s partnership with Sweden’s University of Mälardalen, intended to develop best practice in engaging students with enterprise, funded via an EU CAPTURE project and in partnership with the City of Brighton & Hove.

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The relationship with Mälardalen was furthered by an RDO-hosted creativity event for the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Group, and in partnership with Cambridge and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
Professor Jo Boaler has joined us,’ commented her colleague Professor Judy Sebba.’She has the rare combination of being an outstanding ... grounded in classroom practice, and is already making an excellent contribution to our research on teaching and learning.’

‘Unfortunately, it’s easy to forget ... generally developed along the lines that suit their commercial and military sponsors. Humanity as a whole is rarely, if ever, represented in the project and funding meetings that shape new technology.’

First Business Fellows for Sussex
Sussex has been awarded five Business Fellowships by the London Technology Network (LTN), out of just 14 awarded across the Southeast. Funded by central government, the EU and two regional development agencies, the LTN aims to improve the range and quality of interaction between universities and business. The Fellowships are awarded to research-active academics that are contracted to act as a collaborative bridge between their departments and business.

The Sussex Fellows are chemist Dr Mark Osbourne; Dr Andy Cundy, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Science; Dr Elias Stipidis, Senior Lecturer in Engineering; and Dr Ben Varcoe, Reader in Optical and Atomic Physics.

‘It’s not an open network,’ explains Mike Wylde from the Regional Development Office. ‘A university has to be invited to make nominations against set criteria, and the nominees then have to be approved by LTN.’

‘We are delighted that Jo Boaler has been invited to join the Scientific Advisory Board of the Lifeboat Foundation – a voluntary organisation concerned with the ethics of new technologies.

Dr Blay Whitby, Lecturer in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, has been invited to join the Scientific Advisory Board of the Lifeboat Foundation – a voluntary organisation concerned with the ethics of new technologies. ‘Dr Whitby’s expertise will be invaluable to our Board. He is a leading figure in the field of robotics, and his work on the ethics of new technologies will be a valuable contribution.’

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Commenting on her appointment, Professor Boaler remarked, ‘It is wonderful to be back in the UK and working with such esteemed colleagues. I am happy to be back and making a contribution to improving the education of our children in British schools.’

Left to right: Dr Elias Stipidis, Dr Andy Cundy, Dr Ben Varcoe, Dr Jo Boaler and Dr Blay Whitby

The first intake of overseas students has been taking their International Foundation Year (IFY) programmes at the University’s International Study Centre (ISC) since last September. They will progress to undergraduate degrees at Sussex this October, provided they reach the required entrance standards.

Unlike traditional foundation years, which often place students in local colleges or off-campus, the ISC is located at the heart of the Sussex campus. The ISC is a joint collaboration with international educational specialists Study Group, and the ISC faculty is skilled in pre-degree education although the content and delivery is validated by Sussex academics.

The IFY programmes offer specialist preparation for degree-level study across a range of streams including business and management, engineering and computing, life sciences, humanities, and law and social studies.

The establishment of the ISC is a significant initiative within our international development strategy,’ says Dr Philip Baker, Head of International Liaison. ‘I am delighted that it has got off to such a good start. It is a tribute to the hard work put into by academic and administrative colleagues across the University and by Study Group.’

Robotics expert looks to safeguard our futures
Dr Blay Whitby, Lecturer in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, has been invited to join the Scientific Advisory Board of the Lifeboat Foundation – a voluntary organisation concerned with the ethics of new technologies.

‘I am not a Luddite – far from it – I believe that technology is the main route to improvement in the lives of human beings,’ he says. ‘However, I believe it is necessary to stand up for the rights of all humans.’

‘These new technologies are generally developed along the lines that suit their commercial and military sponsors. Humanity as a whole is rarely, if ever, represented in the project and funding meetings that shape new technology.’

Just as physical lifeboats are provided and crewed by volunteers, so the Lifeboat Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, dedicated to ensuring that humanity adopts powerful new technologies in a safe and generally beneficial way. ‘Unfortunately, it’s easy to forget in the modern academic environment that we have a duty of compassion to the whole of humanity. This is an opportunity for me to make a small contribution,’ says Dr Whitby.

Sussex recruits Marie Curie Professor
Jo Boaler has come from Stanford University to join the Sussex School of Education as Marie Curie Professor - the prestigious title awarded from the Marie Curie Foundation. Her research addresses the critical priority of take up of maths and science at A-levels.

‘We were originally offered three places, plus a fourth from the Regional Development Office. ‘A university has to be invited to make nominations against set criteria, and the nominees then have to be approved by LTN.’

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Meeting the energy challenge – why now?

The recent Energy White Paper – Meeting the Energy Challenge – published by the UK Government in May 2007 stresses that the transition to a sustainable energy economy is one of the main challenges facing us in the 21st century. Addressing the challenges of such a transition is at the heart of the research conducted by the Sussex Energy Group at the Science, Policy, Research (SPRU) at the University of Sussex. Professor Gordon MacKerron, Director of the Group, expresses below his reaction to the Energy White Paper.

The Government’s new policy on energy, presented in May 2007 as its White Paper entitled Meeting the Energy Challenge, is the culmination of a very curious sequence of events. Back in 2003 the Government brought forward a radically new long-term strategy for energy, with climate change at the heart of policy and with a framework that stretched out to 2020 and 2050. This was the result of a novel process combining expert input with wide-ranging public and stakeholder involvement. The White Paper of 2003 attracted a broad consensus and it seemed as if the framework of energy policy was settled for the long term.

But by November 2005 the Government seemed to be convinced that something new was needed. The origins appear to lie in changes that occurred in domestic and international energy conditions since 2003. These changes, tenuously linked, are instability and high prices in international oil and gas markets, together with the UK twist that imports of these are starting to rise, and the beginnings of a revival in the fortunes of nuclear power as a new-build option in several countries.

The oil and gas issue is scarcely original and was analysed at length in the 2003 statement. Nothing major has changed on this since 2003: we always knew that imports would rise, and the familiar volatility of hydrocarbon prices – though severe in recent years – is hardly an issue that would cause a government to change tack from a broadly agreed strategy set so recently. The novelty is perhaps greatest fear of the “Russian bear” – that we will become dependent on Russian gas and that Russia will “turn off the tap”. This seems at best an exaggerated fear.

Nuclear option

It is therefore the appearance of a nuclear revival that seems to have made the principal difference since 2003. It has led to a flurry of policy statements on energy in July 2006, again in May 2007 and with a further statement predicted by Government at the end of this year. The July 2006 statement was particularly rushed – the Prime Minister unequivocally announced a review of the 2003 policy in November 2005, followed by an almost comically hasty consultation (which, as described below, later came home to roost) and in July 2006 that said virtually nothing new except that nuclear power now only seemed to need an agreed policy framework to be taken forward. The story then continued – three linked documents were released over three days in May 2007 with a view to taking forward energy policy: a general White Paper (Meeting the Energy Challenge), a consultation on the future of nuclear power, and a White Paper entitled Planning for a Sustainable Future.

This third document contains proposals to slim down and speed up planning procedures for large infrastructure projects – one of the key lobbying points made by developers, including the nuclear industry. Previous nuclear projects have been delayed by long and thorough public inquiries that have taken evidence from many players and have considered broad national as well as local issues in an inevitably contentious area.

The turnaround in the debate about nuclear power is significant, though not yet matched by any change in investment decisions. However, nuclear is an important issue for an energy policy that promotes the need to reduce carbon emissions as its cornerstone. This is because nuclear is, unambiguously, a low-carbon source of electricity. What should this mean for UK energy policy?

It certainly means that the Government needs to re-engineer the potential future role of nuclear power. The 2003 statement was brief and dismissive – it simply said that nuclear was uneconomic, though it might need revisiting at some point. But re-engineering of nuclear does not imply a need to recast energy policy across the board.

Energy saving

Surprisingly such a broad recasting is what both the 2006 energy review and the new Meeting the Energy Challenge White Paper seek to achieve. Yet revert all the main 2003 issues and try to say original things about them. Thus “energy saving” – a welcome rebadging of “energy efficiency”, which was the 2003 headline – occupies a major part of both documents. But neither says anything really new about energy saving policy. Both documents represent plenty of worthwhile work in progress on the part of civil servants, but no new decisions. The same is broadly true of all the other non-nuclear areas of the new White Paper.

So, perhaps not unexpectedly, there is nothing really new in the non-nuclear areas. This leaves the discussion on nuclear – the part of the Meeting the Energy Challenge White Paper that was due to deliver new policy. But the nuclear sections are an anti-climax. This is the result of the successful judicial review challenge by Greenpeace over the consultation that led to the 2006 energy review. Mr Justice Sullivan ruled earlier this year that
the Government’s 2006 consultation was illegal – it had provided no significant information on costs or nuclear waste, and had been misleading on waste.

The result is that the Government cannot legally make new policy on nuclear without further consultation, which has now been launched. The credibility of this new consultation was not helped by the Prime Minister’s statement on the day of Sullivan’s report that further consultation would take place – but that there would be no change in policy. This is not much of an encouragement for public and stakeholder engagement in the consultation, though the need for at least the ritual of further consultation on nuclear means that no complete new energy policy statement is now possible until, on Government’s own reckoning, the end of 2007. This will be over two years after the ‘urgent’ review was ordered, to almost everyone’s surprise, in November 2005.

Broken promises

What lessons can be drawn from this untidy tale? The simple but powerful message is that it simply does not pay for Government to avoid due process. In 2001 it promised that in nuclear and other energy policy areas it would continue its new and welcome process of full consultation before making new policy. It has blantly and radically reneged its own promise since then, as Justice Sullivan has pointedly made clear. This is particularly unfortunate when the major cause of the new and unnecessarily comprehensive policy review was nuclear power, itself an inevitably contentious subject.

The Government now has the worst of several worlds: it has failed to deliver on its commitment to the investment community for a stable long-term framework against which long-term decisions can be taken, and it has equally failed to follow up its commitment to an inclusive and participatory policy-making style on the one subject that needed to be handled with particular care – nuclear power. The consensus that the 2003 White Paper helped to build has now dissipated and we can, unfortunately, now expect to see a return to some of the more adversarial politics of energy that characterized earlier periods. As someone once said: more haste, less speed…
Two always had a fascination with water, partly because it moves and moving things are more interesting than static things. But I was brought up a long way from the sea, so I spent most of my childhood with rivers and streams, building miniature dams and harbours.’

Richard Soulsby has now spent over 50 years working with water, researching into the physics of the movement of sediments (sand, mud and shingle) in the sea and estuaries, mainly around Britain. It can scan an area of increasing global importance as new technologies and human pressures mean a greater use of the world’s water spaces—whether for industry, recreation, energy or reclamation. ‘Shallower seas are easier to get to than the deep oceans, but in many ways you need to monitor them more intensively because that’s where the interaction with human beings happens—right at the water’s edge.’

‘Ever greater populations living in coastal regions, and around estuaries, create conflict between economic development and pollution and erosion, between those concerned with navigation, industry, recreation, wildlife and habitats. You have all these competing pressures on the same patch of water and the more people there are the more conflicting interests you get. He admits these are difficult issues to resolve, but recently he has been involved in joint European U.K. research projects to develop better methods of predicting the consequences of actions such as increasing the depths of navigation channels (for bigger container ships) or dredging aggregate (for building) from the sea bed and coastlines.

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Water threats

Coastal flooding, erosion and the effects of accelerating sea level rise are now worldwide concerns as ever greater numbers of people become vulnerable to these conditions. Over the U.K coastline as a whole there is a lot more erosion than there is accretion, so are coastal sea defences a solution in Britain?

‘I am in favour of the shift from building hard defences to softer alternatives such as increasing the protection afforded by healthy beaches and sand marshes. However, it’s still necessary to have hard defences where the economic or historic value of coastal settlements justify it. Schemes such as beach nourishment, where sand or shingle is brought ashore to replenish the beach, or bagging, which helps move sand or shingle around an obstruction, also have a place here.”

The absolute sea level is rising everywhere in the world, but the important thing is what the sea is doing relative to the land because the land level isn’t fixed. In the south of England, for example, the land level is actually falling (it is rising in the north and Scotland which just exacerbates the rising sea level, so you have the biggest problem in the most highly populated—and expensive—part of Britain.

A lot of Richard’s work concerns the siting of structures such as oil and gas pipelines, oil platforms and offshore wind turbines. In recent years he has been involved with oil and gas pipelines in areas as diverse as the North Sea, Bristol Channel, Egypt, Nigeria and New Zealand. ‘Usually I don’t need to visit the site, but just work from charts and measurements. The main problem is not so much the effect these structures have on the ocean flows, but choosing the routes and methods of installation that minimise the likelihood of a pipeline becoming exposed to wave and current forces that could break it and cause an ecological disaster. Pipelines are sometimes laid in a trench in the sea bed, or protected by a rock mound, and decisions about the depth of burial, or the size of rock, require an understanding of the physics of sediment movement.’

Alternative energy

As well as oil companies, coastal and water authorities, DEFRA and towns with resort beaches or estuaries, Richard’s clients have included companies developing alternative sources of power generation such as offshore wind farms. ‘You are never going to be able to generate all your power requirements from renewable sources, but offshore wind turbines are a favourite at the moment because they can generate useful amounts of power without being quite so unsightly as the ones on land. However, they have their own problems because you have to mount them on the sandy sea bed and, like oil platforms, they must be designed to make sure the sand doesn’t get washed away and the turbine just falls over! As more, and bigger, offshore wind farms are built, there is also an impact on tidal currents to be calculated. Wave power, too, is currently undergoing a revival of interest and probably the best suited sites for this will be islands facing the ocean, such as the Azores and the Scottish islands (there are currently pilot schemes in Scotland and Portugal), where wave power is abundant and conventional sources expensive.’

There has been renewed interest, too, in tidal barrages, such as the one in the Severn Estuary, but Richard thought that a more likely candidate for tidal power would be underwater turbines, which sit on the sea bed and are driven by the tidal currents in areas where these are strong. Although still at the development stage, they have the advantage over a barrage in that they can be installed unit by unit (unlike a barrage which has to be complete before it achieves anything) and they have much less environmental impact.

As Richard points out, ‘wave power and tidal power are two very distinct sources of energy; tides are generated by the gravitational pull of the moon and the sun, whereas waves are generated by the wind. Tidal power is totally predictable or almost totally predictable, whereas waves are as unpredictable as the weather is unpredictable.’

Interest in modelling ocean movements is extremely topical at the moment, as there is a great deal of media attention given to the relationship between oceans and atmospheric and global warming. Although not one of his direct areas of research, Richard confirms that there is a strong link between the oceans and global warming, as a large proportion of the exchanges of oxygen and carbon dioxide, as well as heat, takes place in the ocean. Natural phenomena such as El Niño have been studied by the oceanographic community for years, although its effects are now believed to be more widespread than once thought.

Another area of oceanography, tsunamis, is one in which Richard has been closely involved. Like El Niño, tsunamis have been studied for many years but only came to widespread attention with the recent colossal Boxing Day 2004 disaster in South East Asia.

There are a number of ways in which tsunamis can be caused. The recent Boxing Day tsunami was the result of an underwater earthquake, generating a vertical movement of the sea bed. Some large earthquakes cause a sideways movement of the bed which doesn’t generate such big tsunamis—indeed there was one like this in the same area of South East Asia a few weeks after Boxing Day.

Tsunami research

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Making the message count

Cell phones have been adopted at a pace unmatched by any technology in the history of mankind. While conventional use of these devices continues to expand, mobile phones are also increasingly being viewed as tools for conservation and development. Ken Banks (AFRAS 1996), currently a Visiting Fellow on the Reuters Digital Vision Program at Stanford University, understands this well.

How did you become involved with applying mobile technology to conservation and development?

Originally I was in the Information Technology (IT) industry but my mother and grandparents have always been very keen on nature and the environment. I must have inherited the family gene for nature because I’ve been fascinated by the outdoors since I was a child. The experience that really cemented my interest in conservation and development was a trip to Zambia in 1993. I went there after being awarded a place on a Jersey Overseas Aid project to help build a school.

While I was there, I started to think about where all the aid money was going and why it didn’t seem to be particularly effective. I began to look at the practical side of conservation and development efforts, when previously my interest had been primarily in wildlife—the kind of stuff you saw on David Attenborough’s shows and other TV programmes. In 1995 I went back to Africa to help build a hospital in Uganda. By then I was really quite captivated by this and knew it was something I wanted to be involved in.

Ken established kiwanja.net as a hub for the latest information on how technology, in particular mobile phones, can be applied to tackle issues of economic empowerment, conservation, education, human rights and poverty alleviation. Ken argues that the development of low-cost handsets and the spread of second-hand phones into emerging markets like South Asia and Africa—one of the fastest growing markets with well in excess of 125 million subscribers—in generating a revolution in how organisations approach conservation and development projects.

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From a conservation perspective, mobile phones are increasingly used for surveys and monitoring. In Kenya, for example, Save The Elephants are using GPS/GSM collars to track elephants (these devices text in the elephants’ location). Compared to the alternatives, it’s cheap, real-time, and doesn’t depend on ARGOS satellites which drive up complexity and costs. These devices not only help the organisation to... so they can protect crops from being eaten and trampled. Human-elephant conflict is still a big issue in many countries.

In what other ways can SMS and mobile telephony be used in development?

In Nigeria and India we are seeing government agencies and NGOs use SMS as a health education messaging application. There... in Nigeria took three months to report is now almost instantaneous. Spreading the word of outbreaks in remote areas saves lives.

One interesting health application is the SIMpill, which helps with the problem of people not finishing their course of antibiotics and so producing drug-resistant strains that are more difficult to treat. SIMpill is an SMS enabled pill bottle which, when opened, delivers a text message to a central server. Each SMS is time stamped and kept as a record of the patient taking their medication properly. The doctor is warned via text message if the patient is not taking their medication properly.

We are also seeing SMS used in both fundraising and awareness-raising campaigns and for more conservation-specific applications. One project I was heavily involved in was ‘wildlive’, a service that promoted global conservation by providing news and information on various issues through people’s handsets. It also had a direct fundraising angle through the sale of conservation-themed wall calendars, ringing tones and games. Funds raised went to Fauna & Flora International, a UK-based organisation, and directly to the conservation projects being promoted.

What were your next move?

I left my job in Jersey in 1996 to go the University of Sussex to pursue a degree in Social Anthropology with Development Studies. I sold everything I owned at that point and left for the UK with two suitcases. That was the beginning of the journey. I formed kiwanja.net in 2005 after I returned from a year working with primates in Nigeria.

What do you offer through kiwanja.net?

Kiwanja.net helps local, national and international non-profit organisations make better use of information and communications technology in their work. The website works as an information resource, while I generally function as an intermediary between the technology – especially mobile technology – and conservation or development groups. You’ll see organisations like the Gates Foundation looking at technology use in developing countries. They put in contact with people in the field as well as some of the technology and applications under development and help check their work and assumptions. Part of what I do is match-making in a sense. I have also developed mobile applications for use in conservation and development, including FrontlineSMS – a messaging hub used to monitor the recent Nigerian elections.

What advantages do mobile technologies offer for conservation and development groups?

While large numbers of organisations have been trying to promote the spread of the Internet in rural parts of developing countries, penetration rates are still pretty low in many areas. Mobile phones, however, have been spreading rapidly and today are nearly everywhere in some countries, leap-frogging the number of land lines in a matter of three or four years. Because of their widespread adoption, we are now seeing mobile phones being used for many conservation and development applications. Many centre around improving communication between stakeholders and NGOs – for example, sending out alerts on impending natural disasters like tsunamis and hurricanes, or wildlife alerts, or posting job openings or health messages. The advantages of text messaging is that it is very quick, generally cheap, and direct. Most people read the text messages they receive, unlike email spam. It also works on every phone regardless of form factor – a critical issue in areas where a lot of the phones can be as much as seven years old. These phones are often useless for surfing the Internet but they work fine for SMS applications. For conservation applications, I focus on the improved communications capabilities.

in the past, where you had government agencies evicting people from their land in order to set up protected areas, today it is realised that conservation efforts must involve local people. Otherwise, you only decimate them and drive them to oppose conservation efforts. Now with the rise of community-based conservation and integrated conservation and development projects, communication can help reduce these issues – mobile phones allow us to open channels that were never before possible. For example, in Kruger National Park (South Africa), the park management used to send a Land Rover out to the 18 different communities living around the park to inform them of meetings, give them latest news, and so on. If a meeting was cancelled or changed, the ranger had to go back out. It might take days to spread the word. Today it is possible to simply broadcast a text message. We can even set up a database that captures text responses from various communities on whether they will be able to attend or how they would vote on a particular initiative. This functionality frees up a lot of resources for more meaningful and productive activities from both the park’s and the communities’ perspective.

It sounds like most of these applications are top-down approaches. Are there examples of user-generated content?

Definitely, but it’s in the early stages in many cases. The release of my ‘FrontlineSMS’ system is an attempt to bring the technology into hands of the users, and to promote a more bottom-up approach. In terms of user-generated content, current ‘hot’ applications include SMS blogging, which really blossomed during last year’s Israel-Lebanon conflict. We saw news being generated by SMS messaging as Beirut was getting bombed. The real-time nature of the posts provided insights that would have been really happening on the ground. This type of reporting – citizen journalism – is ever more technology driven and the BBC, for example, regularly requests people near the thick of the action, particularly with camera-phone images or mobile video, to send them in.

What are the biggest challenges to your work?

The big problem I see is that people are generally reluctant to share. It’s hard to find examples of mobile phone... Mark that ‘going alone’. I think people’s first instinct should be to look at collaboration wherever possible.

This feature is based on extracts from an interview with Mongabay.com. For a full version of the original interview, please visit: http://news.mongabay.com/2007/0415-banks_interview.html

Further information on Ken’s work can be found online at: www.kiwanja.net
Development

My junior year abroad

Gary Ferman (MA in International Relations 1970) is one of many North American alumni who are kindly supporting our fundraising campaign for scholarships aimed at American students coming to study at Sussex. Gary fondly recalls his time as an overseas student at Sussex in the 1960s.

I first came to the University of Sussex just over 40 years ago in 1966, on a Junior Year Abroad programme from the University of California (UC) at Berkeley. It seems ironic that I came from the new world to the old, only to end up in a university which had only been founded five years previously, compared to UC Berkeley which was founded in 1868. Under the Junior Year Abroad programme, we could spend our full academic year known in America as the ‘junior year’ of a four-year BA course abroad, and get full academic credit for it. We had the choice of four British universities namely Birmingham, Edinburgh, St Andrews and Sussex. I opted for Sussex for two reasons.

First, the organisation of Sussex into schools and its policies with the Free Speech Movement. Moreover, UC Berkeley had become a major centre of anti-Vietnam war protest.

The greatest academic contrast was the intensive one-to-one personal interaction between teacher and student. I remember having two compulsory weekly tutorials and seminars plus lectures which were voluntary. By contrast, at UC Berkeley, lectures were mandatory and tutorials for most undergraduate students unknown. Sussex offered a very different style of education that required substantially more self-discipline and taking charge of organizing one’s own time.

In the 1960s, there was limited student housing on campus and most students, including me, lived in Brighton guest houses and took the bus to Falmer. Brighton was an amazing place and the scope for entertainment ranged from Theatre Royal Brighton to the sounds of soulful English rock music at the ‘Coffee Bar’ near the Brighton bus depot. It was also nice to be somewhere where one was not asked for written proof of age – the minimum drinking age in California being 21 – before you could be served so much as a glass of beer.

The style of education at Berkeley put a lot of pressure on the student houses. But the house owner was generally respectful of university students. By contrast, I remember having two compulsory weekly tutorials and seminars plus lectures which were voluntary. By contrast, at UC Berkeley, lectures were mandatory and tutorials for most undergraduate students unknown. Sussex offered a very different style of education that required substantially more self-discipline and taking charge of organizing one’s own time.

It is because of my memorable experience at Sussex and the desire that others may likewise be able to benefit from attending this university that I was happy to contribute to the Friends of the University of Sussex.

Remember US?

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The attitude of Brighton guest house owners was generally respectful of university students. By contrast, opinions about students among those living in Berkeley and surrounding cities of Oakland and San Francisco were quite divided. Many, including the California Governor Ronald Reagan, were unsympathetic to Berkeley students who had openly challenged the university and its policies with the Free Speech Movement. Moreover, UC Berkeley had become a major centre of anti-Vietnam war protest.

By cheque, made payable to University of Sussex
By credit card: Mastercard, Visa or Switch.

The Sussex Fund is one of the key ways in which the University raises funds to support student scholarships, hardship bursaries, library acquisitions, campus improvements and student activities. Your generosity can help us maintain excellence, attract the best students and enhance their teaching and learning environment.

Please complete this form in BLOCK CAPITALS. Thank you.

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Address

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Card number

Expiry date

Signature

Date

I would like to receive a legacy information brochure (please tick).

I would like to make a gift to support this initiative, please make your check payable to the Friends of the University of Sussex and send it to: Friends of the University of Sussex, c/o International Charity Consultants, 225 Peeke Avenue, St Louis, MO 63122.

Please return your completed donation form to:

Development and Alumni Relations, University of Sussex.

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Can you help Sussex students get a foot in the door?

My work shadow experience was invaluable. I got to see how someone in a senior position worked and was allowed to see every part of her life for a day.

I worked shadowing at CDEC looking at the ways mobile phones, PCs and TV were all coming together, but I was also a lifelong sailor – something I thought that when you put phones, GPS and the web together you would suddenly have a little device that tells you where you are and where you’re going.

The Alumni Network regrets to report the death of the following people and extends its sympathy to their family and friends.

In memoriam

The University of Sussex has always flaunted its radicalism. It was inevitable that it would eventually attract to its fold those natural leaders: he never took himself seriously or fell into the sectarian squabbling that weakened the left, even engaging in friendly dialogue with Tories during those polarised years.

Those of us lucky enough to remain close to Richard – who completed his education at McGill University in Montreal and worked in Canada as a journalist, before returning to the UK to spend many years at the International Transport Workers’ Federation – found we had a teacher for life. He introduced us to the Internet. He drew our attention to forgotten conflicts. And he taught us, by his own example, that long, cruel physical decline – in his case inflicted by a neurological condition – needn’t be a cause for self-pity or surrender.

He died this year on 18 April, aged 47. Sussex is posting photos and eulogies from his memorial on http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/alumni/pages/inmemoriam/richard_flint.html And his friends hope to establish a more permanent tribute to a remarkable spirit.

Robert King (ENGAM 1973)
Anthony Miller (SOC 1973)
Peter Clarke (SOC 1974)
Ann Kidd (ENGAM 1977)
Robin Street

Founder of Multimap brings vision of the future to Sussex

The successful entrepreneur talked about his time at Sussex, his career and his vision for a future where no one will be lost again.

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A 40th Anniversary Reunion will take place on Saturday 15 September 2007 from 12 noon until 6pm.

Join us for your 40th Anniversary Reunion
40th Anniversary Reunion will take place on Saturday 15 September 2007 from 12 noon until 6pm.

This reunion is for those who were freshers at Sussex in the years 1961 to 1967.

The packed programme of activities being planned includes:

- National Front.
- Discussion forum.
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Who is doing what and where?

60s

60s Martin Cahn (BIO 1967) has been living near Krakow in Poland for a number of years and recently took early retirement from Energetyka C.P. whom he had been working for the last 13 years. He plans to spend his time including himself and his wife and children, in following up his interests in the rich Jewish heritage of his adoptive country.

60s Susan Bennett (née Rose, EURO 1962) is now the Assistant Centre Organiser for the National Garden Scheme, Sussex. Susan who used to run the Rhythm Club (later Folk Club) recognised her son on the online Scrapbook and got in touch with her. She still recalls the spirit of the 60s when the Folk Club brought many famous names to perform at Sussex. Susan also remembers the days of singing and performing on campus and bucking in Brighton with her friends.

60s Keith Muscutt (ENGAM 1964), Assistant Dean of the arts at the University of California, Santa Cruz, has reported the discovery of a previously unknown ruin on the eastern slope of the Andes mountains in Peru. The ruin is particularly significant because of its unprecedented form, size, and the remoteness of the area in which it was found.

60s Christopher Nassaar (ENGLISH 1964) has published a book called Camerons, Santa Cruz, which is a memoir of Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Importance of Being Earnest’. Earnest Revisted is a lively and entertaining novel that retains all the sparkling wit and repartee of the original play but is more rewarding to read from the page. It is also almost twice the length of the original and full of delightful Wildishian additions and surprises.

60s Congratulations to Christopher Bullock (MAPS 1965), who was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours List for services to mad safety.

70s

70s Martin Fournier-Facio (CCS 1975) has been appointed as the Artistic Coordinator at La Scala Opera House in Milan as of June 2007. Prior to this appointment Gaston has been the Artistic Coordinator at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and in Rome at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia.

70s Eric Clarke (CCS 1974) has been elected to the Health Mentorship of Music at the University of Oxford, starting on 1 October 2007. His book Ways of Listening: an ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning was published by OUP in 2006.

70s Bill Campion (MAPS 1976), although now hardly a work as a marine scientist, was also a mad cyclist who went on the first London to Brighton bike rally in 1974. A dozen did it then. Now it is thousands. If there is anyone who went on those early London to Brighton rides, perhaps ex-members of Brighton Whole Earth Group, please get in touch with Bill because he wants to do it again.

70s Ian Wilson (ENG 1970), who recently took early retirement after almost 10 years as Director of Social Services in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, was awarded the CBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours List for services to social care. During his decade in charge, Tower Hamlets social services were transformed from the worst in the East End (as rated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection),

80s

80s Congratulations to Jonathan Dorey (ENG 1970), who has been awarded a CBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours List for services to social care. As a result of the success of Culture Online in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), of which he was a director, Jonathan is currently a visiting industrial professor at the University of Bristol.

80s Congratulations to Joanne Longfield (ARTS 1980), a champion of healthy eating, who gained an MBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours List for services to food policy. Joanne works for Sustan – a charity dedicated to healthy eating. She is heavily involved in the Children’s Food Campaign which aims to reduce obesity in kids through better school meals.

80s Michael Snell (Education 1981) was awarded a CBE in the New Year Honours List for services to education. Many congratulations to Michael who retired in August 2006.

80s Stuart Townend (ENGAM 1983) is a musician, recording artist and one of the UK’s leading modern hymn writers. Last year, his composition ‘In Christ alone’ was voted among the top 50 most popular hymns in the recent BBC Songs of Praise viewers’ poll, and he regularly performs on the programme. He lives in Brighton with his wife Caroline (née Bull, AFRAS 1980) and three children.

90s

90s The Board of Trustees of Tate are delighted to announce that the Prince Minister has appointed Jeremy Deller (HUMS 1991) as a Tate Trustee. The term of appointment will be for four years from 10 January 2007. By statute, three of Tate’s twelve trustees are practising artists, and Jeremy will join artist trustees Fiona Rane and Anish Kapoor on the Board. He was the winner of the Turner prize in 2004.

90s Sam Daws (AFRAS 1985) became the Executive Director of the United Nations Association of the UK (UNA-UK) in September 2004. He has served as a senior advisor on UN issues for 17 years including three years as First Officer in the Executive Office of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Since graduating from Sussex, Sam completed a master’s degree at the University of Kent and undertook doctoral studies at New College, Oxford. He has been a visiting fellow at the Lutterpuch Centre for International Law at Cambridge University and at the UN Studies Programme of Yale University. He has co-authored or edited six books on the UN.

90s Claire Towner (Education 1985) and her husband Genni Mattick are ‘over the moon’, or should we say sun, after winning the ‘Inheritance and Hundred Monetarization Awards’ for ‘Best Home Installation’ for the 23 huge solar panels they have installed on their home.

90s Congratulations to Jeanette Longfield (ARTS 1980), a champion of healthy eating, who gained an MBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours List for services to food policy. Jeanette works for Sustan – a charity dedicated to healthy eating. She is heavily involved in the Children’s Food Campaign which aims to reduce obesity in kids through better school meals.

90s Ian McEwan (ENG 1970) has published his first book, The Virgin Money Maker, and he regularly performs on the programme. He lives in Brighton with his wife Caroline (nee Bull, AFRAS 1980) and three children.

90s Chris Newlands (SOC 1993) has published his first book, The Single Money Maker. Despite graduating with a hefty overdraft, one too many student loans and an appreciation of how to make cheques out for cash, Chris has turned his finances around and penned a simple, no-nonsense guide to managing one’s finances. The book is about knowing your ISA from your PEP and realising you don’t have to wear braces or have slicked back hair to make money from shares.
Although Kate took an English Literature degree at Sussex (which is unusual for a cartoonist), she never forgot her love of art and drawing. It did, however, take her six years after graduating to be able to read a novel for pleasure again.

Kate spent 1995 and 1996 living at three tree protest camps in England and Wales and occasionally contributing cartoons to free Brighton newspaper SchNews. Then The Guardian newspaper phoned her up to commission cartoons from the Newbury bypass roads protest. This made her mother, a lifelong Guardian reader, extremely happy.

In 1997, she decided to combine her talents for assimilating and collating information (honed at Sussex), and for sitting around firepits drinking cider (acquired since) to write a history of the British roads protest movement. Copse: The Cartoon Book of TreeProtesting was published in 1998.

Unfortunately, she spent all the money from a second edition and a £30 plus. What a shame she doesn’t have any left.

Kate now lives a slightly more settled life, near Bath. She has a three-year-old son, and was pleasantly surprised to discover that having a child didn’t mean the end of her cartooning career. No, soggy nappies, temper tantrums and teething pains have given her an endless supply of comical topics. She is currently working on The Food of Love: Breastfeeding Your Baby. However, it is for her political and environmental work that Kate is better known.

Funny Weather: Everything You Didn’t Want to Know About Climate Change But Probably Should! was published by Myriad Editions last year. It is a funny, concise guide to the science of climate change, and the social restructuring that will be necessary to tackle it meaningfully. It won praise from The Independent, The Guardian, Sky News and Chris Evans on BBC Radio Two (no, he isn’t a relation). However, she is still waiting for it to make her rich and famous!

Kate Evans (Education 2000) worked very hard at Sussex until just before her final exams. Then she discovered free beach parties, festivals and environmental protesting. When she was called for her viva, she was hitchhiking across South Wales to go and live in a tree. As a consequence, she narrowly missed a First.