This is the first edition of what we hope will become a monthly, or thereabouts, update on the activities of The Bridge. And because it’s the first of its kind, we welcome all comments and suggestions for improvements.

In this month’s edition we remind everyone of the vision and ambition we have set for The Bridge and its role in the long-term development of Hughes Hall. We highlight some of the initial activities, both the very real outward-facing engagements we’ve begun and also our ongoing preparation and planning work. We explain how we’re building relations with other within and beyond Cambridge. And we say more about what this means for individual researchers, in terms of what we expect to offer them and what is also needed from them if this bold venture is to succeed.

It’s been a busy three months since I arrived at Hughes Hall, and of course much time has been taken getting to know the College – its people and ways of working – and beginning to get a feel for what’s happening in and around Cambridge in the broader knowledge transfer and commercialisation world. Colleagues have been universally supportive and positive about the Bridge, but quite rightly also challenging and questioning in what exactly it will do and how it will work with and for them. This is not the place to provide answers to all the questions, but by offering a snapshot of live issues, and a view of the longer term, I hope the whole Hughes Hall research community will continue to ask itself what it wants from The Bridge and think constructively about what it can offer to ensure success.

Our driving ambition is to enable Hughes Hall researchers to achieve significant impact in the wider world, by facilitating translation of academic knowledge into policy, products or practice. Our driving ambition is to enable Hughes Hall researchers to achieve significant impact in the wider world, by facilitating translation of academic knowledge into policy, products or practice. Having arrived at Hughes Hall in mid-March as the new director for research translation, I have divided my time between getting to know the Fellowship, taking the Bridge concept out to key individuals already working in translational activities in Cambridge, directly supporting some early initiatives and events, and putting in place the thinking and planning for the long-term sustainable operation of this evolving Hughes Hall capability.
Highlights include the Annual Senior Members Symposium which was given a strong translation theme. We had a series of excellent presentations with three short Q&A sessions, all followed by very lively discussions over buffet supper. A HASS subject event on Scottish populations and migration since 1850 was given added interest and contemporary relevance by inviting two policy experts from Government. They explained how social research is immensely valuable today, and why understanding migration statistics is a critical area for current policy-makers. At the PhD supervisors dinner, a wide group of academics from across the university were reminded that they play a key role, and have a real responsibility, inspiring their students to think beyond the research and consider how new knowledge may change the world. A book launch, with Rupert Wegerif and Laura Kerslake (an education PhD student doing a three-month internship with The Bridge) included a vivid talk about how research links to practice and illustrated the importance of gathering evidence to inform policy – a key aspect of The Bridge. Following up HRH The Duke of York’s visit to receive an Honorary Fellowship, we are looking to forge ongoing links between The Bridge and HRH’s work with entrepreneurs.

As part of increasing the understanding of how the Cambridge translational ecosystem works, and ensuring this knowledge is held by The Bridge to help our researchers, I have attended briefing days at the Maxwell Centre and the Institute for Manufacturing. Initial conversations have been held with CSaP, Cambridge Enterprise, the Intellectual Forum at Jesus, amongst others. These allow us to work towards a good understanding of our different goals, and determine how we can work in partnership with other key players. Follow-up discussions are already identifying new links for Hughes researchers. A dinner with City Fellows explored how they can best engage with the wider college community and bring insight about opportunities that will inspire our researchers to see their work in a new light.

A critical role for The Bridge is to provide underpinning support in working towards new Study Centres at Hughes Hall. Study Centres are a key part of the College’s ambitions to have, and be seen to have, wider impact, and expanding the range of issues and sectors where Hughes Hall has influence is a key goal. The Bridge is actively and closely involved in developing proposals around Translation to support Healthy Ageing alongside new research programmes in the Clinical School, in improving corporate governance around climate change, and exploring opportunities in regulatory policy. Of course, we are also looking closely at the ongoing work of the Oracy Centre, Centre for Digital Innovation, and Cambridge Governance Labs.

More immediately, Research Translation will be the theme of this year’s Alumni Lecture on 22 September – with a panel format to showcase how translation works and can transform the world beyond academia. Beyond that, the Thursday evening series of subject-based events at Hughes will become more translation-oriented, with City Fellows playing a major role showcasing opportunities for academics beginning or enhancing their external engagements.

I suspect future editions of this newsletter will have a more targeted focus on issues and activities of the moment, as well as providing an immediate forward-look of events that will be of interest to Hughes researchers and to our growing band of partners and stakeholders. We will also improve the layout and include more imagery to illustrate issues and make our exploits more memorable.

And finally, here is Laura, our first intern, working at the sharp end of philosophy education research in a school...

**About the Author**

Dr Stephen Axford (pictured on page 1) joined Hughes Hall in March as Director of Research Translation to establish The Bridge and support the College’s researchers in exploiting their work more effectively in a range of external environments.

Read more about Stephen in our Hughes Magazine Issue 28.

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