The Birkbeck effect
Your gift, our future
Summer 2011
Welcome from the Master

Birkbeck is unique. I am always reminded of this fact as our Torrington Square building fills with students in the evenings in term time. The College is an environment where everyone wants to know more and where classrooms buzz with the product of world class research matched with the enthusiasm of a committed student body. This year we have had to work particularly hard to get a fair deal for part-time students in a new era of fees, loans and scholarships, so that Birkbeck can continue to offer the same educational opportunities to working Londoners as it has done since 1823. Our efforts were recognised at the Times Higher Education Awards in June when we won the top honour for Outstanding Leadership and Management.

Students and staff, however, can only do so much to maintain our mission. Being able to count on the support of our alumni and friends is very important to Birkbeck, as it is through your help that we can provide financial support to students who need it most, maintain our excellence in teaching and research, and build a new education facility for those who study with us in east London. The new fee and bursary structure we will adopt from 2012 is designed to ensure that the College continues to encourage non-traditional students to take their first steps into higher education. Allied with the ongoing support of our alumni donors, volunteers and friends, we can ensure that Birkbeck continues to flourish.

Professor David Latchman CBE

Donors and students meet at Scholars’ Evening

In recognition of the vital support Birkbeck’s alumni have provided over the past year, the Master, Professor David Latchman CBE, hosted the fourth annual Scholars’ Evening on 5 July 2011. Now an established event in the College calendar, this year the thirtieth floor of the London headquarters of Clifford Chance again provided an excellent venue to thank donors and volunteers for their continued support.

The event enabled current students, who have received financial support from alumni, to thank donors for their generosity and discuss changes that have taken place at Birkbeck. Many of the bursary recipients who attended had just completed their final year of study and talked about their plans for the future. Others had just finished their exams and were exhilarated to have completed their first year. One such student, Dawn Joseph, spoke at the event and explained the impact that the bursary she received has had on her.

Professor Latchman gave an update on Birkbeck, and Sarah Weir, History of Art alumna and donor, described the impact that Birkbeck has had on her life, and spoke about why she supports the Alumni Fund, the importance of volunteering, donating and remembering the College in her will.

Visit our website for videos and further photos from the evening – www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni

Students thank donors for their support

Bursary recipient, Dawn Joseph

“Elated but tired, I am one lecture away from the end of my first year studying for a BSc Social Sciences. There are three main ways in which the bursary I have received has made a difference to me. First and most obviously is the financial help. I am a single parent and my son is currently at university. Witnessing his achievements had made me realise that now is my time to be at university and receiving the bursary was the difference between doing the degree and not. I work at the Young Foundation and had been PA to the Chief Executive. Studying Social Sciences invigorated me and allowed me to start getting more involved in policy and research – I was recently appointed as International Practice Co-ordinator which never would have happened if I had not started at Birkbeck. Coming to university has also made a difference to me personally, giving me confidence and making me realise that my opinion matters. I am enormously grateful for the bursary I received but I am just one of many who feel exactly the same.”

Students thank donors for their support
Alumni volunteers continue to be a vital asset for Birkbeck

From advising prospective students at Open Evenings and guiding new students at Orientation events, to personal mentoring and guest speaking, alumni volunteers continue to be a vital asset to student recruitment and retention at Birkbeck. Many students come to study through a recommendation and often need a little extra encouragement or reassurance that Birkbeck is the right choice for them. One of the many events that have taken place this year was a taster evening hosted by the School of Arts, as part of its annual Arts Week, organised to give prospective students an opportunity to ask questions about the School, meet staff and also hear from successful graduates. Elizabeth Negus, who graduated with an MA Cultural and Critical Studies in 2001, came along to speak to prospective students. Head of English at Barking and Dagenham College since 2007, she has a particular passion for working with mature learners who are aiming to go to university. She has a depth of theoretical and practical experience in teaching English literature from the fourteenth century to the present day and has written on Shakespeare, HG Wells, Arnold Bennett and Charles Dickens. In May 2011, Elizabeth was elected to the Class of Fellow Members by the College of Teachers.

Speaking about the taster evening, Elizabeth reflects: “I am still fully committed to Birkbeck and really enjoyed talking about the impact that Birkbeck has had on my life. Educational issues are so important today and university education is rarely out of the media. The taster evenings provide a priceless opportunity to think and talk about what it means to study at Birkbeck. I feel privileged to be able to inspire and encourage undergraduates to come to a world class institution like Birkbeck, show them how to manage successfully the difficult combination of personal and educational life.”

There are a variety of volunteering opportunities coming up at the College, especially at the beginning of the new academic year during the week of Orientation events in late September 2011. If you are interested in getting involved, email alumni@bbk.ac.uk.

Graduating class add to library collection

Students finishing their courses and anticipating the excitement of their graduation ceremonies now have the opportunity to start giving to Birkbeck, marking their special day with a contribution to their Class Gift. Trialled for the first time last year, those attending graduation were able make an online gift when purchasing tickets for their ceremony. A large number of donations were given, which pooled together totalled over £1700, forming the Gift from the Class of 2010. The money has been used to purchase over 200 books for the library and each book contains a commemorative book plate to acknowledge the source of the donations.

Philip Payne, Director of the Library and Media Services, says: “The books we have added to the library are essential reading for any new student so we are very grateful for the generosity shown by recent graduates.” The class giving scheme will continue for the coming year and it is hoped that new graduates will be equally generous.

Alumnus recounts life of Victorian hostess in first Master’s Circle lecture

In April, Professor Latchman welcomed leadership donors to hear the inaugural Master’s Circle lecture in a Georgian drawing room overlooking a leafy corner of Russell Square. The evening’s speaker, MA Victorian Studies alumnus, David Waller, guided his audience through the fascinating life of high society centenarian Gertrude Tennant (1819 –1918), from a childhood in Bohemian Paris and a teenage flirtation with Gustave Flaubert to a distinguished later life as an unsurpassed London hostess. The research resulted in his biography, The Magnificent Mrs Tennant, published in 2009, which went on to become a Daily Telegraph Biography of the Year and was a runner-up in the Biographers’ Club Prize.

The new home of the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy at 28 Russell Square proved to be a particularly suitable venue for the event, as Gertrude Tennant lived in Russell Square for many years after she married, before relocating to the more upmarket Richmond Terrace adjacent to Downing Street. The life of Mrs Tennant was the first in a series of Master’s Circle lectures which recognise and thank Birkbeck’s leadership donors. The College has a long philanthropic tradition initiated at the founding of the College by Dr George Birkbeck, in 1823, and continued today by those who donate at a significant level.

A second exclusive event will follow in another of the College’s unique Bloomsbury venues in early 2012.

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Alumni rise to the challenge

Each year we ask former students to help improve the experience of those currently studying at Birkbeck by contributing to the Alumni Fund. Again, alumni rose to the challenge and collectively gave over £140,000 in 2010–2011. Thanks to the three-year Matched Funding Scheme, where every £1 donated to Birkbeck benefited from a 50p match from the Government, the actual value of these gifts equated to £210,000.

This fantastic result is down to the huge number of donations, ranging from £5 to over £5,000, made by those who believe in education and maximising the potential of students, providing great facilities and services as well as financial support for those who need it most. Birkbeck is fortunate to have a body of alumni and friends whose commitment, generosity and goodwill continues well beyond their student days and graduation.

This was particularly in evidence during the latest telephone campaign, Birkbeck’s main fundraising initiative of the year, when a dedicated team of 30 student callers spoke to over 1,800 alumni and friends of the College. Students enjoyed friendly and highly entertaining conversations with alumni of all ages but, more than anything else, it was the shared enjoyment of being a student at Birkbeck and the opportunities it created that was the main reason alumni decided to donate. “On occasion I was totally overwhelmed by their generosity, especially those who had little or no income, but felt so strongly about Birkbeck’s values that they wanted to make a contribution – however small,” remarked Faheem Ahmed who is currently studying for a Graduate Certificate in Professional Studies, having already gained an MSc in Gender, Culture and Politics from Birkbeck.

The money raised through the Alumni Fund in 2010–2011 has been allocated to the areas where it will have the greatest impact on the lives of Birkbeck students. View of the current changes in student funding, the Alumni Fund has committed over £60,000 to student bursaries and hardship funds to provide help for students who find themselves in financial difficulties that would otherwise threaten their ability to continue their studies. In support of enhancing the student experience and providing the best service and facilities for all Birkbeck students, the Alumni Fund has contributed £40,000 towards the ongoing improvement of support services offered by the new My Birkbeck Student Centre in the main entrance on Torrington Square. The remainder will be disbursed among individual Schools and Departments in support of smaller-scale projects that would not find funding elsewhere. All of the projects will have a direct impact on the academic or social life of students and full details will be announced at the beginning of the next academic year.

We are very grateful for the donations made by alumni, staff and friends in the last year and we hope you will continue to support Birkbeck. Donate online at www.bbkl.ac.uk/donateonline.

Boris Johnson launches University Square Stratford

The £33 million building project, creating a state of the art new education building for Birkbeck in the heart of east London reached a significant milestone in March 2011 when the scheme was officially launched by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson.

The project, which is the first of its kind in the capital, is the result of a unique and exciting collaboration between Birkbeck, University of London and the University of East London (UEL). The new building will provide highly-flexible shared teaching spaces for both institutions and their partners. A broad mix of 3,400 adults will study in the building throughout the day and evening, with a wide variety of courses offered by the partners enabling people to study at a level that suits them. University Square will also be made available to local community, business and arts groups, helping to embed it into the ongoing development of Stratford beyond the 2012 Olympics.

Commenting on the plans, Boris Johnson said: “Attracting the brightest and best minds to London’s universities is essential if the capital is to remain a global powerhouse for education. This new building will become a magnet for students in east London, adding to the buzz which is already being generated in Stratford ahead of the 2012 Games. This quarter of the capital is being transformed before our eyes and University Square will help secure the legacy of regeneration for decades to come.”

The project’s innovation in aligning educational delivery with regeneration outputs has already been recognised by considerable financial support from a wide range of funders, including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC), in addition to a very generous £1 million donation from the Garfield Weston Foundation and a number of significant donations from former students and staff. The Master of Birkbeck, Professor David Latchman CBE, remarked: “This collaboration between UEL and Birkbeck demonstrates that it is possible to build a major, new educational facility at a time of budget cuts and economic constraints. University Square Stratford will enable more non-traditional students from east London to enjoy the opportunities of higher education near where they live and work, carrying on George Birkbeck’s original mission of education for all.”

Planning permission was given for the collaborative project in November 2010 and work will start on site in September 2011: the building will be ready for the beginning of the academic year, autumn 2013. For more information about making a donation to the Stratford project, please contact development@bbkl.ac.uk

Gordon Square showcased in alumni event

Tucked away in the School of Arts on the east side of Gordon Square is Birkbeck’s state of the art, RIBA award winning cinema, (picture, right). Alumni were recently invited to this hidden gem for a screening by the London Screen Archive, offering an intimate portrait of London at the end of the Second World War and its reconstruction up to the 1948 Olympics, followed by the Festival of Britain in 1951. The evening was hosted and narrated by Ian Christie, Professor of Film and Media History, and Director of the London Screen Study Collection.

London’s Screen Archive is a regional network which supports all organisations in London holding collections of moving image material. Its mission is to bring screen heritage into the heart of London’s cultural life. It helps organisations care for their collections, assists the public and researchers and opens access to an extraordinary heritage of London film. Birkbeck is a leading partner in the collaborative project, which was launched in 2005 with help from the Alumni Fund. The films in the collection provide an insight into the feelings and attitudes of the time, prevailing social conventions, victory at the end of the war then enduring hardship in the 1940s and 50s. Many of the films also introduce some of the new ideas and institutions that were being established in the post-war period, such as the Welfare State and an emerging teenage culture. Additional film from the archive covering the entire twentieth century can be viewed at www.youtube.com/etrnordonscreenarchive

Alumni guests also had the opportunity to view the newly refurbished Keynes Room, also housed in Gordon Square in which a post-screening reception was held. Funded through a generous donation to the School of Arts, the refurbishment has given the room a new lease of life, creating an interesting environment for student conferences, seminars and events for the School, as well as a fitting home for paintings by Bloomsbury group members Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

For more information about making a donation to the Stratford project, please contact development@bbkl.ac.uk
Thank you for supporting Birkbeck

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Please return the completed form to: Development and Alumni Office, External Relations, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX.

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I wish Birkbeck, University of London to treat this and all other donations that I have made since 6 April 2006, and all future donations, as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

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□ £1000 □ £500 □ £100

□ £___________ (other amount)

(Please tick as appropriate)

I enclose a cheque for £___________

(Please make cheques payable to ‘Birkbeck College’)

Please charge my: □ Visa □ Switch/Delta □ Mastercard

Name on card: __________________________

Card number: __________________________

CVV: __________________________

Start date: __________________________

Expiry date: __________________________

Issue no: __________________________

Signature __________________________

□ I would like information about including Birkbeck in my will.

□ We may publish the names of donors to the Alumni Fund. Please tick if you wish to remain anonymous.

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