

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

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FOREWORD

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Welcome to the Third edition of Technically Speaking



Dr James Howard
Director of The Academy

A warm welcome to the third edition of Technically Speaking, a newsletter by Technicians, for Technicians.

It's been a busy year with regards to all things Technician related here at the University. As you can see in the stories and articles within this newsletter, work has continued to enhance the visibility of the technical community. For example, this year's Technical Showcase was a great event, even more successful than last year's and everybody who gave up their time to be involved deserves a huge thank you and congratulations.

I'm was very impressed to see (and hear!) that Technicians from the School of the Arts have put together a Christmas single, with all proceeds going to our 'Liv to Give' charities Alder Hey Children's Charity, Claire House Children's Hospice and The Whitechapel Centre. This is yet another example of our Technical staff using their many talents to go above and beyond, well done to all those that contributed.

Meanwhile, the work of the Technician Commitment Steering Group continues and, following recent discussions with the Senior Leadership Team, I am looking forward to reporting on significant progress against our action plan in the New Year.

We plan to hold 3 Technical Leaders' Forums during the coming year and I hope many of you will be able to attend and join in our conversations. However, in addition to the Forums, we are always keen to hear the views and ideas of those within the technical community on how we can further support your development. In particular, it would be great to hear your creative and innovative ideas for reaching out to and engaging the wider community of Technicians across the University.

If you would like to contact us about anything mentioned in the newsletter, or if you want to get involved with the work of the Technician Commitment, please email us at:

theacademy@liverpool.ac.uk

#TechniciansMakeItHappen

Technicians Bio

Katherine Parkes

Katherine Parkes is a technician working in the School of Engineering workshop. The workshop supports the teaching and research activities of the School as well as departments accross the University.

Describe your work area and your role.

My work area is a large workshop based in the School of Engineering full of people in dirty white lab coats. My role is to provide technical services to the department. My main role is to machine/fabricate components within the engineering workshop.

What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day for me consists of the manufacturing of mechanical components and bespoke equipment. We often use materials such as aluminium, mild steel, stainless steel, various plastics and sometimes even wood. You can usually find me on a lathe, miller, CNC or the waterjet. On occasion I provide assistance in some of the engineering labs and assist with teaching including workshop practice and waterjet training.

No day is the same and there is always something new to solve.

What's your favourite bit of kit?

My favourite bit of kit is probably the CNC miller.

I feel like this is something you can never get bored of. There is always new and more efficient ways to go about machining a job. I find the whole thing from set up to programing very satisfying. I am also quite proud of myself because 4 years ago I didn't even know how to switch one on. Now I am happy to go about machining any job I am given on there.

What's your favourite task?

I enjoy when all the technicians have to work together on large projects. The team I work with always make this a fun and interesting experience. Problem solving is a huge part of engineering and you always have to be 10 steps ahead of the task at hand. As a fellow technician tells me daily "every day is a school day".

What's the best project you have worked on?

There are lots of interesting projects I've worked on since I started at the Department of Engineering for students and research. I always enjoy when we have to manufacture components for the student capstone projects like the Arion Bike and Formula

"...you always have to be 10 steps ahead of the task at hand. As a fellow technician tells me daily "every day is a school day".

Student. You get to see the bike evolve over the year and you also get to see the team grow and overcome challenges along the way. It is very satisfying knowing that a part you have made is being raced round in a car on the Silverstone track or being raced with a bike at Battle Mountain in America (the Arion team currently hold 5 World Records!)

Describe your career path. How did you get to where you are now?

I studied BTEC art and design at Holly Lodge Girls College and completed two work experience placements at Wongs Jewellers and A. Hill Jewellers. I've always been creative and I originally wanted to become a Goldsmith. Whilst I was at 6th form studying art I decided to apply for an engineering course at Knowsley Community College. I thought the experience of working with metals on a larger scale would help me gain experience and be an extra string to my bow when trying to apply at a jewellers. After taking my NVQ level 1 Engineering course, I decided to apply for the second year because I enjoyed it so much. When I finished at college and 6th form I applied to a jewellers and I also applied for an engineering apprenticeship at the University of Liverpool. I got an offer from both. I proudly became a full time member of staff for the University Of Liverpool in 2014 after completing my three year apprenticeship.

What part of your job do you most enjoy or get the most reward from?

I would say the part of my job I enjoy the most is the people you meet. Working as a technician you basically meet everyone. Ranging from students, PhD's, Academics and Professors to Technicians in other departments. We all work together to provide the best for the people in and around the University.

What's the best thing about being a technician?

The best thing about being a technician is that no day is the same and at the end of the day I always go home with job satisfaction.



School of the Arts Technicians record a Christmas Single

Technical staff at The School of Arts (SotA) have recorded a Christmas single with colleagues from across the school. 'The SOTA Singers' have recorded their version of a new Christmas song written and produced by Michael Beiert, technical coordinator in the Music department. The single showcases the amazing recording studio facilities in the Music department as well as the wonderful musical talent found within the wider School. The single also represents the first official release of the newly established Music department record label Redbrick Records. All proceeds from the CD sales will support the University of Liverpool's nominated charities.

"Stuey and I (Stuey Carroll, technical coordinator in Architecture) wanted to make an imaginative and fun contribution to the annual School of the Arts end-of-year showcase. We initially thought about recording a cover version of a well-known Christmas song and presenting a live performance

of it at the festive gathering in December. The idea eventually turned into an aspiring and creative project, which has seen colleagues from across the School of the Arts come together and produce something special", explains Michael, on where the idea to record a Christmas single came from.

This recording combines the delightful singing of SotA colleagues with an exquisite string quartet performance from the Music department's ensemble-in-residence The Solem Quartet into a musical offering. "The single carries a gentle message of hope for Christmas, without exaggerated sentimentality, but with a sense of optimism for our ability to overcome the current social and political impasse" said Michael.

Gathering in the Music department's flagship SSL Recording Studio the singers and musicians experienced first-hand what it is like to work

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inside a professional recording studio. Recent investment in a new studio and rehearsal and performance spaces within the Music department has meant that staff and students have access to state-of-the-art music facilities, allowing for the perfect integration of teaching and professional practice. With a new 400-seat performance auditorium being built by the University of Liverpool over the next couple of years further opportunities of raising the Music department's profile and developing its standing as a centre of excellence are being realised.

All recording and mixing was handled by the technicians in the Music department, operating specialist facilities of this calibre requires a high level of expertise. However, their contribution didn't just cover the technical aspects of the

recording session (e.g. setting up microphones, operating the mixing desk and editing performances in the recording software), but had them assume the role of producers as well. This meant overseeing the artistic vision of the project, organising the schedule around the recording session, and, not least, making sure the singers felt at ease and suitably inspired before stepping up to the microphone.

Michael goes on to explain about the message of the single: "The message is clear and simple: we need to stand together for peaceful solutions in a globalised world, in particular, when political discourse has been highjacked by populist and elitist endeavours to create rifts between different parts of the population. We need to continue to promote a sustainable lifestyle to ensure future

generations can call this planet their home. Most importantly, we need to look inside ourselves, acknowledge our pain, and overcome the current state of traumatised society."

For anyone interested in checking out the final result, CDs of the Christmas song (aptly called Christmas Time) can be purchased for £5.00 at the Victoria Gallery & Museum and the Music department reception. All profits from the CD sales will go to the University's Liv to Give Charities for 2019, which include; Alder Hey Children's Charity, Claire House Children's Hospice and The Whitechapel Centre. The song is also available to listen to on most music streaming sites, including Spotify, Amazon Music, YouTube

and Deezer. Just search for 'Christmas Time Sota Singers.' You can also purchase a digital copy of the song on iTunes and Google Play.

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**"Wishing all
 colleagues a Merry
 Christmas and a
 Happy New Year.
 Peace and love. "**

TECHNICAL SHOWCASE 2019

Technicians from across the University gather in the CTL for this year's Technical Showcase



This summer saw the first dedicated event to showcase the work of technical staff from across the University. The event followed on from the success of the Technical Showcase element of the OnePS conference with organisers aiming for the event to be a true representation of the varied work done across campus.

Technical staff from across the main campus, Leahurst and Ness gardens came together to promote and demonstrate the work they are involved in, not only to other technical staff but to the University as a whole. The stands ranged from posters and demonstrations explaining the daily work of technicians to architecture themed crazy golf and the honorary four-legged technicians from the Small Animal Teaching Hospital.

Although the event was well received and did an excellent job in highlighting the work of technical staff across campus, we would like to improve on this format and bring our work to a wider audience. We are looking for ideas from technical staff on how we can do this and so we would like to hear your feedback on the event and any ideas for the future. Please send feedback to technet.contact@liv.ac.uk



Bottom Left:
Rachel Rankin,
Head Nurse, Small
Animal Teaching
Hospital; and
Mabel the Bulldog,
Honorary Staff
Member.



Dr Peter Gethin from the Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, showing ancient cave painting techniques.



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Right: Tim Baxter with his plants and herbs from Ness Gardens, giving a history of plant collectors.

Bottom left: Lara from School of Architecture.

#TechniciansMakeItHappen



University Technical Manager Wins Prestigious Papin Prize

“To have even been nominated for a Papin prize was a lovely surprise, but to actually win and be recognised at such an event is a huge and unexpected honour.”

Paul Gilbert from the University’s Institute of Integrative Biology has won a prestigious Papin Prize in recognition of his technical excellence in supporting and delivering infrastructure.

The award was presented at the Higher Education Technicians Summit (HETS 2019), which aims to share best practice amongst higher education technical staff in UK, Ireland and beyond, and is the largest event of its kind in the country, with over 700 technicians attending.

Paul, who is the Technical Manager for the Institute, has led the development of SafetyNet which allows risk assessments, CoSHH Forms, etc to be recorded online. Paul’s nominator commented on how ‘his innovative thinking is making Health and Safety accessible to all.’

Commenting on his award, Paul said: “The Higher Education Technician Summit was a fantastic event and gave me an opportunity to learn more about many of the innovative initiatives that technical teams are leading on across the UK HE sector. To have even been nominated for a Papin prize was a lovely surprise, but to actually win and be recognised at such an event is a huge and unexpected honour.”

Named after Denis Papin, a famous 17th century technician, the Papin Prizes were first awarded at the inaugural Higher Education

Technicians Summit (HETS) in 2015. Held biennially, the Papin Prizes recognise and reward innovation and excellence amongst technicians working in higher education.

Speaking about the Papin Prizes, Kelly Vere, Technician Commitment lead for the Science Council, said: “This year, the standard of entries for the Papin Prizes was incredibly high, so all of the technicians and technical teams that have been nominated for the awards should be very proud of their achievements.”

Dr Helen Turner, Director of Midlands Innovation, added: “I am particularly delighted that we have had so many entries for the Papin Prizes from right across the UK. This demonstrates that the excellent work which technicians do throughout the country is greatly appreciated by their work colleagues and students. I am pleased that through HETS and the Papin Prizes we are able to support technicians in HE and recognise their achievements.”



Introducing the Connections Platform

What is the Connections Platform?

The Connections Platform has been designed by technicians to catalogue skills and resources with the aim of improving knowledge transfer across campus. Technicians can register their interest in demonstrating a particular skill they have, and can then create a profile that lists all the skills they are willing to share along with any resources that they can provide. Initially the platform will be searchable by technicians but it is hoped that it will also become a useful tool for researchers and students who are looking for a particular skill or resource.

How does it work?

Once a user has found a skills match with a technician, they can make contact through the platform. It is then up to the

individuals to decide, away from the platform, how the relationship will work. We are aiming to avoid technicians having to commit a precise amount of time when they register, which should allow the relationship to grow organically and provides flexibility for both parties to fit the work into their current schedules. It is hoped that the platform can provide career development opportunities for both the individual learning a new skill and the demonstrator.

How do I get involved?

The platform is still at an early stage of development, and trials are currently taking place to gain feedback on how to improve the system. A current area of focus is how this can be incorporated and recorded as official staff Continued

Professional Development (CPD), and how this might fit into current departmental frameworks.

You can help shape the future of the platform by signing up and sharing your experience as a case study.

We are asking for the following:

- For technicians who are willing to demonstrate a skill or resource to sign up and create a profile.
- For technicians and other users to check the platform as often as possible to look for possible connections.
- All users to report any feedback on how the platform could be improved.

- All users to report any feedback on how the platform fits in with current departmental operations.

- All users to report back with details on any successful connections.

If you are interested in sharing your experience of the Connections Platform you can sign up [here](#).

To submit your feedback, or for more information contact [Tony Topping](#)

Do you have a story to tell?

If you have a contribution or idea for future newsletters then please email theacademy@liverpool.ac.uk

