Message from the Director

The last three months have seen the Institute maximising the impact of past workshops, supporting our current programme of workshops and encouraging submission of proposals for future workshops.

Where programmes of workshops are completed we ask organisers, and work with them, to produce accessible reports summarising thinking that has resulted from the knowledge exchange that they promoted. Details of new reports are below. In supporting our current programme of workshops we had to deal with the challenge of temporarily losing our premises due to fire. Patricia, our manager, worked hard to identify alternative locations and to minimise disruption. We are grateful to organisers and participants for their understanding. March saw us “on the road” visiting universities to spread awareness of the Institute and our current call for proposals.

Our co-operation with Scotland’s Futures Forum continues to be productive. The Forum arranged an informal meeting with members of the Parliament’s Justice Committee. Members and programme organisers discussed conclusions from the programme “Scots Law of Evidence” which examined use of scientific evidence in Scottish criminal trials. Members were also alerted to the current programme on Fingerprinting.

Dr Jane Morgan

Event report from Fingerprints: A roadmap for reform

On 19-21 March 2012, the Fingerprints programme held its first meeting in Glasgow. Participants from a wide range of sectors considered in detail the Shirley McKie case as well as cases from England (R v Smith, 2011) and the USA (Madrid bombing) which are illustrative of problems with fingerprint evidence that have arisen around the world. The meeting aimed to establish the mechanisms necessary for the transformation of fingerprint practices in Scotland and to inform those in other jurisdiction.

The workshop was opened by Kenny MacAskill MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice and attended by representatives of key organisations, including Scottish Government, Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Police Services Authority, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Forensic Science Regulator and the Forensic Science Society.

Presentations and discussions highlighted the need for cultural change to recognise the limitations of evidential tools when identifying complex marks. Details of key cases showed that differences of prints could be overlooked and that not only should variations between prints be explained more adequately, but transparency in the identification process is also necessary, especially when opinions differ among fingerprint experts. A second workshop, to be held in June 2012, will focus on disseminating recommendations to relevant practitioner communities.

Call for Proposals - reminder

Proposals are invited for KE programmes to be held in the Scottish Universities Insight Institute in the first half of academic year 2012-2013 (Sept-February). The Insight Institute will support at least 6 programmes during the next academic year.

Key dates:

Registration of interest: Sunday 15th April, 23:59hrs
Full applications: Friday 18th May, 5pm
Funding decisions: end June

Full details can be found at:
Reports from past programmes

Independent publishing: Making and preserving culture in a global literary market place

This programme report addresses the opportunities and challenges of the global literary marketplace for small and independent publishers at the beginning of the 21st century. It highlights the need for independent publishers to embrace digital technologies by prioritising investment in knowledge, acquisition and training in this field, exploring digital product formats, and growing audiences through digital engagement. Read the full report or executive summary.

Gatekeepers of participation: Water management at the interface of government and society

The policy brief produced by the Water Management team looks at the central role played by non-governmental Participatory Catchment Organisations (PCOs) in the delivery of both water-related statutory legislation and community desires. The brief further identifies relevant policy issues relating to issues of leadership, scientific knowledge, stakeholder relations, organisational factors, governance and funding and their implications for policies covering environment, health, education, planning, research, water, agriculture, urban and rural affairs. Read the policy brief.

Designing the transition to sustainability: Resourcing community resilience

The report explores models for designing community resourcing, identifying barriers for effective action and highlight opportunities for future action. The authors acknowledge the tension between a value based approach to community development and the skills required to develop new forms of business case and ensure the longevity and success of such projects. They argue that unequal distribution of power and influence amongst actors in community transition can be partly ameliorated through building trust and relationships, use of land rights and land reform legislation and development of capacity of some actors. Read the full report.

News in short

The universities of Edinburgh and Stirling join the Institute

The Institute is pleased to announce that the universities of Edinburgh and Stirling are joining the existing partnership of four Scottish universities financially supporting its activities. Academics at Edinburgh and Stirling can now collaborate with members of the existing partner universities (Aberdeen, Dundee, St Andrews and Strathclyde) to propose programmes for the current Call for Proposals for the academic year 2012-2013.

Temporary relocation of the Institute’s office

Due to a fire in the James Weir Building, the Institute has relocated its office in room 4.01, Royal College, 204 George Street, Glasgow G1 1XW. Staff contact details remain unchanged.