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# AEA DIGEST

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Angela Glendenning and Professor Brian Groombridge at AEA's 2011 Conference, held at the Birmingham Medical Centre (see Conference Report page 5)

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## **FROM THE CHAIR.....**

*Jo Walker*

Dear friends,

Autumn always has a feel of new term about it and in the UK we have enjoyed weeks of late sunshine and autumn colours. Summer had its highlights too – an excellent AEA day conference was held in Birmingham with the Institute of Ageing and Health (see report on page 5). The International Journal of Education and Ageing held a day-long editorial meeting in Hungary, since two of its members live in Budapest and Vienna. Progress has been made in establishing a wider editorial board, under the chairmanship of Professor John Benyon of Leicester University. We now have the benefit of editorial support from Australia, Germany, Greece, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Spain as well as the UK and US.

Over the summer we also heard the news that a proposal to develop a European network of projects on later life learning had been awarded funding from the EU. AEA is a partner in this ambitious multi-national initiative, entitled FORAGE. You can read more about the project on page 11 and we feel that it gives the Association and the Journal an opportunity for significant profile-raising. We congratulate Jim Soulsby for coordinating the complex proposal, and thank University of Leicester for their help.

We are now working hard towards our international conference next spring (March 20-22), to be held in Dublin with Age Action Ireland and the Workers' Educational Association Northern Ireland. The New Dynamics of Ageing Research Programme UK is also associating itself with our event,

which we hope will appeal to a broad range of practitioners and academics. Our venue is the historic St Patrick's College, Maynooth, part of the National University of Ireland (NUI)

Entitled New Dynamics of Learning and Ageing – Research, Policy and Practice, we are pleased to announce key speakers Professor Tom Scharf from National University of Ireland, Galway; Dr Martin Formosa from the University of Malta; and Professor Alan Walker from the NDA programme (tbc). There will be a lecture in memory of Fr Liam Carey, who was a significant figure in Irish and European adult education. As with our previous residential meeting in Lancaster in 09, there will be a pre-conference day for older learners and anyone interested in or with a view on older adult learning, to be organised by the Adult and Community Education department of NUI Maynooth.

A leaflet and booking form have been available since August, and a call for papers / presentations is open until the end of November (see further information on page 3/4).

You can also book online via AEA's website.

<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/aea-events.html> Funding from the Visits and Exchanges programme of Grundtvig may be available to assist participants with expenses including conference fee and travel (see link on page 4). Do plan to join us if you can in Maynooth in March 2012.

## CONFERENCE NEWS

**The Association for Education and Ageing, Age  
Action Ireland &  
Workers' Educational Association NI  
& The New Dynamics of Ageing  
Research Programme UK**



*present an international conference 20-22 March 2012*

***NEW DYNAMICS OF LEARNING AND AGEING:  
RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE***

at the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), Dublin

*Taking place on the historic St Patrick's campus, within easy reach of Dublin, this international residential meeting will seek to highlight new curriculum areas for older learners and innovative ways of reaching and teaching them – including the involvement of arts and creativity, and in the context of an ageing society.*

*An additional pre-conference programme will be available for older learners and anyone with a view on later life learning, organised by the Adult and Community Education Department of NUIM.*



## The conference will aim to:

- Identify new areas of teaching and learning, especially through arts and creativity
- Share good practice about older adults' learning and educational opportunities
- Include the voice of the older learner
- Highlight the EU year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012)
- Showcase the work of the conference partners and other contributors.

**A CALL FOR PAPERS** is open for programme contributions.

These can be in the format of a scientific paper, a presentation on a theme, or a workshop. Thirty-minute slots are available (20 minutes presentation, 10 minutes discussion) and will be scheduled in parallel with others within paper sessions.

Abstracts of not more than 250 words should be sent for consideration to the conference organisers at: [j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.hughes@open.ac.uk) by 30 November 2011.

Successful presenters will be notified by the end of December 2011 and they should register for conference attendance (if not done so already) to confirm acceptance of their contribution.

Please include the following information:

1. Title of proposed contribution
2. Style: paper / presentation / workshop (please state which)
3. Name(s) including title(s) of presenter(s)
4. Contact postal address and telephone number
5. Contact email address
6. Employer or sponsor of work to be presented
7. Description of content of contribution, including
  - a. Aim or purpose of work
  - b. Methods or procedures used
  - c. Outcomes
  - d. Reflections or conclusions
8. Method of presentation
9. Technical requirements.

*The above information is also available on our website at:*

<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/aea-events.html>

As the course is registered in Ireland, anyone from another EU country (including GB and N.Ireland) is eligible to apply for Grundtvig funding under the Visits and Exchanges budget line. Details of how to apply at:

<http://www.grundtvig.org.uk/page.asp?section=0001000100400008&sectionTitle=Visits+%26+Exchanges>

The deadline for applications is on or before **16<sup>th</sup> December 2011.**



Photo by Trish Hafford Letchfield

## **AEA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, JULY 2011 'LEARNING, AGEING AND WELL-BEING'**

*Report by Jo Walker*

AEA's annual conference was organised jointly with the Institute of Ageing and Health and held on 21 July at Birmingham Medical Centre. The programme contained a fascinating mix of academic papers, examples of good practice for professional training and a project presentation by older learners. A diverse audience also reflected these interests and we were glad to welcome those who had not attended AEA events before.

Professor Chris Phillipson, long term member and friend of the Association, started the day with an excellent overview of how thinking about later life had evolved in recent times and in different cultures. He traced the historical development of older age and ageing from the 19th century onwards, identifying several stages through which older people have been

transformed from paupers to pensioners; from 'deserving poor' to older citizens / workers. Now, in the 21st century, the challenge is to allocate economic resources, including work and welfare benefits, over the lifetime to reflect people's changing responsibilities and capacities.

Phillipson reflected on the large amount of Government policy initiatives regarding older people, even since 2000. Much of it was concerned with building people's capacity for work, learning, health and resilience. In practice, however, the ability to fund the services that could support such policies is under great pressure. Citing examples from the world of adult learning, Chris illustrated the size of the gap between the potential benefit and the reality of provision.

His recommendation for re-thinking the social and educational responses to ageing included:

- Lead the creation of a new kind of ageing for the 21st century built around extended economic, family and citizenship roles
- Support people in the two decades beyond their main work careers
- Unlock mental capacity and support well-being in later life
- Support health and social care professionals
- Challenge institutional ageism

In particular, regarding older learners, we needed a better understanding of their contexts including:

- The mixed and overlapping 'learning generations' who had widely differing reasons for being involved in learning
- The continued impact of life-course inequalities
- The complex and fluid state of the work/retirement transition

A second paper by Sue Lillyman of Worcester University reported on two research projects on older people's use of the internet to gain information, especially relating to health care. One had been carried out with Age Concern Gloucestershire and the other with E-Scouts, an international project. Drawing on both, Sue summarised some key findings about older people and computer use. For example, nearly a third were regular users of computers, mostly for correspondence and communication with others (letters, emails).

Accessing information was a slightly lower priority at 18%, shopping at 8% and playing games 1%. Where lack of computer use was reported, it was due to not having access, skills or an understanding of what could be done.

The E-Scouts project aimed "to develop an innovative, intergenerational exchange between older and younger volunteers using ITC as a vehicle for promotion and exchange."

As an extra outcome of the research, Sue went on to describe a checklist for designing websites that would be more useable / accessible by older adults. The list covered factors such as: typefaces, layout, backgrounds, colours, text-editing styles, illustrations, video and audio elements, navigation, icons, menus and hyperlinks.

*(Further information on IT training for older learners can be found on page 15 - Ed. )*



**Still from "Funny things happen at the Grange"**

The next presentation was very different in style. A DVD-based educational resource for social service professionals was introduced by its designers / producers, Dr Trish Hafford-Letchfield from Middlesex University and George Baddeley from the charity 'Silver Comedy'. The DVD tracked the making of a 'mockumentary' at a day centre for older people with dementia. It illustrated how comedy had been used to improvise scenes and generate

scripts, which were then acted out by residents and staff. The commentary also explained how improvements in residents' engagement and interaction could be seen and supported, making the production a valuable tool for staff. Entitled *Funny things happen at the Grange*, the subject of the drama was an imagined visit to the centre by HM the Queen. (Dr Hafford-Letchfield has provided an article on the project in the latest issue of *International Journal of Education and Ageing*.)



**Jo Walker introduces Lesley Hart**

After lunch, which included a brief presentation about the Journal published by the AEA, we were delighted to welcome a longstanding friend of the Association, Lesley Hart, founder of the Senior Studies Institute in Glasgow. She had agreed to give this year's Frank Glendenning memorial lecture, which was attended as in previous years by Mrs Angela Glendenning. Lesley's theme was *Working and Learning Together: the value of collaboration*, which she traced as a successful strategy throughout her time in developing the Senior Studies Institute at the University of Strathclyde, where she went on to direct its Centre for Lifelong Learning. Shortly before her

recent retirement, she was appointed MBE. The collaboration that she sought to feature was between the University and its community – including its older members – and between the teachers and the older learners who were very actively involved in all aspects of the Institute's programme. The lecture will be available on the AEA site.

Lastly, our very own Carol Allen showed a short feature film entitled *Miss Threadgold* which has been developed from a play written by two older students in her over-50s drama class. Filming has been achieved with the voluntary help of young film professionals, making this an intergenerational project. The resulting content thus illustrates the literary interests and talents of its older writers and actors and their ability to work with younger professionals to express themselves through the medium of film.



**Joan Lovelace as Miss Threadgold and Salman Hasan as The Doctor**

This contribution rounded off what had been a stimulating day, in which the potential and active participation of older learners had been amply illustrated.

Our particular thanks go to Alex Withnall for all her hard work in liaising with IAH and organising the conference.

*We carried a story in the Summer issue of AEA Digest about 17 year old Amy Lineham, a sixth form student at the City of London School for Girls, who was organising a conference for young people on the theme of **The Age of Ageing**. That conference took place in late October and, as promised, Amy now reports back to us on how it went.*

Our first speaker of the day was Professor Lewis Wolpert, Emeritus Professor in Cell and Developmental Biology, whose talk was both witty and serious, touching on subjects from his own increasing forgetfulness as he has aged to his views on euthanasia. The talk was a great start to the event, accessible and engaging for the audience and encouraged them to begin considering the implications of an ageing population.

Next up was ‘The Science of Ageing’ presented by Julie Mcmanus, Scientific Director of L’Oreal UK. Ms Mcmanus spoke on the changes we see in skin’s appearance as we age and why these occur and following on logically from that was a presentation by Rozina Ali, a consultant plastic, reconstructive and aesthetic surgeon, who discussed ‘the pros and cons of ageing gracefully versus the responsibilities and obligations of looking young forever’. Miss Ali was not only a fantastic orator but a challenging and sometimes controversial speaker, eliciting a wide range of response from the audience from gasps of shock to peals of laughter. During her session, she encouraged the conference participants to consider questions such as ‘What is ageing?’ ‘What value does it have?’ ‘Are there any benefits to being old?’ ‘How does the world treat the old and what does it expect from the young?’ and perhaps most crucially ‘When we carry out plastic surgery what are we doing – disguising the stigma of ageing

or allowing the physical exterior to match the youthful interior?’ - this final point echoing the words of Professor Wolpert, when he spoke of the dichotomy of having an 82 year old exterior with a 17 year old mind.



**Professor Lewis Wolpert**

The focus then returned to science with Dr Radmila Mileusnic, lecturer in Neurobiology with the Open University, showing how ‘Bird brains can throw much needed light on new treatments for Alzheimer’s disease’, work for which she and her research partner won the Medical Futures Innovation Award for the Best Mental Health Innovation in 2003. (*We will be carrying further information on Dr Mileusnic’s research in the next edition of AEA Digest – Ed*)

The final event of the morning was a debate discussing the motion ‘this house would legalise euthanasia’. The debate was introduced by Lord Alex Carlile, QC and Lib Dem peer, who outlined both sides of the argument with a fantastically balanced approach, which left everyone guessing on which side his own beliefs lay. He also chaired the debate – 3 speakers on each side – with the debaters keen to discuss this important issue well and present



all their most persuasive points in the short space available. The questions from the floor were well thought out and thought-provoking, with one conference participant putting forward the challenging question; 'If you are supporting the opportunity for those who are suffering from incurable illnesses to die, then why not offer this same option to those suffering from abject poverty with no hope of aid?' Finally, the vote was taken with a landslide majority in favour of the motion 'this house would legalise euthanasia' - an interesting outcome to a gripping debate.

Over lunch a number of different activities were available to further explore areas of ageing not covered in the formal conference. A display on Ageing in the Media showed how newspapers and magazines portray ageing and encouraged viewers to consider how this portrayal shaped the way they, as the public, regarded ageing and also how the articles themselves might show bias from the pressure of society's views on the subject – which influences which? In another room, a film entitled 'What do you see?' was playing; a dramatisation of a poem most often called 'Crabbit Old Woman'. The poem records the thoughts of an elderly woman challenging onlookers to see past her frail exterior to the person she is within, with the final line being 'Not a crabbit old woman, look closer-/See Me'. A powerful film, which encourages viewers to put themselves in the writer's position and better empathise with the elderly. The greatest success story of this activity was that it inspired four students to say that they would go and volunteer in a care home. The other activity available over lunch was a touch frivolous but still carried a serious intent. Students were photographed using an I-Pad and

this photo was then manipulated to transform their image into a simulation of them in their old age. The activity was well liked and there was much hilarity. However behind this was also the idea that, by showing these young people they will one day be old, they may be able to better identify with those who are already in their later years and appreciate that the older generations are not so distant and detached after all.



The afternoon began with a talk from David Oliver, National Clinical director for Older People. He spoke on what an ageing population means for the NHS and the wider social implications of an Ageing Population. After reminding us of the now oft quoted statistics on the ageing population - by 2033, one in 5 of the population will be over 65 – David Oliver suggested that, instead of representing this as a "time-bomb" a "crisis" or a "tsunami", we should perhaps celebrate it as a success for economic progress, the welfare state, housing, nutrition, workplace safety, public health and healthcare, let alone the chance for individuals to flourish.' He went on to refute the characteristic image in the media of older people being routinely neglected, isolated, unhappy or unwell and to suggest that the reality is most still feel their health and wellbeing are good in their later years with quality of life seeming to improve for many beyond sixty. He

was not however unrealistic and accepted that ‘the change in population demographics does mean a higher number of people in the population will live with long term medical conditions, disability or cognitive impairment’. He questioned whether services are currently appropriately designed around the needs of this changing demographic and pointed up the imperative to focus more on prevention and intervention, so that ‘older people don’t always need to end up using services and can retain their independence and control.’

The final event of the day was a workshop on the care of older people, led by Professor Julienne Meyer who is Executive director of My Home Life; a UK-wide initiative to promote quality of life for those living, dying, visiting and working in care homes for older people. In an enlightening exercise delegates were told to pair up, number themselves 1 and 2 and everyone was given a piece of paper. Participants were then given 3 minutes – the number ones were to use the paper to design their care home room, including everything they felt they would need to live comfortably while there, while the number twos had to list on their paper ‘suitcase’ all the items they would wish to take with them to a care home. Once time was up the pair swapped papers and were told to, without speaking, cross off three things they felt their partner would in fact not need. Having completed this part of the exercise, the papers were then returned to the original member of the pair and participants were told to discuss how the removal of the items made them feel. The most common emotion felt after the crossing out was indignation followed by a sense of loss of control and helplessness. These emotions,

Julienne explained, were the same as those felt by an individual moving into care and it was My Home Life’s aim to change this, making the moving process the least disturbing it could possibly be.

As organiser of the day I used my closing speech to thank everyone there for their attendance, and acknowledge the companies who had sponsored the event (The CLSG friends, The Worshipful Company of Scriveners, Argent, The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, The Worshipful Company of Barber and, of course, The Association for Education and Ageing) and many others.



**Amy Lineham summing up**

I immensely enjoyed organising The Age of Ageing Conference and the 166 students who attended obviously enjoyed being there. An analysis of their feedback forms indicates that over 90% of them felt the day has improved their understanding of the ageing population. Thank you to the Association for Education and Ageing for both following this event with such an interest and for your kind donation, which was incredibly valuable in enabling the day to take place.

## OTHER NEWS

As reported in Jo Walker's *From the Chair* column, AEA is now a partner in a pan European network of projects on later life learning, entitled **FORAGE**. It is a three year Grundtvig-funded initiative due to begin on January 1st 2012. **Professor Keith Percy** explains what the FORAGE project is all about.

The University of Leicester is lead partner and Jim Soulsby (as a Research Associate in the Institute of Lifelong Learning in that University) is project manager. Actually the project is Jim's brainchild and he wrote the proposal and it is because of Jim that AEA is a partner.

FORAGE's five aims are:

- To be the initial source of information for later-life learning activities in Europe, in particular to allow for better dissemination of EU project reports and to create an archive and access point for EU and other initiatives concerned with later-life learning;
- To connect later-life learning ideas, projects, policy, research and voices of older people
- To develop dialogue with key national and European politicians and decision makers concerning emerging and key themes and issues in later-life learning
- To signpost to a lexicon of terms used across Europe and in disciplines relevant to later-life learning
- To do the above through a network of partners which must be developed and sustained.

FORAGE's key operational goal will be to create and maintain a sophisticated interactive database, which will be accessible through a website, which AEA will maintain.

There are 18 institutional partners in this project (of which AEA is one), spread over 16 European countries. The total budget of the project over three years is nearly 600,000 euros, of which the EU contributes 75% and partners find the remaining 25% - mainly through documenting paid and unpaid staff time. AEA will receive about 25,000 euros as income from Brussels. It will be a very welcome addition to the turnover of the organisation over three years.

FORAGE a very good project in its vision, aspirations and ambitions. If it achieves all its ambitions, it will fill a much needed gap in European later-life learning and raise its profile greatly. Even if it is only fairly successful, it will still make a difference. AEA is written into the project to play an important role. By being host of the project website, AEA will potentially develop a further international profile (different to that of the *International Journal of Education and Ageing* but complementary to it). If the database succeeds and the website is used significantly, the exposure for AEA will be beneficial and important.

FORAGE is a complex project with a large number of partners. Key responsibilities and important roles are shared out among six or seven core institutional partners. So AEA's role and activities within the FORAGE project will require careful attention and monitoring. The AEA Executive Committee recently established a small

working group of three members to plan, develop and monitor the work which AEA will need to put into FORAGE over the next three years. It consists of Jonathan Hughes, Anne Jameson and Keith Percy, with the latter acting as co-ordinator. They will report regularly to the Executive and also keep members informed of progress through the Digest.



*Keith Percy is also of course one of the three editors of AEA's **International Journal of Education and Ageing** - the other two being Professor Franz Kolland and Jim Soulsby. Issue one of Volume 2 of the journal is about to be published. Here is a progress report from Keith Percy.*

The Journal, which is hosted by AEA, has now entered its second year. The three issues of volume 1 contained in total 19 articles, 12 book reviews, 12 pages of International Notes, and 120,00 words. The articles ranged for example from being an older person in British higher education to the discourse of ageing in a Lebanese nursing home; from learning and mental health in later life to learning to travel after the cessation of driving; from training of older workers to training about end-of-life care in care homes; from active ageing and the EU Grundtvig programme to learning for older volunteers working with

indigenous peoples in Australia,. The Journal is of course peer-reviewed and its aim is to publish articles which meet the recognised standards of academic excellence at the same time as being informative and relevant for all those interested in the role of learning in later life. The descriptor 'International' in the title represents an important aspiration: IJEA aims to be international in both its readership and in the authorship of articles. In volume 1, seven the 19 articles were by non British authors.

Issue number 1 of volume 2 of IJEA contains four wide ranging articles and four weighty book reviews. In the first of the four articles Marvin Formosa of the University of Malta argues that critical educational gerontology, which was much debated in the early 1990s, needs to be re-considered today in a form adapted to the social, economic and cultural changes of the last twenty years. Many of those who make up the increasing proportion of older people in society are disadvantaged, marginalised and disempowered. Critical educational gerontologists urge that those scholars purporting to study learning in later life and those activists seeking to promote it should therefore concern themselves predominantly, even exclusively, with the disadvantage, marginalisation and disempowerment of later life. Formosa's article however weighs carefully with reference to the contemporary context the criticisms of critical educational gerontology which were voiced in the 1990s and calls for a new debate.

In the second article of IJEA vol.2 no.1, Trish Hafford-Letchfield of Middlesex University argues that thinking and research into learning in later life should connect more with thinking and research into certain

aspects of social care for older people. She explores particularly the move to person-centred care for older people in the UK and the need for reflection and action on the learning needs of older, often vulnerable older people, who are called upon to understand and make decisions about packages of care. In the third article, Carola Iller and Jana Wienberg, scholars from the University of Heidelberg, discuss data from the German Longitudinal Study of Adulthood (ILSE). They explore the multi-layered impact of social relationships and networks on the learning of older people, in particular their effect on decision-making skills and coping strategies. Iller and Wienberg suggest that it is the quality rather than the quantity of social relationships that matter in this context and they illustrate from qualitative data some of the close family relationships which can inhibit learning and reflection among older people.

Finally, Rosemary Marsden, of the University of Lancaster, reports on a research study of teaching and learning approaches in a large University of the Third Age group in England. She analyses her data to illustrate that a range of teaching and learning modes were in use, all of which could be described as promoting co-operative learning and complementing each other. The author suggests that U3A members to whom she talked might recognise variabilities in the quality of teaching and learning but considered that the supportive atmosphere and collective culture of U3A were more important.

The editors of IJEA met for a day-long review of volume 1 in late August 2011. They reviewed each aspect of the Journal and concluded that, although volume 1 could be regarded as a considerable achievement, there

are identifiable improvements to be made in editorial procedures and administrative arrangements and important developments that could be made in content and format. The balance between articles which report research findings and those which discuss professional, practical and policy issues needs to be monitored closely. IJEA is proceeding to look at the possibilities for publication in on-line format; the production of regular thematic issues and the holding of promotional seminars and conferences.



**Franz Kolland, Jo Walker and Keith Percy enjoying the Hungarian sunshine in a break from their deliberations.**

*If you are not yet a subscriber to the journal, you can get full details via our website at <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/international-journal-of-education-and-ageing.html> where you can either subscribe online or, if you prefer, print out a leaflet with a subscription form and pop it in the post.*

*An important element in the funding of many older learner initiatives in Europe and indeed of the FORAGE project, in which AEA is now involved, has been Grundtvig. But change is in the air, as **Alex Withnall** reports here.*

It is understood that in late June 2011, the EC made a proposal within the future budget of the EU from 2012-2020 for an 'Education Europe' Programme comprising the current Lifelong Learning Programme, Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus. The proposed budget for this programme shows an increase of 68% which would be very good news. However, there is no mention of sub-programmes such as Grundtvig, which has funded such a large number of European projects concerned with aspects of older people's learning over the last few years. The Commission is currently working on a draft proposal for the legal basis of the new Programme, which will go to the College of Commissioners on 23rd November and will then be made public. Member states will then have to give their approval.

At the moment, the Commission is still discussing how to integrate the proposed sub-programmes – mobility, partnership/co-operation and policy support – into the Programme and expects to be flexible in order to be able to respond to future crises and challenges. However, it is likely that they will give up smaller projects (many of these were funded through Grundtvig) and they will be looking for larger projects that can have an impact on national systems, especially in the policy section. It should also be noted that there is still a danger that member states will reject the proposals in view of the current economic situation in Europe, so the EC has asked organisations who may be

involved in lobbying activities (especially those who would like to see a stronger Grundtvig element) to ensure they don't end up sabotaging the budget!

*Thanks to Gina Ebner, Secretary General of the European Association for the Education of Adults in Brussels for this information.*

*The ever active **Jim Soulsby** was addressing the Education Centres Association AGM in October on the subject of **Looking forward to European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.***



*In his speech he gave a trenchant summary of steps forward and backwards in Europe since 1993 – a year which was at that time designated European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations - and what we can learn from the setbacks of the past to take us forward into the future in 2012 – next year being designated European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Bit of a déjà vu situation here, if we're not careful. It all makes for interesting and stimulating reading and is a very thorough overview of the situation. So thorough in fact that it would take up the rest of the digest to reproduce here! Jim's speech is however now available on our website*

*on the News and Views page – and well worth your attention.*  
<http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/news-views.html>

*“All very well”, some of you may be thinking, who are reading the printed copy of this digest. “But I don’t know how to use the internet and I don’t have anyone to teach me”. Well, if you live in London, you could take advantage of Boris Johnson’s **Team London** scheme, one of whose aims is to get older people IT savvy – and guess what? It has an intergenerational aspect to it.*

Boris Johnson's pioneering Team London programme to increase volunteering across the capital is currently recruiting hundreds of young people to teach 600 over 60s how to join the online world. Since 2008, the Mayor's programmes have already galvanised tens of thousands of Londoners to help improve quality of life in the capital. Team London is now seeking to mobilise an additional 10,000 volunteers across the capital to work with organisations to cut crime, increase youth opportunities and reach out to isolated groups through the Mayor's drive to improve quality of life.

To this end, Boris Johnson has provided over £200,000 to enable 600 older people to learn valuable computer skills from 375 volunteers aged 16-18, recruited through Age UK London's MiCommunity digital project. The initiative was launched in September with an ‘I.Tea & Biscuits’ week of free tutorials for the over 60s, with over 60 events happening across London. The funding from the Mayor will allow Age UK London and MiCommunity to place young Team London digital volunteers in 10 of London’s boroughs, based on the most

need. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson said: “Pairing up digitally savvy youngsters with older people who may be utterly bewildered by the Internet is a fantastic way to bring different generations together and bust the myth that modern technology is exclusively the preserve of the young.”

Samantha Mauger, Chief Executive of Age UK London, said: “We’re really excited about pairing up with the Mayor on this exciting project, which we believe will be just as rewarding an experience for younger people as it will be for older people. It will provide the perfect opportunity for both groups to work together, helping to bridge differences and challenge negative stereotypes.”

The young volunteers trained through the MiCommunity project, backed by the Mayor, will teach older people how to use the internet to email, download photos, shop online, or use programmes such as Skype and social media as easy ways to get online and stay in touch. Those taking part will also learn basic computer skills if they don’t have any, how to use mobile phones and use a digital camera.



**Picture courtesy of Digital Unite**

*And once you’ve got even the basics of getting online, there’s plenty of help available on the internet. **Digital Unite**, whose raison d’être is to encourage older people to learn to be at ease using computers and the internet have introduced a free, new*

*and improved user friendly Learning Zone. Katherine Teed writes about it here.*

Helping older people with accessing and using computers and the internet can open up a whole new world. It can enable them to be in better touch with friends and family, pursue existing hobbies or find new ones and even help them save money.

More importantly it can help to overcome feelings of loneliness and social isolation by helping older people better integrate themselves with modern society. In fact a recent survey by Digital Unite\* showed that among those over 55s, who are already internet users, four out of five (86%) said being online had improved their lives.

Learning levels and abilities can vary significantly among older computer users. Some people need help with getting started and some are already competent users but keen to learn more about what digital technology can offer them. Having access to a one-stop shop for good information and advice can really help.

That is where the Digital Unite and its new and improved Learning Zone comes in. With over 200 learning guides, the Learning Zone is one of the largest, independent online resources for helping people to learn more about digital technology. The guides are easy-to-use, offer guidance and information in a clear and step-by-step way and cater for people at all levels, from the complete beginner to the accomplished computer user. The straightforward nature of the information provided also makes them perfect teaching aids if you're helping others to learn.

The learning guides are grouped into easily navigated categories which include:

- Beginners' help, which offers guides to getting started such as turning on a computer, using a computer keyboard and deciphering computer jargon.
- Email, smartphones, Skype and webcams show how easy it can be to keep in touch with friends and family in far flung corners of the world.
- Facebook, Twitter, blogs help learners with joining and using social networking sites safely and securely.
- Interests, hobbies, games demonstrate how to pursue a whole new outlet of pastimes from researching family history to getting active with a Wii.
- Online TV, films and YouTube offer guides that show people where to go to catch up on a favourite TV programme or film via the web.
- Photography is dedicated to getting the most out of digital photography, from uploading and downloading pictures to getting rid of that dreaded red-eye.
- Shopping and banking has guides on how to buy products and services online that could help the average household save around £560 per year\*\*.



**Picture courtesy of Digital Unite**

Emma Solomon, Managing Director for Digital Unite said: "With our Learning Zone we have strived to develop a comprehensive resource that is both progressive and responsive; one



that can help people at whatever stage of digital engagement they may be at and one that can keep up with the fast-paced nature of modern technology in an independent and flexible way.

Computers and the internet offer many potential life-transforming opportunities and here at Digital Unite we continue to pursue ways we can open up this world to those people who are still not engaged or to those who need the skills to engage further. We have poured all of our expertise and experiences into creating a learning environment that will help thousands of people get more out of life online and we are very excited about the potential it offers.”

\* The online survey was conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Digital Unite in April 2011. 526 people aged over 55 years who had been using the internet for 5 years or less were questioned.

\*\*PriceWaterhouseCooper/Race Online 2012: Manifesto for a Networked Nation 2010.

To access the Learning Zone go to:  
<http://learning.digitalunite.com/>

*Unfortunately our **Hon Secretary Lois Gladdish** has had to take a break from AEA activities as she recovers from the effects of treatment for an operation she had in the summer. She is making a good recovery but needs to rest. We all wish her a speedy return to full health.*

*Sasha Anderson has kindly agreed to step into the Hon Sec post and hold the fort for the time being. Any queries you have about membership should be addressed to her at [sasha.anderson75@gmail.com](mailto:sasha.anderson75@gmail.com)*

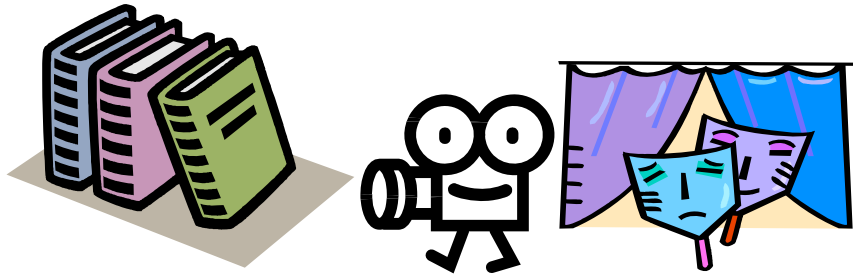
By the time the next digest comes out, we will be into 2012. While you are celebrating Christmas and the New Year, don't forget to renew your AEA subscription, which falls due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012. In accordance with the remit given to the Executive Committee by the membership at the AGM in July, there will be a small rise in subscription rates for 2012. The new rates are as follows:

Subscription rates 2012	
Individuals	£35
Unwaged	£18
Organisations	£93

If you are paying by standing order, don't forget to let your bank know to alter the amount. Those of you on e-mail will be receiving an e-mail reminder, which will enable you to pay electronically by the Paypal system via our website. Or if you prefer you can still send a cheque to our acting hon. secretary Sacha. Her address can be found in the contacts box on the last page of this digest.

And although it's still a bit early, AEA wishes all our members a very happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.





## ***AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION***

*In September the Education Department at Dulwich Picture Gallery was awarded an 'Arts and Health Award 2011' by The Royal Society of Public Health for Excellence and Innovation for its **Good Times: Art for Older People programme**. Only a few weeks earlier, Good Times also received a commendation at this year's Museums & Heritage Awards in the 'Educational Initiative' category. **Madeline Adeane** from the gallery writes about the Good Times programme.*



*Good Times: Art for Older People addresses the needs of older people,*

combating loneliness, isolation and inertia through involvement in the arts. The programme offers an enriching menu of art activities at the Gallery as well as out in care homes, hospitals and community centres: creative art workshops, interactive talks and assisted Gallery tours, including a time to talk, celebrate success and enjoy companionship. Sessions are led by professional artists, storytellers, actors and trained guides. Strands of the Good Times programme include Outreach Creative Workshops, Intergenerational workshops; and Prescription for Art, where doctors refer patients to the Gallery to participate in a series of creative art sessions. This ensures that those individuals who are not part of any community group are still able to benefit from Good Times. The programme is free of charge to participants and is no cost to the tax payer. It is a core Education programme and is now in its seventh year at Dulwich Picture Gallery.

The theme of this year's Arts and Health awards was the contribution of arts, music and cultural organisations to community health and healthcare, and the 2010 evaluative report of Good Times, *This is Living* by Professor Sarah Harper of the Oxford Institute of

Ageing, also received an award for excellence in research.

The Royal Society of Public Health received over 40 nominations from across the UK, reflecting the dynamism and creativity of links between arts organisations and the NHS.

*My thanks to those of you who were at the AEA conference in July for the interest you showed in the film “Miss Threadgold” that I have made with my older learner’s drama class. After an unforeseen problem to do with finishing the sound mix, which has held us up for over three months, we are now back on track and I hope to have a trailer on line in the next few weeks, along with details of how to order copies of the film for those of you who expressed a wish to do so. At the conference you would have met Dorothy Adibi, one of my students, who was there to help me introduce the project.*



**Ray Shaw and Dorothy Adibi in the film “Miss Threadgold”**

*Dorothy, who proves herself an accomplished actress in the film, is woman of many talents. She is also a writer, she speaks several languages and she is always up for learning something new. She celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday this summer by going in for a learning*

*experience which would have many of us, including your editor, quaking in our boots. That didn’t worry her at all. It was the getting there that was the challenge, as she reveals in this short story, which she has written about the experience – **Two Journeys**.*

She had bought a ticket for the previous Friday for the first journey, and now it was Monday. She wasn’t sure she could get a refund on it. At the station there was such a long queue for the ticket place that she decided there wasn’t time and just got one for that day, checking the train time with the man. She realised her knees actually felt weak – ‘travel anxiety’ – such a cliché. In fact there was a train for Banbury in ten minutes at 10.20h, so she looked for that one on the board.

On the platform the train was in but you had to press your ticket onto the machine thing to open the barrier. It didn’t open, so she waved madly until somebody came. ‘Use your Freedom Pass’, he said gruffly and she obediently produced her Senior Railcard. ‘No, your Freedom Pass’. ‘But I thought that was just for buses’. He didn’t even bother to reply, so she did it with her Freedom Pass and the barrier thank goodness opened. She thought fleetingly of the first time she’d used it and how she’d been a bit put out because the bus conductor didn’t stagger back in disbelief, hand clapped to his forehead. She pressed the button on the first carriage but the door didn’t open. Worriedly, she kept walking up the platform behind a girl, who was moving purposefully, as though she knew what she was doing. Oh yes, here was a button with a little light on and the door opened when the girl pressed the button. She got in and sat down in a window seat

opposite a young woman, who had papers spread out in front of her. After a minute or so she heard a man say, 'Occupado?' and then in a strong accent, Italian or Spanish, asked her if the seat next to her was occupied. She answered 'no' and he and his wife sat down in the aisle seats. The train started and she squinted at her watch. Quarter past. Oh God, she couldn't be on the wrong train, could she? Did trains come in and out so quickly? The man had definitely said 10.20h, and the information board for 10.20h had said Birmingham, stopping at Banbury. The announcer came on the speaker and she thought she heard 'Manchester' but the rest was totally incomprehensible.

She sat and fretted, looking to see if they went through anywhere that looked as if it might be in the right direction. She thought she saw Princes Risborough flash past and that seemed a bit reassuring. Then she seemed to see it again, and she wondered if she'd got into a parallel universe, which reminded her obscurely of G.K. Chesterton's 'The Man Who Was Thursday'. She sat, fretting for a while and looking at the young woman opposite. She was studying her papers, highlighting everything, it seemed, in red or yellow. She wondered if she was a student and if so, of what, or if she worked in an office. The girl was writing now, rapidly and very neatly, almost like printing. The heavy-set Italian or Spanish man had been talking non-stop to his wife, middle-aged to elderly with a thin mouth. She was irritated that she couldn't determine the language, from an odd word or the cadence. Then she caught the horrid whiff of chewing gum, and sure enough, peripheral vision showed her the beastly rhythmic

movement of the woman's jaws, so she turned her head further to stare at the countryside whirling past. The worry about where they were going persisted, so she plucked up courage and spoke to the student/junior executive. 'Excuse me', and she saw the gum chewer actually shift in her seat to hear what she saying - bloody nosy. 'Do you know if this train goes to Banbury?' The girl looked up and replied pleasantly, 'I think so, yes, I think it does'. Reassured, she relaxed back but immediately started worrying again. She hadn't been really sure, had she?

It went on being pretty outside, didn't the bloody thing ever stop? Then she could make her way to the door and ask. But supposing someone got on and took her seat? No, she'd have to ask the nice girl to save it. But she was turning into a terrible nuisance, pestering people. And supposing she didn't see anyone on the platform to ask? Suddenly she leant forward again. The girl had seemed like someone who did the journey regularly, and she'd know anyway, wouldn't she? 'Excuse me, sorry to keep bothering you but do you know what time this train started?' The girl didn't seem annoyed to be bothered again: '10.20', and went straight back to her notes. 'It's just that it seemed to start a bit earlier' she felt obliged to explain, but the other didn't say anything more. The train finally stopped somewhere, she couldn't see where, and she caught sight of the destination indicator and it said 'Birmingham' on it, which made her feel better, and sure enough not too long after that, the announcer came on again and she could make out Banbury somewhere in his message. The train stopped and she got out and made her way to the taxi company the organisers had told her they

always used, which was in car park, and she was driven to the place where her second journey was to begin. There she suited up, was given her instructions, went up in a little plane, bumped around for a bit, then jumped out, securely attached to a big strong man and a parachute and landed perfectly safely. Compared to the challenge of the train - sky diving? It's a doddle.

*More fiction, as we turn to Alex Withnall's book choice, which is Siri Hustvedt's novel **The Summer Without Men***

With such an intriguing title, this just had to be part of my holiday reading and it certainly caused some mirth among male members of my party, who spotted me lounging on my sun bed totally engrossed in its pages. As I was aware, the American writer Siri Hustvedt is already well-known for her previous affecting novels which have generally been well-received by critics so I was looking forward to an engaging read. I certainly found the novel interesting and even challenging but on reflection, I was not completely convinced by this somewhat lyrical tale of love, loss and female friendship. What I did enjoy was Hustvedt's delightful depiction of a retirement community and the feisty 'Swans' who live there.

But I digress. The story is narrated by Mia Fredricksen whose husband has asked for a 'pause' in their thirty year marriage, basically so that he can indulge his infatuation with a much younger woman. Suffering a breakdown and a frightening mix of emotional reactions, Mia moves back to the quiet prairie town of her childhood whilst she considers her future. Taking up a

teaching job, becoming acquainted with her neighbour, a young mother, and paying regular visits to her widowed elderly mother and her friends, she muses on what it means to be female and the nature of female relationships across the life course. Thus we encounter the appalling nastiness of pre-adolescent girls, involving some particularly well-written and gripping scenes; the isolation of the early days of motherhood and the constraints of marriage as well as Mia's own relationship with her grown-up daughter and the losses that later life brings for women as they face the reality of impending death. All this is interspersed with Mia's stream of consciousness that takes the reader from, for example, the beliefs of the Amish to issues of primate sexuality via her understanding of research on male-female differences and her thoughtful poetry. Mia is by turns pathetic, confused, annoying, erudite, sparky, brave but she is certainly never boring. I almost began to care what happened to her but I was very disappointed by the ending which seemed something of an anti-climax compared with what had gone before.

Where I felt the novel scored was in the author's beautifully moving depiction of later life friendship and the ability of older people to reflect upon and make sense of their lives. This is well illustrated in the discussions within Mia's mother's book club ("with the exception of myself, there wasn't a woman in the room under seventy-five") and in the elderly Abigail's carefully formulated plans for after her death, as well as her gentle revelations about her past life. We gradually come to understand their world of continual decline and loss and, as Mia's mother

comments, how bitter growing old can be. Overall, an interesting read; I wonder what male readers would make of it.

*Siri Hustvedt (2011) The Summer Without Men, London, Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd. 216pp. Price £7.99 (pb).*

**Theatre Reviews.** Here are some recommendations from *Carlie Newman*.



**Vanessa Redgrave (Daisy Werthan) and James Earl Jones (Hoke Coleburn) photo credit Annabel Clark**

Better known for its filmed version, Alfred Uhry's *Driving Miss Daisy* (Wyndham's until 17 December) is now a vehicle for the talents of Vanessa Redgrave and James Earl Jones. Redgrave plays Daisy Werthan, an elderly Jewish widow, who is very firm in her initial refusal to have the chauffeur that her son (Boyd Gaines) tells her she needs. When she finally admits to frailty, the black Hoke (Earl Jones) faces quite a challenge in persuading Miss Daisy to make use of his services. Gradually they develop a touching relationship.

We see them together over the years from 1948 to 1973, through the Civil Rights period and the slow lead up to desegregation, with Miss Daisy having to confront her prejudices. Director, David Esbjornson uses a simple set with back projections and a wooden chair

with a bench behind and a steering wheel to represent the car. Both actors give us a lesson in acting and Boyd Gaines manages to hold his own as the caring and at times despairing son. Redgrave's depiction of extreme old age at the end is very moving and Earl Jones shows us the caring side of the chauffeur, who, while no longer working, visits and feeds her.

Out of the rain (literally) comes *Crazy for You* now transferred to the Novello Theatre from the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park and running until 10 July 2012. If you want an exciting theatrical experience, then this is for you. The whole cast remains in the transfer. Director Timothy Sheader has once again done an excellent job of directing a musical, which not only has verve but also the best dancing to be seen currently in a musical on the London stage.

We have a real storyline here. Banker, Bobby (Sean Palmer), who really wants to be a dancer, travels on the orders of his over-powering mother (Harriet Thorpe) from New York to Deadrock, Nevada to foreclose the little theatre on his mother's behalf. He falls in love with the owner's daughter, Polly (Clare Foster) and stays to put on a show to save the theatre. Bobby pretends to be the impresario, Bela Zangler, and imports the New York chorus girls and boys. All goes well until the real Bela (David Burt) turns up. There is much fun when Bobby impersonating Bela comes face to face with the real Bela in Nevada.

There are good performances from all the cast – some can sing better than others, but they make up for it with their footwork, which is really superb. This revival of George and Ira Gershwin's musical, with book by Ken Ludwig,

gives us some lovely performances. Some of the musicals on in London at the moment may be better sung, but none have more inventive dancing with a whole variety of styles from tap dancing to ballet. Added to all this is the wonderful music, played well here under the leadership of Gareth Valentine, with well-known songs such as *Someone to Watch Over Me*, *I Got Rhythm* and *Nice Work If You Can Get It* sung with real musicality and enhanced by the always inventive choreography of Stephen Mear along with the magical lighting which gives us stars at the back and a crescent moon in the trees at the end.

If you want a meatier outing, you will enjoy *Three Days in May* (Trafalgar Studios until 3 March 2012), where you might well learn some new facts and see a well-acted, although very wordy play performed by experienced actors. Ben Brown's play explores what really happened in a series of Cabinet meetings in 1940. Over three days in May, the Cabinet debate the recommendation put forward by Lord Halifax (Jeremy Clyde) to pursue the proposal that the French have suggested to use Italy with Mussolini as the intermediary to secure a peace with Hitler. Winston Churchill (Warren Clarke), the newly elected Prime Minister, has to persuade his Conservative colleague, Chamberlain (Robert Demeger) and use the support of the Labour members, Clement Attlee and Arthur Greenwood to reject the proposal. Although somewhat static with men sitting around a table talking, the play brings history to life. It shows us what could have happened if Churchill had not used his excellent negotiating skills to good effect. Clarke is especially good as Churchill, getting his voice, thrusting lower lip and bulldog

manner just right. Clyde and Demeger show the different characteristics of men caught in the turmoil of war.

And finally there is the excellent *The Pitmen Painters* about older miners in 1934 in Ashington, Northumberland, learning art through doing it themselves that is now on at the Duchess Theatre (until 21 January 2012). This not only shows the educational aspects of learning at any age and for everybody, but also how art has an emotional aspect and learning about painting affects all who try it. The same wonderful cast and production that we saw at the National Theatre once again put across Lee Hall's play in a realistic and straightforward manner.

*A very brief look from Carol Allen at some new films that are On Screen*



Michelle Williams as Marilyn and Dougray Scott as Arthur Miller

Michelle Williams brings back memories of Monroe in *My Week with Marilyn*, which co-stars up and coming Eddie Redmayne as Sir Kenneth Clark's son Colin, who befriends her during the famously fraught filming of the 1957 film *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Also features a stunning performance from Kenneth Branagh as Olivier plus Judi

Dench as Sybil Thorndike and Dougray Scott as Arthur Miller.

George Clooney's political thriller *The Ides of March* is an intelligent adult film about ethics and morality set in the world of American politics. Ryan Gosling is at the centre supported by a good cast including Clooney himself as the Democrat candidate, who's too good to be true.

The charming animation *Arthur Christmas* has arrived a bit early for the Yuletide season, so let's hope it's still around for the holidays. Starry voice cast including James McAvoy as Santa's son.

Terence Davies's *The Deep Blue Sea* gives impressive attention to period detail and there are good performances

from Rachel Weiss and Simon Russell Beale as Hester Collyer and her husband but Tom Hiddleston as Freddie lacks Kenneth More's hearty period charm and there are too many of Davies's childhood memories shoe horned into the film and distracting from Rattigan's writing.

Out on DVD is *Sarah's Key*, which stars Kristen Scott Thomas as a journalist, who uncovers the story of 10 year old Sarah, a victim of the infamous wartime Vel' d'Hiv round up of Jews by the Nazis in occupied Paris and finds Sarah's story resonating in her own life. Young Mélusine Mayance as Sarah is very touching. This is a good and moving story well told.

### ***The Association for Education and Ageing***

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