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# AEA DIGEST

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Rehearsing the ballroom scene for Masquerade in 18th Century Venice – page 20

## **IN YOUR SPRING DIGEST:**

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

*Jonathan Hughes*

My thinking about the importance of what the AEA has to say about later life learning continues to be informed by how the AEA AGM and Conference in September 2013 was structured. I think all AEA events provide a refreshing variant to many conferences as older learners, practitioners and academics come together to share common interests. Having said that, the particular format adopted when we met last September has crystallised my thinking about later life learning and I hope it has done the same for other people.

The day was organised into three strands. The first related to older workers and to the transition into retirement. The second focused on 'active learning' in what is sometimes referred to as the 'Third Age' while the third strand related to the learning linked to health and care needs. These strands cross cut, so a particular individual may well be an older worker but need also to find out about health or care needs too.

The task for AEA is thus to contribute to realising the importance of later life learning within these three strands and involving all of our 'constituencies' (older learners, practitioners and academics). To do this, we are taking forward proposals to identify a range of benefits for different categories of members, including student and associate membership. There will be more details about these in future digests (which is of course a benefit to all members). An important component of how AEA will be seeking to reach out to current and new members is to organise a sequence of conferences and seminars

which will address interests in the three strands I've mentioned.

Details of these conferences (until March 2015) are on page 6 of this digest and I hope you will be able to attend at least some of them. The first is being organised in conjunction with NIACE and will be held in Leicester on 20th May. The focus here will be on older workers. Professor Stephen McNair has already agreed to speak.

A number of AEA members were 'gathered together' in a single book review in *Ageing and Society* recently. Anthea Tinker, herself an AEA member wrote the review which was co-edited by Marvin Formosa (with Paul Higgs). Anthea thought that that review had succeeded in "bringing together a collection of experts on social class" to show that "the individual and collective experience of growing old differs significantly by class" and so needs to be analysed in ways that takes into account both class and age. Another AEA member, Trish Hafford-Letchfield contributed a chapter on social work.

I am about to review *Men Learning Through Life* (edited by Barry Golding, Rob Mark and Annette Foley) for the AEA Journal, the *International Journal of Education and Ageing*. It was good to see that other AEA members (Brian Findsen and Jim Soulsby) have contributed chapters to this book.

Just in case you feel I might be getting a little too focused on the academic side of later life learning, I'd like to share a recent experience, when my wife and I visited a couple of long-standing family friends. Harry (not his real name) has

dementia and has had a series of strokes. Betty (also not her real name) is receiving chemotherapy and having to adjust to being the person who now makes all the decisions and has to find out about what help and support is available and most appropriate. Betty has had to do a great deal of highly significant learning and in doing so has found unexpected strength and resilience.

A version of these notes can be found on my blog - entry 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014  
<http://jonathanhughes53.wordpress.com>

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***The University of the Third Age (U3A)** not only promotes and provides many formal and semi formal learning activities but is also active in the wider world of older learning. **Janet Whitehouse** writes here about the U3A ethos and some of the organisation's recent activity.*

In the University of the Third Age 'university' is used in its original sense of coming together to learn for pleasure. No qualifications are asked for or are awarded. Members form interest/study groups to share their knowledge and skills and they decide what they want to learn and how. 'Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach' is one of the founding principles. There are currently 915 U3As and 320,000 members in the UK.

In addition to the activities provided by each U3A, regional and national events are organised – residential summer schools, special lectures, concerts, visits and more. Shared Learning Projects, which offer the opportunity for members

to work on a wide range of projects for organisations such as the National Trust, museums and charities, have resulted in the production of information leaflets, talks to the public and the conservation of artifacts.

In December 2012 U3A members were invited to participate in a debate in the House of Lords presided over by the Lord Speaker, Baroness D'Souza. The subject was who should be responsible for care in old age – the family, the state or voluntary organisations. Teams of U3A members and secondary school students spoke for each and the debate was then opened to other speakers. The teams were trained by the English Speaking Union (ESU,) who subsequently offered to run seminars for other U3A members. The first will take place in April with the aim of helping members to form or support Debating Groups in their U3As.



**Debating in the House of Lords**

Older people are encouraged to keep physically and mentally active to maintain their health and wellbeing. Three universities are currently seeking funding to research how being a member of U3A contributes to wellbeing. One project aims to find out if being a U3A member results in less use of GPs and other community support services. This would provide useful quantitative data

regarding the benefits of community learning. An increasing number of links between U3As and universities are being formed as part of the universities' public engagement programmes. In June 2013 University College London organised a Café Scientifique, when four professors gave talks about their research to a large group of U3A members. Post-graduate students networked with them during the lunch break. Feedback from both sides was overwhelmingly positive. U3A members said their reasons for attending were the opportunity to learn about current research, to hear from specific speakers and a desire to maintain contact with research and/or education.

Research is an important part of U3A life in the North East region where U3As have the opportunity to participate in the annual RITA (Research Ideas from the Third Age) competition. U3A members draft outline research proposals which are judged by researchers from Newcastle University. In 2013 the first prize of £700 was won by Teesdale U3A for a proposal to study the demography of the North East and its implications for a regional U3A strategy. For RITA 2014 the research network will work with the Human-Computer Interaction Group at Newcastle University on the development and delivery of research projects across the region. Other U3A regions would like to set up RITA research projects with their local universities.

More than half the U3As in the North East region have research ambassadors who promote interest and understanding of research in their U3A and provide information about research related events. Some members in U3As in other parts of the country are interested in

being research ambassadors and this will be developed.



**RITA 2012 winners with Prof Edwardson of Newcastle University.**

At the AEA conference last year a report by Catherine Ware of Merton U3A *Men and Membership* led to lively discussion. It looks at the relative lack of men in many U3As and other voluntary organisations. Merton U3A has looked further at this issue and have tried to provide study groups and topics that will be of more interest to men.

The report *Gender Distribution in the U3A* can be read here

<http://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=368&page=30903> 6<sup>th</sup> Item down

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*One area of formal learning which is important and arguably vital in terms of dealing with contemporary life is the acquisition of digital skills. Digital Unite's national digital inclusion campaign, **Spring Online** in association with Carphone Warehouse, is taking place **31 March – 4 April 2014**. During this one week hundreds of free internet taster events are held right across the UK to help thousands of people, particularly older people, take their first steps online. **Katharine Teed** explains why campaigns like Spring Online are still so important.*

Despite being in its 13th year Spring Online is still as relevant as ever. Figures released by the Office of National Statistics in February this year show that despite some improvement in the last few months, there are still 6.7 million people who have never used the internet and of those 5.8 million are aged over 55 years. Many more don't have basic online skills meaning they can't use email, browse the web, share personal information in online transactions or keep safe online.

In today's modern society having the skills to use digital technology is a must-have. It can save people time and money, make them feel better connected, less lonely and better informed. In a Digital Unite survey, 86% of over 55s who had recently got online said that using the internet had improved their lives with 81% saying it had made them feel part of modern society and 75% saying it had reduced feelings of social isolation. 82% also said that they save money by buying products and services online and indeed it is estimated that the average household could save around £560 each year by shopping over the internet. The Government has also taken a digital by default approach moving 650 of their citizen transactions online such as benefit claims and electoral registration and by 2015 every patient will have the opportunity of online access to their own medical records providing, of course, they have the computer skills to do so.

Fear coupled with lack of knowledge and awareness are the key reasons why older people are not actively using the internet. In one national report 78% of retired non-users cited lack of skills as a key reason why they're not online. Very

often all they need is someone to give them a helping hand to try out the internet at a venue close to home and, as we see through Spring Online every year, this type of local support can be life-transforming.



Take John who at his Spring Online event was helped to set up his utility bills online, create an email account and send an email to a friend; "At 71 I never thought I would do this, I am so glad I came". Or one lady who in her 100th year took to using the mouse and keyboard like a duck to water and subsequently informed her son she wanted a laptop. Or look at this feedback from Immy, a 13 year old school girl who ran a Spring Online event last year for some of her older neighbours: "Two grannies who said they would never use the internet now want to. One, who has a visual impairment, said computers were no good to her but was thrilled when she saw my mum's talking laptop, as she is disabled too. The granny said she didn't know there was so much to listen to about her hobby of knitting!"

With the help once again of the fantastic Spring Online event holders we look forward to seeing thousands more older people be inspired and supported to make digital an essential part of their everyday lives. To find a Spring Online event people can call 0800 77 1234 or use the event search at

[www.digitalunite.com/spring-online](http://www.digitalunite.com/spring-online)

## AEA EVENTS 2014

### Dates for you diary

There are a number of interesting events booked into the AEA diary for this year. Make a note of them now.

- 20th May 2014. Seminar - Older people - careers and learning**  
 Venue: NIACE, Leicester. Free to AEA members.  
 Date: 20 May 2014  
 Time: 10.30am-3pm  
 Venue: NIACE, 21 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GE  
 Cost: Free to AEA and NIACE members. £20 for non-AEA/NIACE members. Includes light lunch, tea/coffee.  
 Confirmed speakers:
- Prof. Stephen McNair (NIACE Research Fellow) - *Staying in work – learning and employment in later life*
  - Dr Jane Watts (NIACE Programme Manager) - *Mid-life career review – can it help extend a working life?*
  - Dr Vanessa Beck (University of Leicester) - *Retirement without a retirement age*
- Booking: Places are limited, so booking is essential. Details, booking form and publicity will be released in the next few weeks.
- 9th June 2014. One-day conference on Memory in Later Life.**  
 Venue: University of Lancaster.  
 Programme and details currently being finalised.
- 11th September 2014. AEA annual conference and AGM.**  
 Venue: Open University, Milton Keynes.  
 Further details TBC.
- December 2014 Seminar relating to the ‘Active retirement’ strand.**  
 (date TBC) Venue Stoke on Trent  
 Details to follow

Further details and booking information on all the above events will be circulated and posted on the AEA website as soon as it becomes available.

*For the last 18 months, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has been managing the **Mid-life Career Review** project. **Charlotte Robey** reports on the results.*

The aim of the project was to explore whether there is a demand for a mid-life career review, what approaches are most effective at stimulating such demand and for what kinds of people and how needs vary between different groups. The project involved 17 partners, including all of the National Careers Service prime contractors, who delivered career reviews to mid-life clients between August and December 2013. In total, pilot partners worked with around 3,000 clients, using a range of approaches to support them to explore and make informed decisions about their career and retirement options.



**The Mary Ward Centre**

One pilot provider was the Mary Ward Centre, an adult education college which offers a broad range of courses in Holborn, London. This pilot delivered its

Mid-life Career Review activities through two distinct strands. The first offered group sessions to mid-life students, who had an interest in developing a career in some aspect of the visual arts. The second strand delivered one-to-one careers advice sessions and was open to all the centre's mid-life students.

Reported benefits for clients included:

- increased confidence and motivation to look for employment or a new career direction;
- reduced feelings of isolation about their situation;
- an increased focus on their goals;
- improved employability skills;
- researching and taking up learning opportunities;
- accessing formal IAG with the National Careers Service.

The project enabled the centre to gain a good understanding of careers advice and how they can deliver this alongside and within the learning programmes they offer. Teaching staff are already considering how they can more effectively embed careers advice into their existing and future learning programmes and the centre is keen to continue delivering careers advice workshops with its learners. As one them put it: “We’ve really got a handle on this aspect of provision; we’ve got the seed now and we’re confident that it can grow and it’s worth growing.”

*Editorial note: Among its many educational courses, which are open to all, the Mary Ward Centre has a programme specifically for over 60s. <http://www.marywardcentre.ac.uk/courses/subject/over-60s-programme/> and <http://www.marywardcentre.ac.uk/courses/>*

*AEA member Norma Raynes of Intergen is about to launch a new charity **From Generation to Generation: FG2**. And she is understandably excited about it!*



I am really delighted to be writing this piece for the Spring Digest to tell you about FG2. This is a new charity, which will enable more sustainable intergenerational programmes to be developed in England.

We are having not one but two launches. This in itself is important. One is in London and one in Greater Manchester. This is because the charity supports intergenerational work in both the north and south of the country and will continue to do so.

The charity has as its vision a country in which older and younger people share time together, having fun, and learning from each other. The Mission of FG2 is to promote knowledge and wellbeing through cooperation between the generations and it has 5 strategic objectives.

To improve and promote:

- Life chances for people of all ages
- Learning for all ages
- Wellbeing for all ages
- Learning as fun

- Positive views of older and younger people in the communities in which they live.

So how is it going to achieve these objectives? Well, it is already achieving some of them by supporting Intergen [www.intergen.org.uk](http://www.intergen.org.uk)

Intergen exists to address the problems of underperformance of pupils in schools, low aspirations of pupils, loneliness of older people and hostile intergenerational stereotypes. We do this by bringing older and younger people together in their neighbourhood schools to enrich opportunities to learn, raise those aspirations, share the untapped range of skills and knowledge that older citizens have to offer and build stronger communities. So some of the ground is already laid.

One of FG2's first initiatives is the piloting this summer of the first European Intergenerational Film Festival (EIFF) to be held in England, following the award-winning model developed in Frankfurt, Germany . This festival will show films from all over Europe, which are commercial releases and which address issues relating to the generations and becoming older. We are lucky enough to be holding this film festival at the Phoenix cinema in East Finchley London. The cinema itself is over a 100 years old and serves its community in a wide variety of way. Details of the festival can be found in the *Arts and Culture* section page 22.

In the pipeline are a programme for university students from overseas and an intergenerational allotment and bee keeping society working in partnership with other organisations .

The two overall aims of FG2 are:

- to promote equality and diversity for the public benefit by advancing education, raising awareness of these issues and promoting activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds
- to promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded and assisting them to integrate into society



These objectives encourage us to develop and support other intergenerational programmes, which will be self-sustaining, and to promote well being for older and younger people in our country.

## CONFERENCES

### LIFE COURSE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION. ANNUAL CONFERENCE SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup> April 2014

From 10:30 to 15.45 . Fee for non-members: £10.00, including lunch

**VENUE: BIRKBECK COLLEGE, WC1**

Key note speaker: Meg Maguire, Professor of Sociology of Education at Kings College, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/people/academic/maguirem.aspx>, will speak on:

#### *Retirement Transitions for Teachers.*

After lunch there will be a session with a fitness focus led by Jean Anderson, one of our members. She will do a Tai Chi taster, and discussion on exercise and keeping fit as we get older.

For further information and registration form, please contact:

**Martin Goffe, Email: [martinrgoffe@gmail.com](mailto:martinrgoffe@gmail.com). Tel: 020 7564 8372**

**The 5th International Conference of the Network  
Education and Learning of Older Adults (ELOA)**

**INNOVATIONS IN OLDER ADULT LEARNING**

Theory, research, policy

**Wednesday 22 - Friday 24 October 2014  
University of Malta Valletta Campus**

The 5th Conference of ESREA's Network on the Education and Learning of Older Adults (ELOA) will be taking place in Valletta, Malta 22-24 October 2014

This conference seeks to build on the success of previous ELOA conferences in Munich (2010), Braga (2011), Ljubljana (2012), and Vilnius (2013). The language of the conference will be English.

Keynote speakers include Prof. John Field (University of Stirling), Prof. Sabina Jelenic Krasovec (University of Ljubljana), and Prof. Carmel Borg (University of Malta).

Further information on the conference, including registration and accommodation, can be found at <http://www.um.edu.mt/events/elo2014>

Participants wishing to present a paper are invited to send a title and abstract (maximum 300 words) to [marvin.formosa@um.edu.mt](mailto:marvin.formosa@um.edu.mt)

The deadline for submission of abstracts is **30 April 2014**.

For any queries contact

Dr. Marvin Formosa, European Centre for Gerontology, University of Malta

Tel. : +356 79634015

*Keith Percy writes about AEA's participation in the ELOA Conference.*

AEA has accepted an invitation to organise and present a four paper thematic seminar/workshop in this research conference. Such an opportunity, if carried out well, will enhance AEA's international reputation. The present thinking is to use the theme *Knowledge, beliefs and models in later-life learning: implications for research, teaching and action* and to develop two papers out of our ForAge project and one each from our Memory and

Wellbeing projects for delivery in the sessions.

However, if anybody from the AEA Executive or membership would consider attending the conference and presenting a paper - relevant to the broad theme - as part of the AEA offer, I would like to hear now ([k.percy@hotmail.com](mailto:k.percy@hotmail.com)). We might then recast our present thinking about the four papers.

*AEA is now involved in a number of projects with other partner throughout Europe. More information from **Keith Percy**.*

These projects are not only dealing with important issues and enhancing AEA's profile on the international older learning stage but also making a significant financial contribution to the Association's funding.

As far as our participation in the Grundtvig multi-partner **ForAge** is concerned, our hon. secretary Sasha Anderson and I are continuing to develop the website, database and other aspects of this important project. Further information can be found here <http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/> and in the FORAGE newsletters, which you can download here. <http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/page/123-forage-network-newsletters/> These links are also available via the News and Views page of the AEA website. <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/news-views.html> European funding for the ForAge project ceases in December 2014 but AEA has expectations of maintaining the website and aspects of its promotion and use.

The Grundtvig Learning Partnership project **Memory in Later Life** started in August 2012 and is due for completion in July 2014. AEA is a partner with organisations in Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Poland and a great deal of interesting and valuable work has been completed. Since Summer 2013, the topics of autobiographical memory, attitudes to memory, lifestyles and memory and aesthetics and memory have been researched, discussed and debated in local groups of older learners

(in AEA's case in Lancaster and Strathclyde) and in international meetings in Rome and Athens. On AEA's behalf, Val Bissland has been a major participant with me since September 2013.



*An illustration here of the work of the Memory project from **Val Bissland**:*

*Italian facilitator Andrea, arms akimbo, listens to a participant describe how her autobiographical memory works in the Memory XL Project in Rome. Autobiographical memory is an important strand of our memory bank. In many respects our memories of our unfolding life experiences shape the person we are now and strongly influence the person we will be in the future.*

In the final months of the project, AEA has major responsibilities for the Project Handbook. The last international meeting will take place in Lancaster June 5 - 8 and it will be followed by an open one day conference on June 9th on Memory in Later Life to which all AEA members are invited.

**Wellbeing in Later Life: education, creativity, physical activity** is another Grundtvig Learning Partnership project with AEA involvement which started in August 2013 and will continue until July 2015. Organisations in Italy, Poland,

Slovakia, Spain and Turkey are partners with AEA. This project got underway in September 2013 with an initial partner planning meeting in Krakow. AEA has a major organisational role as far as project content is concerned. A meeting was held in Palencia near Valladolid in Northern Spain this year, March 10 - 14 at which the outcomes of a learner questionnaire on views and assumptions of learning and well-being were considered. Lynne Wealleans is assisting during the lifetime of the project and Anne Jamieson participated in the Palencia meeting with me. We now move on to consider teaching and learning styles and tutor beliefs and assumptions before the next international meeting in Turkey in June. Any expressions of interest in the content of this project, or even in international travel, are welcome from AEA members.

Keith Percy ([k.percy@hotmail.com](mailto:k.percy@hotmail.com))

*And just to demonstrate that these events are not all work and no play, here's Keith enjoying the beautiful view over*

*Rome in a break with Jill Robinson from the Memory in Later Life meeting.*



**Photo by Val Bissland**

*Jill is a long-term member of the Lancaster learning group, who says the experience at Lancaster has transformed her life.*

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## ***Update on the International Journal of Education and Ageing***

Volume 3 (2) is now ready for printing. It is a strong and substantial issue with five articles from Austria, Greece, Russia, United Kingdom and Europe (in the shape of the ForAge Partners). The ForAge Project is also discussed in the Editorial and the International Notes. The Austrian paper was first written as a plenary paper at the ForAge conference of October 2013. The Editors have decided to make this issue the subject of a discount offer for new subscribers from the ForAge partnership and the ForAge network of contacts. Volume 3 (3) is in an advance state of preparation.

If you are not yet a subscriber to the journal, details of how to do so are on our website: <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/international-journal-of-education-and-ageing.html>

Preferential subscription rates are available for AEA members.

## TOFF (TRIPS FOR OLDER FEMALES AND FELLOWS) HOLLAND ART TOUR



**Dates: Wed 9th July -Sunday 13th July 2014**

**£420.00 pp based on a minimum of 20 paying passengers £62.00 single supplement  
Coach travel**

Day 1 TRAVEL TO HOLLAND. Following pick-ups at Euston and South London, travel via Folkestone and Eurotunnel to Calais before continuing to your hotel in Holland.

Day 2 THE HAGUE SIGHTSEEING. Experience The Hague. Cultural and historic sights this city has to offer, include the Peace Palace, Noordeinde Palace, Queen Beatrix's Office and The Binnenhof where the Dutch Parliament is or do some shopping in Holland's oldest shopping centre, The Passage. Visit included to the Mauritshuis, housing Vermeer's 'The Girl with the Pearl Earring'.

Day 3 AMSTERDAM SIGHTSEEING. A full day to explore this cosmopolitan city. Visit included to the Rijksmuseum, home to paintings from artists including Rubens, Rembrandt and Vermeer. Afternoon visit to the Van Gogh Museum, home to the largest collection of his paintings in the world

Day 4 AMSTERDAM. Another day to explore this great city at your own pace. A farewell dinner has been arranged in an Amsterdam restaurant.

Day 5 RETURN TO THE UK. Travel to Calais for the return Eurotunnel crossing home, stopping en-route at a local hypermarket.

Your Hotel : NH ZOETERMEER

4\* hotel located in a great position only 10 miles from The Hague and 50 miles from Amsterdam. The hotel is located close to the small town centre of Zoetermeer with a few small shops. Price includes 4 nights half board hotel(4 dinners), executive coach hire throughout and ABTA bonding for your protection

E: [carlie.newman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:carlie.newman@hotmail.co.uk) T: 07973 932665

*Jonathan Hughes writes here about a recent report from an **Open University in Wales Carers Project**, which showed that 65% of learners on the project were over 50.*

This example of work will be of interest to digest readers as it shows that there is a continuing demand from older people for learning opportunities that meet needs and address concerns. It's interesting to note that this project was not aimed specifically at older learners but that it has succeeded in attracting older people. This may also be another example of the way in which older people may not always see themselves as learners, so may be reluctant to respond when opportunities are couched as being 'for older learners'. However, if learning is presented in such a way that it clearly relates to your situation, it's perhaps more likely that you will make use of them. I'd like thanks Gayle Hudson and Eleri Chilcott of the Open University in Wales for agreeing to share this information for the Digest

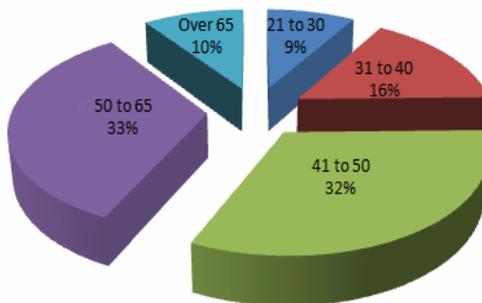
widening access work at the OU in Wales.

The aim was to engage carers in learning opportunities, specifically aimed at raising their aspirations and increasing opportunities to study at higher education level in order to enhance their knowledge, skills and confidence. This innovative project enabled the OU to build on its existing widening access programme and extend it in order to benefit carers.

The project found that the OU's flexible distance learning methods were well suited to carers, who often have to study at unconventional times to fit in with their caring roles. One carer on the project studied through the night, as she had to be awake anyway to change her daughters' medical tubes.

The project was able to reach out to carers and provide them with access to the OU's flexible and supported distance learning curriculum of over 500 courses.

Age profile of carers  
on courses



The project had 5 main strands:

1. Development of information specifically aimed at carers. An information booklet for carers was endorsed by The Carers Trust Wales (formerly Crossroads and Princess Royal Trust for Carers), and helped to address carers directly and provide answers to many of the questions they had about study.
2. Work through carers groups and networks to disseminate information. Regular information was disseminated to over 100 carers groups and networks across Wales, with articles being placed in newsletters, and e bulletins.

This widening access project ran between 2010-2013. Originally funded by The Waterloo Foundation, it has now been mainstreamed into the core

Promotional materials and information were provided via these networks.

3. Direct partnership work with a smaller number of carers groups complemented their informal learning programmes and provided enhanced support through taster sessions and face to face study clubs.

4. A bursary programme helped towards the cost of course fees for carers who were not eligible for other financial support.

5. Sharing best practice within the Open University and elsewhere.

- The project engaged directly with 171 carers across Wales, 47% went on to study with the OU and 65% of these were over 50 years old.
- Work at the OU in Wales helped to influence policy across the University as a whole. Carers are now one of the priority groups for the OU across the UK.
- An evaluation of the project was undertaken, which included quantitative and qualitative analysis. The evaluation report makes recommendations for the sector in improving accessibility and outcomes for carers.
- The report has been shared widely with Reaching Wider partners and was presented at an internal conference at OU Milton Keynes and the HEA conference in Wales.

The report is available here <http://www3.open.ac.uk/near-you/wales/p5.asp>

and video case studies here [http://www.open.ac.uk/choose/ou/www\\_carers](http://www.open.ac.uk/choose/ou/www_carers)

In 2012 the project won the UALL projects award.

*Australian journalist **Frank Smith** recently contacted AEA requesting our support in connection with a study he is doing on how **print media** in all its forms – from government leaflets to newspapers - communicates or in many cases fails to communicate with the senior sector of society. [More here.](#)*

Much official communication with seniors, especially older and disabled seniors, tends to be patronising. There isn't even an accepted term for older people. The politically correct term may be 'chronologically gifted'!



I have an encore career as a journalist working mainly with a senior's newspaper in Perth Western Australia. That has brought to my attention the chronically poor quality of much communication from health authorities, NGOs and even commercial organisations wanting to connect with the demographic, of which I, at 73, am a member. For that reason I am applying for a Churchill Fellowship that will allow me to travel to the UK, Japan, USA and Scandinavia to talk with practitioners and experts in this field.

There is substantial evidence that neural networks remain capable of making new connections (learning) throughout life. Older people can learn, grow, change and adapt, but that is often not recognised by people aiming to connect with them.

It is obvious that there are better and worse ways of communicating with older people, especially where the information is complex and unfamiliar or where the communicator wants the older person to change their behaviour in some way.

Finding out how to communicate in a meaningful way with the senior sector is important for the numerous government and charity organisations.

- Health authorities want to encourage seniors to adopt lifestyle changes that will reduce morbidity.
- Governments need to communicate eligibility for pensions and other welfare entitlements as well as changes in pension policy, superannuation and housing options.
- Governments may also want to encourage seniors to prepare for end-of-life in matters such as guardianship, wills, palliative care and enduring powers of attorney
- Australian Government policy is to encourage seniors to remain in the workforce to reduce the welfare budget.
- In other countries, such as Japan, older people are encouraged to stay working to retain valuable skills.
- Both government and NGOs want to encourage volunteering.
- Financial planners, retirement villages, aged care facilities, hearing aid suppliers all need to connect effectively with their senior target market.

Many organisations do however manage to do the job effectively. In the case of the seniors' media they must do so for their survival, as otherwise they would

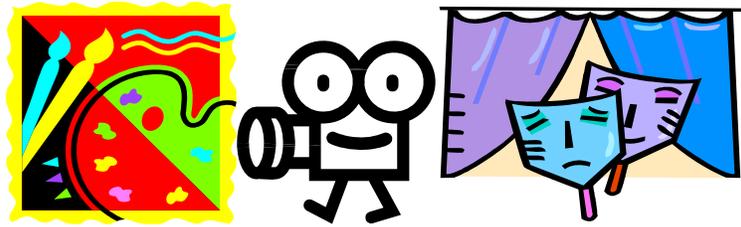
lose readers and hence advertising revenue. Seniors' organisations also need to get their message over to their membership or lose them. However there is still room for improvement in this area.



I have chosen to concentrate on the print media because seniors are the one demographic that is still served predominantly by print. Anecdotal information is that seniors pick up free senior's papers and read them extensively. Only around half of Australian seniors' households are connected to the Internet (20 percent in Japan) and even those who have access to the Internet continue to prefer to read hard copy. However the lessons learned in print media will also have valuable lessons for the electronic media.

At the moment I need to identify seniors' media, practitioners who need to communicate and experts who have studies communication with older people both formally and informally. Suggestions from readers of whom to contact would be most welcome.

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

*As a keen theatregoer, I receive a steady stream of emails with regard to new shows on the way, reduced rates for previews and so on. I was particularly intrigued by one recently announcing a new production of **The Importance of Being Earnest**. due to open in June*

Oscar Wilde's classic comedy about the hypocrisies of Victorian society revolves around the courtship by young bachelors John (Jack) Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff of society young ladies Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew. There are also two good roles for older actresses in the piece – the mousy governess Miss Prism and Gwendolen's dragon of a mother, Lady Bracknell.

However when I looked down the starry cast list sent to me, which includes Sian Phillips, Nigel Havers, Cherie Lunghi, Martin Jarvis and Rosalind Ayres, I realised they were all to a thespian over sixty (with one exception – Christine Kavanagh born 1957) with veteran Sian Phillips leading the field at eighty one in May. Were I casting the play, I would have her as Lady Bracknell. But which actors are playing the young lovers? What is going on here?

Further examination of the press release holds the answer. "The Importance of Being Earnest is presented in the West End by The Bunbury Company of

Players" it announced, going on to tell me that "The Bunbury Company of Players reside in Bunbury, South Cheshire in the North West of England, and specialise in late 19th Century and early 20th Century light comedy". So what we have here, I surmise, is the conceit of a play within a play – an amateur dramatic company, such companies often having a high complement of older members, putting on their "acclaimed" production of Wilde's play.



**Michael Byrne (Romeo) and Sian Phillips (Juliet) Photo: Simon Annand**

The production is not however setting a new precedent for older actors taking roles written for younger actors. Last autumn Vanessa Redgrave and James Earl Jones played Shakespeare's middle aged lovers in *Much Ado about Nothing* at the Old Vic (to chilly reviews it must be admitted), but four years ago Phillips, then in her late seventies and co-star

Michael Byrne received rave notices for their performances as *Romeo and Juliet* played as star crossed lovers in an old people's home. So I wonder if this could be part of a new trend, reflecting the active ageing demographic and giving older actors, who are still at the peak of their powers, the chance to play some of the classic roles they missed out on when younger. There are after all comparatively few leading roles written for the over sixties, probably because until comparatively recently most of them were either retired or no longer with us.

There is a similar situation only more so with regard to shortage of parts when it comes to actresses. I've been following a lively correspondence on Facebook about the fact that even today there are far more roles for men than women. When it comes to the classics in particular however, there are now examples of women seizing the initiative and taking some of these juicy roles for themselves. Fiona Shaw as *Richard II* in 2011. Director Phyllida Lloyd's all female *Julius Caesar* last year, set in a women's prison. And I too am following the trend with the contemporary production I am directing in June of *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Merchant of Venice* in which Shylock is a high flying woman in the financial world.



Ray Shaw as Oliver Twist Pic: Michael Spry

Not to mention a couple of years ago casting my 92 year old female student Ray Shaw in the title role of *Oliver Twist*, which challenged both gender and age stereotypes. So obviously I'm all for it!

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*I have mentioned in these columns before the theatre piece created with my older learner drama students at New Horizons centre in London on the theme of **Isolation and Older People**. The group were invited to perform it again recently for the launch of the initial results of a new survey in Westminster of how this issue affects the borough's residents.*

The survey is still being collated so I can't give you the results yet, though the initial results and the discussion with the older audience were enlightening. The survey is part of an application to the Big Lottery for up to £6 million over 6 years to prevent isolation amongst older people. Westminster is one of 32 local authorities across the country to get through to the second round of a wide partnership application with this round being led by a voluntary Sector organisation, in this case Open Age.

The piece the New Horizons group were performing begins with a short mime sequence of people trapped in their invisible "isolation boxes", followed by each student talking to the audience in the character they have created and then interacting with a facilitator character, who was formerly isolated herself but has now broken out of her box and whose job is to offer them options that will release them too from their isolation. As students have come and gone over the years, we have been able

to drop some characters and create new ones.

For this performance the student who usually plays the Facilitator was unable to be with us, so another student stepped into the role creating a slightly different character with a wider brief, which interestingly reflected several points raised by the audience in the preceding discussion.



**New Horizons student Jo Cooklin as the Facilitator - Pic: Michael Spry**

For example, one of our characters is a former gardener who has been made redundant and who is fearful of social contact. The facilitator invited him to join a lunch club, where there were women members who would love a bit of help with their gardens. He was also attracted by the idea of meeting these lovely ladies! This reflected an earlier discussion during the afternoon about the difficulty of getting isolated men in particular to break out and take part in the world.

Another character is a former high flying career woman, whose skills in marketing would be a great asset in the volunteer sector. She didn't however "want to spend all her time with old people". "Not all older people are old", retorted our Facilitator" – a line which raised an appreciative laugh from the audience. Jo also pointed out that there are many

intergenerational activities available, where an older person's life skills and experience are in demand, such as for example joining the local branch of whatever political party you support. Yet another character, who had formerly run a vintage clothes business, was attracted by the idea of a local drama group, which needed a costume supervisor.

Jo must have been pretty convincing in her role, as after the show she was approached by one woman, who thought she was for real, asking for information about how she could get involved in these activities.

*A previous performance of the Isolation project piece can be seen here on video [http://catswhiskersfilms.co.uk/?page\\_id=37](http://catswhiskersfilms.co.uk/?page_id=37)*

*The ever busy New Horizons drama group have also taken part this term in the filming of an interactive video project with one of London's leading museums. I am sworn to silence as to which museum, until they launch their press campaign later this year, but the subject of the video might give you a clue – **Masquerade in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Venice***

The finished video will consist of three scenes – a masked ball, a gambling salon and a Commedia dell'arte street performance in a Venetian piazza, all of which are based on paintings of the period. To build such sets in the studio would cost a fortune, so the filming used the "green screen" technique, which is widely used in many commercial films such as the recent *Gravity*. This involves actors playing their roles using a very basic set – tables, chairs, in the case of the street scene a very simple wooden platform – with the background

and indeed some extra characters to create a crowd put in digitally afterwards. 41 actors took part, recruited from two young people's theatre groups, Synergy and Intermission, older people's organisations such as New Horizons and the Catherine Lane Settlement in Battersea plus a couple of young professional actors, while an army of students from the London College of Fashion were on hand getting us all into costume, wigs and make up. The video was directed by the Slung Low theatre company from Leeds, who specialise in community theatre projects.

After five weekly workshop sessions held at the museum, we then moved into a film studio in Waterloo for two days filming. I and my students were split among the three scenes. One of them spent hours learning the period dance for the ballroom, which she then taught the other students in our weekly class, against a possible future project we might do.

The scenery may be being added digitally but the costumes are all totally authentic and were under the eagle eye of the museum's curators, to ensure every detail was just as it should be. It's a long time since I've been an actor, as opposed to director, and I now know what actors have to endure on a costume movie. Hours in make up and costume, covering your costume in an old robe when eating and drinking or not doing either and then a lot of hanging around, followed by retake after retake, in this case complicated by the fact that as the scenes are effectively moving "tableaux vivants", they all had to be shot in one take.

It was a valuable learning experience for all of us. My students particularly

enjoyed the opportunity to work with the young actors, who were delightful and great fun. They were though somewhat taken aback by the fact that, although we had done a short session in one of the workshops on mask work, they felt unprepared for the fact that most of them had their face and top half totally hidden by what I can only describe as an 18<sup>th</sup> century version of the burkah and a mask (see pic page one). "So why did we have to wear make up?" they asked. I suspect the answer was that, until he saw us all on set, the director was not able to decide who should be masked and who not. For example originally I was allocated a *moretta*, a black mask worn only by women that covers the entire face and is held in place by gripping a button attached to the inside of the mask with the mouth – a sexist way of preventing women from talking, I reckon. The director then decided however that, as he wanted me shouting enthusiastic support in the background for the street performers, which you can't do with a mouthful of mask, I could go bare faced – so just as well I'd been in make up then.



**Carol with moretta against the basic set and green screen**

The other reservation my students had was they would have liked some of the workshop time to have been devoted to one of the very well informed curators giving us a bit more of the social background to the period, rather than spending time on the sort of improvisational work we do in class anyway. But we all agreed the experience had been well worth while and we look forward to seeing the completed video in place later this year at the launch of the new gallery.

*Back to the present day now with  
Theatre Tips from Carlie Newman*



**1984: Seated Mark Arends as Winston with the rest of the cast**

Without even thinking about it, so many expressions from the play *1984* are in common usage today, such as doublethink and, of course, Room 101 and Big Brother, both of which are now titles of reality shows. But these were all new when George Orwell's manuscript was first published in 1949. Not only do we now use those words in our present day life but we also have surveillance cameras and reality TV, both of which were envisaged in Orwell's novel. Not only do cameras watch people on the street but we even have them in nurseries so that parents can observe their children from screens at work!

The play begins at the end of the novel, the appendix, with a group of people looking back on events and the audience can see their reactions. It works well and brings the terrifying story of Winston Smith to life. Most of the action takes place in a kind of office with files, archives and so on. The narrator tells us about Winston writing a diary "for the future." We see a group examining and talking about the novel. The audience watches events unfold and listens to the group discussing these events. And some are truly awful – the worst, to my mind, being the removal of Winston's nails (we presume as his finger tips are all bloodied) in the dreaded Room 101. Winston is tortured until he agrees that "If the Party says not 4 but 5 fingers" then he is to acquiesce. And what Winston fears most – rats – are introduced into Room 101 and they are not the friendly ones we see in *I'm a Celebrity, Get me Out of Here!*

When Winston has sex with his girlfriend Julia he is reminded of the past but berates her, "You're only a rebel from the waist downwards." Big Brother on a large screen is omnipresent. The production is strong with some very chilling moments. Sound and lighting effects are most evocative and contribute greatly to the frightening atmosphere. Mark Arends is a nervous hero, who realises exactly what he is doing when he begins writing – by disobeying the rules he is likely to die. There are, too, good performances by Hara Yannas as Julia and Tim Dutton as the interrogator, O'Brien. It is a very good idea to let the play run for an hour and a half with no interval – the level of tension in the cast and audience remains high.

This new adaptation by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan, which is a co-production with Headlong and

Nottingham Playhouse, has transferred from the Almeida Theatre to the Playhouse Theatre and runs until 19<sup>th</sup> July. Box Office: 020 7359 4404 and

I have officially found a replacement for Judi Dench: well, not so much a replacement as an addition. We always knew that Imelda Staunton was a good film actress; her performance in *Vera Drake* was just wonderful. Now in *Good People* Staunton shows that she is a magnificent stage actress too.



**Imelda Staunton as Margaret & Lloyd Owen as Mike**

In David Lindsay-Abaire's well-written play she is Margaret – known as Margie – who works in a dollar-store in South Boston, a working class area. She is often late as she is caught up with the care of her disabled daughter. When she loses her job she believes that an old boyfriend, Mike (Lloyd Owen), who has recently returned as a successful doctor in the fertility field, will be able to help her as, “Mikey...he was always good people.” Desperate for a job, as she is so short of money that she can't pay the rent, Margie goes to his office, then to his home to plead with him. He is now wealthy with a younger wife, Kate (Angel Coulby) and has no job for her. The difference between the two is vividly portrayed – whereas Mike has been able to get a good education and

rise up in the world, Margie just exists as a single mother with no hope for a bright future.

The cast are all very fine with lovely performances from all, particularly June Watson as Margie's landlady with a sharp tongue and Angel Coulby as Mike's wife, who welcomes Kate and tries to offer her a baby-sitting job, which her husband vetoes. Lloyd Owen manages to convey the awkwardness Mike feels in confronting his former girlfriend combined with his pride in having managed to progress in the world. Above all Staunton is pitch perfect from her accent which is spot-on to her projection and above all her ability to inhabit her character in such a way that although we see her behaving in a nasty way with her former boyfriend we support her desire to look after her daughter and have a better life.

The production's move to the West End is well-deserved and the play is highly recommended. Book now!

*Good People* is at the Hampstead Theatre until 5 April and transfers to the Noel Coward Theatre 10 April until 14 June 2014 Box Office: 0844 482 5130

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*Film news - details as promised of the European Intergenerational Film Festival (EIFF) referred to in Norma Rayne's piece on FG2 on page 8.*

There are two programmes of films, both taking place at the Phoenix Cinema, East Finchley, London N2 9PJ

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June at 1.00 pm – *Philomena*** - suggested donation: £5. We will also be screening winning entries of Germany's *Video of Generations* short film competition.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June at 2.30 pm Omamamia** - suggested donation: £5; ages 18+ only. We will also be screening winning entries of Germany's *Video of Generation* short film competition.

*Philomena* is both moving and unexpectedly and warmly funny and features Judi Dench as an elderly widow, who is trying to find the son she gave up for adoption. As recommended in the last digest.



Judi Dench and Steve Coogan in *Philomena*

*Omamamia* I haven't seen but from its description here it sounds well worth your attention  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1924336/> it

In addition to the films, the festival also includes a seminar, presented by Dr Anita Wohlmann, Mainz University. The subject of the seminar is *I Feel Old - When Young People Think About Aging* and it takes place on **Monday 23rd June 10am-3pm** at Ryker Kids, 162 High Road, Finchley N29AS; admission: £10.

An RSVP to all these events is advisable. Please email Holly at [holly.morgan@intergen.org.uk](mailto:holly.morgan@intergen.org.uk). Latest information will also be posted on this website:  
<http://www.intergen.org.uk/european-film-festival>

More film information of interest to older audiences. AEA member **Jo Walker** found these recommendations in the newsletter of the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons).

*Old Goats* is a film featuring the positive side of retirement for three older men, who become new friends. Review here: <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/films.php?id=25868>

I haven't seen it but it sounds interesting. *Quartet* is described rather misleadingly by AARP as a film about life in an assisted living facility.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfilms/film/quartet>

Highly recommended in AEA Digest when it first came out, this is a funny and touching story set in a retirement home for former opera singers and deals with their past loves and rivalries. Stars Maggie Smith and Tom Courtenay and is directed by veteran actor Dustin Hoffman.

*Still Mine*, like another beautiful Canadian film *Away from Her*, features a husband supporting his beloved wife who is suffering from Alzheimer's. [http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/02/still-mine-adds-to-movies-on-aging/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/02/still-mine-adds-to-movies-on-aging/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)

*Quartet* and *Still Mine* are both available as DVDs on the Amazon website. *Old Goats* I could only find in US Region 1 format, so would not be playable on most UK DVD players.

*The Art of Aging: Alice and Richard Matzkin*, in which a married painter and sculptor couple, who have written on later life creativity, talk frankly and lovingly about the changes and understanding they have gone through, is a short video (7'22"), which you can watch online.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZsQObmiYkc>

*Act Their Age or Age Their Act? Stars Strive to Keep Reinventing* is an article, which you can read online, about older male stars such as Robert Redford, Clint Eastwood and Dustin Hoffman, who are still making movies – “age cannot wither” and all that.

at:

<http://variety.com/2013/film/news/aging-stars-robert-redford-captain-america-1200376247/>

And now for Carol Allen's recommendations of films currently or soon to be seen **On Screen**.

Joel Hopkins is the warm hearted director, who a while back gave us *Last Chance Harvey*, a wistful tragi-comic love story about a washed up, elderly ad-man and an English spinster, played by Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson.



Thompson features again in Hopkins latest, *Love Punch*, an amiable comedy about a divorced couple – Thompson's ex is played by Pearce Brosnan - who hatch a plot to steal some diamonds

from the crooked businessman who's filched their pension pot.

Set in the South of France, the “caper” aspect of the story stretches credibility but the locations give us a pleasant visual holiday. The two main characters are well drawn, their acerbic yet still friendly relationship is amusing and older audiences will probably identify with them and appreciate the jokes about retirement, back problems and bunions. Good supporting performances too from Timothy Spall and Celia Imrie, as their best friends who are also involved in the caper.

You don't get many animated films aimed at adults, particularly older adults, so *Wrinkles* is a bit of a one off. Well received at the San Sebastian Film Festival this is a Spanish film dubbed into English and based on a graphic novel about elderly people in a retirement home.

Emilio (voiced by Martin Sheen), who is in the early stages of Alzheimer's, is shunted into the home by his son (Matthew Modine), where he finds himself sharing a room with Miguel (George Coe). Miguel is a bit of a lovable rogue, who cons other residents out of small sums of money in return for supporting their illusions and fantasies.



At first Emilio is wary of him but as his Alzheimer's worsens and Miguel tries to help him in fooling the doctors, so he doesn't get exiled to the upper floors, where the seriously demented patients are sent to vegetate, the bond between the two grows.

The visual style of the story is charming and it is both funny and touching but the film's depiction of life in the home, where the residents have nothing to do except watch tv and take part in a once a week, patronising, sedentary "gym" class is more than somewhat depressing, with the only fighting note being voiced by Miguel: "If you don't keep yourself busy, you'll go mad". Good advice that! I was though dying for Miguel to lead a residents' rebellion, rather like Pauline Collins' character did in the 2002 film *Mrs Caldicot's Cabbage War*.



Pierre Niney as Yves with one of his models.

A biopic with a love story at its heart, *Yves St Laurent* tells the story of the iconic and world famous fashion designer of the title and his often stormy relationship with his lover and business partner, Pierre Berge. The couple are played by Comédie-Française actors Pierre Niney and Guillaume Gallienne. Niney recreates Yves with startling

physical accuracy – the signature spectacles set the visual tone – but more than that both actors give excellent and often moving performances.

As you might expect from the subject, the film is visually sumptuous from the very opening shot. It lovingly recreates the fashions of several eras with some truly lovely frocks from the Dior days of the fifties and St Laurent's ground breaking Mondrian blocks of colour dress of the sixties, which was copied world wide – costumes which the film makers borrowed from the museum where it they now live. This isn't though just about the fashions. It is primarily about the complex, intertwined lives of the two men - Yves, a mentally unstable character, who becomes increasingly dependent on alcohol and drugs and Pierre, the more centred of the two, who is frequently mopping his incoherent partner up from the floor. Succumbing to the temptations of their wealthy, jet set life style, neither man is faithful, but the link between them survives until Yves' death and beyond..

Based on a novel by Patricia Highsmith, and a much lower key story than the films of her Ripley yarns, *The Two Faces of January* is an impressive directing debut from Hossein Amini, writer of an eclectic number of screenplays such as *Jude*, *The Wings of The Dove* and *Drive*. Nothing flashy, no showing off, he just chooses some stunning locations – Athens, Greek islands and Turkey – casts good actors and gets on with telling the story.

Set in the sixties with a good sense of period, it tells the tale of Rydal (Oscar Isaac), a young American tour guide and small time scammer of his clients, who is befriended by a glamorous and rich

American couple, Chester and Colette, played by Viggo Mortenson and Kirsten Dunst.



But when Chester calls on Rydal for help in dealing with an apparently unconscious man whom he claims has attacked him, a whole different scenario emerges, as the three of them find themselves on the run from the police and the true, darker side of Chester is revealed. With a ménage a trois of an older man, his beautiful much younger wife and a young man who is attracted to her, the scene is set for a Greek tragedy of sorts. It has its twists and turns and surprises, but the real interest in this psychological drama is the revelation of character with the core of film being the relationship between the older and younger men and its undertones of father/son type conflict.

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