

Dear Reader,

Here we are, then. The **inaugural issue** of *Opticon1826* has landed on this virtual table at last, and you are invited to read it at your leisure. What follows is a compilation of the very good that has been thought and created by our fellows at UCL – and it is fit to remind ourselves every day that those who work inside a different discipline from ours can be as close to us in spirit and intention as those who work next to us in the laboratory or the library. Yet *Opticon1826* can benefit not only its readers, but also its contributors. Once their submissions have passed the scrutiny of at least one independent reviewer (in most cases, that of a subject specialist in addition to the Faculty Editor's), our journal will enable them to share their thoughts with, and test them out on, people who aren't familiar with their academic field and whom they may under normal circumstances never meet. It is also an opportunity for novices among us to have something published for the first time in the comfort of an in-house journal before venturing into the publishing world at large. To these ends, we have formulated the ***Opticon1826* Rules**.

From this first of your twice-yearly collections of researched and creative work it should be evident that *Opticon1826* doesn't only look for work that is the result of interdisciplinary study (whatever that may be or mean); while such work is very welcome, it is not all that we are about. This is a cross-disciplinary journal for UCL, not The UCL Journal for Interdisciplinary Research. It is designed to be a forum in the true sense: a place in which we can all gather and consider each other's offerings: weigh them, declare them wanting or complete, negotiate a price if we choose, and walk away with them or from them, however we wish.

Though many of us endeavour to be open to the other thoughts of others, it isn't easy for us to learn what these thoughts are. A triumvirate of obstacles will always make it a difficult matter. There is, firstly, the lack of time: we are all busy negotiating our own field of work, and therefore have little time to negotiate another. Secondly, there is the unfamiliar jargon: we have to expend enough energy to understand whatever text or data we have to ingest for the sake of whatever piece of research we are working on – do we really have any left for someone else's language? The third obstacle is that of not knowing where to go, or even from where to start the journey. We are all no doubt curious about what lies on the other side of our self-imposed disciplinary fence, but frequently cannot decide where to go, or find the gap through which to pass.

Can *Opticon1826* be the embryo of a remedy to all this? We believe that it can be. You won't need to

read a whole book on the theory of the novel, in order to get a sense for the kind of thing some people who study novels think and talk about: you can read an article here on the subject instead; an Hour replaces a Week. You won't need to despair, or grow irritated with jargon – there is jargon here, too, but we have endeavoured to provide all the footnotes and glossaries you need, and the contributors know they are writing for everyone, not just for their immediate colleagues; Communication replaces Confusion. As for the journey, well, the journey can begin here, if you choose to take it. It will never be as easy as what you know, but it will be as challenging and exciting as only that which you don't know can be.

This first issue has been an experiment, and for that reason – and none other, as has been suggested to us by some – we limited ourselves to Arts and Humanities, the Bartlett, Laws and Social & Historical Sciences. From the next issue onwards, *Opticon1826* will be open to **all UCL faculties**. We also hope to provide you with a number of regular columns in future issues: a **letters page** containing selected feedback on previous issues or general matters relating to the journal; a small column entitled **'To the Jugular of Jargon'**, in which we seek, with your help, to understand what lies beneath some of the words we use; and **'Ken's Challenge'**, in which you are invited to write on a given topic from a discipline that isn't yours. We shall also be arranging occasional debates and conferences, information on which will be posted on this site well in advance.

Enjoy what follows! We certainly did.

Yours faithfully,

Gesche Ipsen
Editor-in-Chief