From the Large Hadron Collider to refugees in Greece, City student Anna Pantelia is one of the most talented documentary photographers of her generation.
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City Magazine 2015
The magazine for alumni and friends of City University London, produced by the Development & Alumni Relations Office.

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Imagery on this page, from top:
Anna Pantelia outside the College Building; Arthy Ravichandran, a 2011 alumna and now Aerospace Growth Partnership Programme Manager; clinical training in the Department of Optometry, 1953; Binnie and Paul Barnes, who met at City in the 1980s, pictured in the old swimming pool at City.
Welcome

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the 2015 edition of City Magazine and especially to our 6,450 new readers who graduated during the last year. You are joining an alumni network with over 130,000 members, the ages of whom range from 21 to 101, representing a rich heritage of former students who studied at City or one of its former affiliated institutions.

As many will be aware, City has a long tradition, dating back over 160 years, of providing high-quality education with a focus on business and the professions. Our roots go back to the founding of the Inns of Court School of Law in 1852, now known as The City Law School, St Bartholomew’s College of Nursing and Midwifery (1877) and of course the founding of the Northampton Institute in 1894. In 1966 the Institute was granted a Royal Charter and City University London came into existence. City has maintained and developed its close connections with business and the professions with around 60 per cent of our courses currently recognised by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.

So we are proud of our heritage. However earlier this year City was also listed in the 2015 Times Higher Education 100 Under 50 ranking of the world’s best ‘young’ universities. The table showcases the rising stars who are demonstrating great potential. The significant developments made over the past few years are no doubt reflected in City’s inclusion.

The highlights of the last year are many. In the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which assesses the quality of research, City leapt from 51 per cent to 75 per cent of research entered being considered as ‘world-leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’. This important measurement is crucial to the research reputation of the University and places us well among our peers.

With a view to providing outstanding facilities for our students, further significant developments to our estate have been introduced. Students now benefit from state-of-the-art underground lecture theatres and an impressive new social space, CityBar. The jewel in the crown though has to be CitySport, our new sports centre on Goswell Road, constructed on the site of the old Saddlers Sports Centre. This is the largest student sports facility in central London and was opened in March by Olympic gold medal winning cyclist Dani King. Our students now have facilities of which we are proud.

Elsewhere, over 1,000 alumni and friends supported the University financially by donating to the Annual Fund and funding named scholarships, thus helping to improve the lives of current and future students. If you were one of our donors then please accept our thanks. If you were not, you can find out how to donate by visiting www.city.ac.uk/alumni/support-us. You really can help to make a difference.

I hope that this edition of City Magazine gives you a flavour of why City is such an exciting place to be at the moment. If you haven’t been back for some time, why not contact us and arrange a visit? I am sure you will be impressed.

David Street
Director
Development & Alumni Relations

City in numbers

City’s Alumni Office is now in contact with over 130,000 former students in 202 countries

83% of current students indicated their satisfaction with their experience at City through the 2014 National Student Survey

75% of City’s submission to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework was rated either ‘world-leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’

Between 2012 and 2016 over £130M will be invested in City’s estate
Our estate continued to transform with the opening of CitySport, CityBar and new, modern lecture spaces. Cass Business School named a new Dean, two University buildings were named after former Vice-Chancellors and our music studios were used to film a series for BBC Four.

Building the Vision

The University has made significant investment in the estate over the past few years as part of its Strategic Plan, to provide high-quality academic spaces and areas for students to socialise that help create a sense of community.

The newly opened CitySport is one of the biggest student experience initiatives in which the University has recently invested and provides a sporting hub for students, staff and alumni. The fitness centre, located in the Franklin Building on Goswell Road, was opened in March by Olympic gold medal winning cyclist Dani King.

The custom-built facility is 75 per cent larger than its predecessor, Saddlers Sports Centre and is equipped with more than 120 fitness stations. There is also a strength and conditioning area with free weights and resistance equipment and purpose-built studios for group exercise, martial arts, mind and body classes, spinning and team sports. The standout feature of the new centre is the Sport England-standard hall that can accommodate a range of team sports from basketball to badminton, with retractable seating for up to 400 spectators.

In addition to CitySport, the Franklin Building is home to new educational facilities and office space.

Further along Goswell Road lies the recently opened CityBar, the University’s new social space for students. CityBar has been designed to be modern and welcoming and the glazed façade draws natural light.

Work has also been completed to provide a new suite of lecture spaces in the formerly redundant Drysdale Building basement. This was part of the Lecture Space Project, which is formed of three phases, the first of which was in the University Building.

The new rooms are light and airy, having been carved out of formerly dark and underused parts of the estate. The copper light-wells draw daylight into the area, which has been equipped with modern furnishings and the latest technology. This includes moveable furniture and swivel seating (making it easier for students to work together) and flexible computer rooms with pop-up PCs.

City alumni can benefit from exclusive discounts at CitySport. Prices start at £4 for a class and £30 per month membership. Visit www.citysport.org.uk for more information.
New Dean appointed at Cass

Professor Marianne W Lewis has been announced as the new Dean of Cass Business School. Professor Lewis, who praised the “buzzing, vibrant energy” at Cass upon her appointment, is currently Professor of Management and Associate Dean at the Carl H Lindner College of Business at the University of Cincinnati. With over 20 years' experience in international business research and education, she has been Associate Dean at the College since 2006.

She will lead Cass and become a member of the University’s Executive Committee when she assumes the role of Dean in the autumn term.

Welcoming the appointment, Professor Paul Curran, Vice-Chancellor of City said: “I am delighted to welcome Marianne. She is an innovative academic leader and talented communicator and stood out from a field of exceptional candidates from around the world. Her strong commitment to educational quality, combined with international levels of research excellence and close partnerships with the business world are an excellent fit for us as Cass consolidates its position among the world’s leading business schools.”

Professor Lewis will join Cass as Dean-Elect at the end of the summer and will work initially alongside the current Dean, Professor Steven Haberman, who has enjoyed three very successful years as Dean of Cass and, previously, ten years as Director and Deputy Dean.

Professor Lewis said: “I am very excited to be joining Cass. It has a buzzing, vibrant energy which is fuelled by its momentum, people and place. The people I have met are exceptionally capable, dedicated and driven. They strive for excellence and envision even greater potential for Cass.

“I am most looking forward to building partnerships – within Cass, across City University London, within the London community and across an international network: partnerships that can harness the potential of Cass Business School.”

City honours former Vice-Chancellors

City has a history of naming buildings to recognise the contributions made by former Vice-Chancellors and eminent staff. In keeping with this tradition, the University has opened the Franklin Building and named the Rhind Building in honour of former Vice-Chancellors Professor Raoul Franklin and Professor David Rhind.

The Franklin Building on Goswell Road houses the University’s new sports centre, CitySport, plus new educational space and student bedrooms operated by City’s accommodation partner.

The Rhind Building was completed during Professor Rhind’s tenure as Vice-Chancellor. Previously known as the Social Sciences Building, it houses parts of The City Law School and the School of Arts & Social Sciences.

Speaking before unveiling a commemorative plaque, Professor Rhind said: “Having been involved from beginning to end in the creation of this superb, functional yet beautiful modern building, in which much top-class education and research have taken place, I am deeply honoured by the University’s decision to name it the Rhind Building.”

Professor Franklin was appointed City’s third Vice-Chancellor in 1978 and held the post until 1998. He is the University’s longest serving Vice-Chancellor and was successful in raising additional income through his collaboration with business and the professions. He rapidly expanded City’s professionally oriented postgraduate programmes with the mantra ‘City makes other universities’ graduates employable’. Professor Rhind succeeded Professor Franklin as Vice-Chancellor in 1998 and held the position until July 2007. He did much to shape the University that we see today: in particular he improved the estate, strengthened research and launched the Cass Business School. Previously he was Director General of the Ordnance Survey where he oversaw the transformational digitisation of its maps.

In 2002 Professor Rhind was the first geographer elected to the Royal Society for nearly 50 years and holds the distinction of also being a Fellow of the British Academy. In 2011, City awarded him an honorary Doctor of Science.
SU petting zoo brings the calm

Remember how stressful examinations were? ‘Keep Calm and Study On’ is a City University London Students’ Union campaign aimed at supporting students during their assessment period. The Students’ Union fully appreciate that examination time is an intense period for City students and aim to do what they can to make it that little bit easier.

The campaign involves a range of activities encouraging students to take a break so they can go back feeling focused. One of the highlights of the campaign this year was a petting zoo, sponsored by the City Future Fund.

The zoo was held in Northampton Square on Wednesday 13th May. There were goats, lambs, a Shetland pony, a rabbit and ferrets in attendance to meet students and bring a smile to their faces. Members of the local community and schools were also invited. The animals were provided by Surrey Docks Farm.

The Students’ Union also hosted a stall every day on campus with a ‘Procrastination Station’, games, free stationery, stress balls, bubble wrap, water bottles and massages. They also provided information on support services available to students that include the Union Support Service, the Mental Health and Counselling Service and Samaritans.

Students’ Union President Rima Amin said: “We’d like to thank all those who contributed to the City Future Fund for helping us to support students better. We wouldn’t have been able to do it without you.”

For more information or to donate to the City Future Fund, visit www.city.ac.uk/alumni/city-future-fund.

Alumnus runs for US Senate

A City alumnus is bidding for a place on the United States Senate in 2016. Alexander ‘PG’ Sittenfeld will run for one of the two available seats in Ohio, on 8th November next year.

The 30-year-old, who completed a Masters in Creative Writing (Non-Fiction) in 2010, has been described as a ‘rising star’ of US politics by journalists and political commentators. He is representing the Democratic Party in the race for the Senate and will compete against current Republican Senator Rob Portman.

Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Sittenfeld is currently serving in his second term as a member of the city’s council, after being elected in 2011 and 2013. He is Chair of the Education & Entrepreneurship Committee and serves on the Budget & Finance Committee and the Major Transportation & Regional Cooperation Committee.

The City alumnus attended Princeton University after graduating from Seven Hills School. He was then chosen for the postgraduate Marshall Scholarship and studied at the University of Oxford. The prestigious award offers select US citizens the chance to study in the UK.

On his time at City, Sittenfeld said: “City University London was a wonderful, formative experience for me and I learned a lot from both my teachers and my fellow students.”

Following work experiences at Google and as a freelance reporter for The New York Times, Sittenfeld returned to his home town to become the Assistant Director of the Community Learning Center Institute. The organisation helps to turn schools (otherwise unused in the afternoons and evenings) into hubs of neighbourhood activity offering health, educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for students, families and the surrounding community.

On his campaign website, the politician says: “I never forgot where I came from and chose to come back to Ohio: first to build stronger, better schools for our next generation and then to serve as an elected leader for Cincinnati.”

For more information, visit www.pgsittenfeld.com.
The impact of a speech disorder on a person’s functioning and emotional state can be severe, but a course at City University London is helping young people reduce the anxiety and embarrassment associated with stammering.

“Services for young people who stammer are extremely variable across London – and indeed across the country – and not all young people who stammer receive some form of therapy through the NHS,” said Dr Bernard Camilleri, Senior Lecturer in Language and Communication Sciences (LCS) and manager of the City University London Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Clinic. “The course offers young people who might not otherwise have access to therapy the chance to work in small groups with a specialist speech and language therapist towards managing their stammer. This can make a significant difference to their day-to-day lives.”

Run at the Clinic, the four-day courses for people between the ages of eight and eighteen (divided in two age groups) includes sessions on general communication skills and managing the struggle of stammering along with personal goal setting on which students can continue to work after the course is over. On the last day of the course students also prepare a presentation for their peers and their families, which puts into practice some of the skills learnt during the intensive course.

Originally developed the late Mrs Roberta Williams, former Director of the Clinic, the course builds on the skills and experience of the staff in the LCS Division within the School of Health Sciences. Previously run completely free of charge, the team is hoping to find different sources of funding to ensure it can continue to run successful clinics while keeping costs to families as low as possible.

“We naturally want to continue to make courses available to all young people who need the support and welcome applications from people who are unable to pay the fee,” said Dr Camilleri. “But any financial support would be a great help as we want to continue to offer students a chance to find something that works for them in a safe environment and give them the confidence to tackle social situations that they normally fear or avoid.”

For more information, please visit www.city.ac.uk/stammering-course.

Celebrating 40 years of music, culture and arts management at City

2015/16 marks the 40th anniversaries of both Music and Culture, Policy and Management at City University London.

A groundbreaking Bachelor of Science in Music, the first of its kind in the UK, was established in 1975 by Malcolm Troup (who was then Director of Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama). Music achieved departmental status in October 1982 and today ranks as one of the top 15 music departments in the country and one of the University’s highest-ranking departments in terms of its research.

In the same year, City also launched a pioneering programme in arts management education. Now under the guise of our MA Culture, Policy and Management, it is the longest established programme of its kind in the UK. Its network of alumni can be found in some of the most prestigious cultural management positions around the world.

To celebrate these 40th anniversaries, the Department of Music will be hosting an alumni event on 10th October, with a similar event to follow in November for Culture, Policy and Management (details available soon). Both events will mark the start of a year of celebrations and special activities.

Stephen Cottrell, Professor of Music and Head of the Departments of Music and Culture & Creative Industries said: “I am delighted to be involved in our 40th anniversary celebrations and I look forward to welcoming as many of our alumni as possible to the exciting range of events we have planned for the year.”

If you would like to receive further information about these events when it becomes available, please visit www.community.city.ac.uk/city/home to update your details or call +44 (0)20 7040 5551. If you are a Music or Culture, Policy and Management alumnus and have photographs from your time at City that you would like to share as part of the celebrations, please email alumni@city.ac.uk.
Booking a haircut, checking for plaque and understanding politics were just some of the challenges tackled by the winners of CitySpark, City’s enterprise and innovation competition. From over 60 entries, the top 15 ideas were selected to set up a stall at the CitySpark ‘marketplace’, where they presented their ideas to a panel of roaming judges.

The panel, comprising business experts, entrepreneurs, alumni and City staff, voted for the ideas they felt were the most innovative, well-designed and sustainable. The five winners each took home £3,000 and a coveted place on the FastForward business accelerator.

The winners

Inspired by problems finding a salon, **Qrown It** [1] founders Olorunfemi Fagunwa and Kunmi Olatunji devised an app connecting independent black hairdressers with clients in London.

When Hawaa Budraa’s sister had a brace fitted she found it hard monitoring the health of her gums without going to the dentist. It gave Budraa the idea for her **Plaque Checker** [2] app as a quick and effective way to check oral health.

**Peeps by Instetto** [3] was created by Christoffer Olsen and Daniel Infante as a way for people instantly to share social and business contact details. Olsen came up with the idea after he watched people “clumsily trying to network” and thought there had to be a better way.

Brothers George and Freddie Shelton came up with the idea for **Bet U** [4], an interactive app that “gamifies” challenge-based fundraising, while cycling from London to Gibraltar.

Journalism alumnus Jeremy Evans was frustrated by the lack of innovation in how information is displayed. He created **Explaain** [5] as a way to go behind the headlines with an interactive guide to current issues.

The Performance Space at City’s Department of Music was the setting for an episode of the new BBC television series *Sound of Song*. The first hour-long programme of the series, titled *The Recording Revolution*, explored the history and development of popular music recording and aired on BBC Four in January.

During the episode, musicians were filmed recreating historical recording practices and giving demonstrations of contemporary digital processes at the facilities in City’s College Building.

Sequences from the works of Lieber and Stoller, Irving Berlin, Phil Spector, Louis Armstrong and Frank Sinatra were performed on the Department’s Steinway piano.

Neil Brand, writer and presenter of the series, praised the “wonderful facilities”. He said: “We have had access to everything we needed in one very convenient space and the result is better than I could have hoped.”

Dr Miguel Mera, Deputy Head of Music at City, explained that Brand had previously performed in the University’s concert series and given guest lectures to City students: “We have always had strong external links with the music industries but it is especially pleasing to be working on this project with the BBC.

“This documentary focuses on the close interaction between music and technology, which has been a core concern of the Department of Music at City since its inception 40 years ago,” he said.

Series producer Alastair Williams described some of the recording techniques his team were able to reproduce in the facilities: “The City Performance Space was ideal for our needs,” he said. “It gave us an opportunity to re-enact and produce our own musical moments from the history of recorded music.

“So we recreated the Edison Tone Test and gathered a band together to record acoustically as they did in 1906 on wax cylinders. In the recording studio we made our own version of the song *Believe* by Cher, to illustrate how Pro-Tools and Auto-Tune can change the sound of song.

“These were fascinating and productive days exploring a century of recorded sound.”
Several successful publications have been released by academics and alumni of City University London this year.

Professor of International Politics at City, Professor Ronen Palan, has co-authored a book titled *Legacies of Empire* in collaboration with Royal Holloway Professor of International Relations, Professor Sandra Halperin. The book, published in July, examines the recent historical phenomenon of the nation-state. Taking a look at several millennia of human history, it shows how the modern world has been shaped by empires of the past and applies these to contemporary politics. Professor Palan joined the Department of International Politics at City in September 2012.

MA Creative Writing alumna Liz Trenow has reached number 18 in *The New York Times* Best Sellers list for ebook fiction. *The Forgotten City* in print

Seamstress is the second release by former journalist Trenow. The book, which tells the story of a seamstress working at Buckingham Palace during the Edwardian era, has now been published in countries across the world including the UK, Germany and the USA. The author’s second novel was inspired by a trip to the Warner Textile Archive in Braintree and a visit to a former Victorian mental asylum. She has since written two further books, *The Poppy Factory* and *The Master Piece*, in addition to the novel she penned as part of her City course, *The Last Telegram*.

Peter Moore is an alumnus of MA Narrative Non-Fiction and now lectures on the course. His second book, *The Weather Experiment*, was published in May and featured as BBC Radio 4’s *Book of the Week* programme. With a cast that includes notable figures John Constable, Samuel Morse, Francis Beaufort and founder of the Met Office Robert FitzRoy, the historical account explores the meteorological enlightenment of the 19th century. It has been described by *The Sunday Times* as “exhilarating”.

Two City alumni have created *Sixpenny*, a digital magazine of six illustrated short stories that each take six minutes to read. Elizabeth Leonard and Kate Thomas both graduated from the MA Creative Writing (Novels) in 2013.

Having completed his Graduate Entry LLB (GELLB) course at City, Scott Howe has now embarked on a journey of a different kind. He has travelled to Pyongyang in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) to be a trainer on the Choson Exchange programme, with backing provided by The City Law School.

The Choson Exchange is a Singaporean non-profit organisation supporting entrepreneurship in North Korea through intensive training workshops delivered by foreign professionals in areas such as finance, policy, law and management. It provides an opportunity for foreign professionals, such as Scott, to share their knowledge and support economic development in a very challenging environment.

Scott, who hails from Vancouver in Canada, has been involved in international development work providing rural communities with access to sustainable energy. He also successfully established two backpacker hostels in Kenya. He has “always been fascinated” with North Korea and was even in Pyongyang last year on a sightseeing tour.

He is “delighted and grateful” with the financial support offered to him by The City Law School, which will go a long way towards supporting his work with the Choson Exchange.
The 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF2014) results were exceptionally important for City. In less than three years the University made a greater improvement in research quality, per Funding Council research pound, than any other UK university. A brochure, titled *Research Impact* and focusing on the Impact Case Studies submitted to REF2014, was recently published and a couple of the Impact Case Studies are summarised on these two pages.

**Better care for older people**
Regulating detention law

Immigration detention is widespread in the UK and beyond. It means thousands of vulnerable people are held for long periods without trial or access to adequate legal representation. City research has influenced the legal framework and practices that govern detention and has encouraged courts and governments to respect the detainees' basic rights.

Professor Daniel Wilsher at The City Law School was behind the research, aimed at developing legal and ethical standards to regulate immigration detention. From its findings, he produced a series of academic articles and a book, *Immigration Detention: Law, History, Politics* which has since informed policymakers across the world. It has brought into focus the vulnerability of detainees and the shortcomings of legal systems in providing them with appropriate protection and legal support.

By 2011, around 27,000 people went through immigration detention in the UK, at a cost of £130 million. In the same year, the US detained 429,000 immigrants, costing $1.7 billion. On a global scale, immigration detention is on the rise and largely unregulated, so governments have the power to decide whom they detain and release, without reference to universal guidelines.

Professor Wilsher’s work proposed clear standards for policymakers for improving the balance between migration control and an individual’s fundamental rights. In particular, he stressed the need for judicial review, time limits on detention and the elimination of detention for vulnerable groups, such as children.

A wide range of government bodies and NGOs has consulted Professor Wilsher and he has sat as an immigration judge on detention issues.

To view City’s Research Impact publication online, visit www.issuu.com/cityuniversitylondon/docs/impact.
Footing the bill for acts of God

Academics at Cass Business School have conducted research that considers how natural and manmade disasters cost the reinsurance industry billions of dollars.

Based on the research of Professor Paula Jarzabkowski and Research Fellow Rebecca Bednarek, *Making a Market for Acts of God* looks at how changes to the way reinsurance is calculated and traded could have profound and widespread implications.

The book explains how losses from natural and manmade disasters have been increasing in frequency and severity, how the reinsurance market has been changing and how those changes can potentially have worldwide implications.

A move towards bundling the underwriting of natural disasters and changing the way in which potential losses are assessed could mean that investors in insurance bonds and financial products end up footing the bill, or even slow the rate at which we rebuild societies following a disaster.

The book looks closely at the Tohoku (Japanese) Earthquake in 2011 (estimated to have cost the reinsurance industry $37.5 billion) and the Thai floods the same year, the world’s fourth-costliest disaster. Indeed, 2011 was the most expensive year on record for natural disasters, placing the costs of recovery on the insurance and reinsurance industries.

Professor Jarzabkowski said: “We studied the industry for three years and one of these years was 2011. We saw that the drivers of risk are increasing and the range of disasters across the world during that year demonstrate the systematic and linked nature of that risk.

“What we are showing is how a flood in Thailand can disrupt global supply chains, impacting the operations of businesses as far away as the American chain, Walmart.”

‘Nurture’ over ‘nature’ for overweight children

Nature versus nurture: it’s a relationship that has long been debated, especially when it comes to things as vital as lifestyle and specifically weight. But in a new study published this year, academics from City and London School of Economics seem to have settled the argument for good as they discovered that parents’ lifestyles rather than their genes are primarily responsible for their children being overweight.

Speaking about the research, Mireia Jofre-Bonet, Professor in Economics at City, said: “The good news is that our research shows that we can do something about children’s weight problems. Although initiatives that target schools and children themselves are admirable, our results suggest that the primary focus should be on helping parents adopt healthier lifestyles and be better role models concerning healthy eating and physical exercise.”

Comparing the overweight status of biological and adopted children to that of their parents to determine whether children inherit their overweight problems or whether they are the result of the environment in which they develop, the team found that when both adoptive parents are overweight, the likelihood of an adopted child being overweight is up to 21 per cent higher than when the parents are not overweight.

The research could have significant implications for health policy, with further support for parents to adopt healthy lifestyles urgently required. Wider acknowledgement of the impact of cultural factors in the transmission of obesity is also needed to help combat the increasing prevalence of the condition among children.
Technologies to help people living with dementia

City academics are working to develop three new online and mobile tools with the aim of transforming the experiences of people living with dementia and those of their friends, families and carers.

Over 6.8 million people live with dementia in the EU, around two thirds of whom live at home. Yet family carers report a severe lack of real-time, practical advice. There are currently 800,000 people living in the UK with dementia and most are supported by unpaid carers.

The technologies are being developed by City’s Centre for Creativity in Professional Practice, led by Alise Kirtley, a Culture Change Manager and Practice Development Consultant with care homes and Professor Neil Maiden, Professor of Systems Engineering and co-founder of the Centre. Professor Maiden leads the research at City to develop new forms of digital support for care of older people with dementia.

The three tools are: ‘Non-Trivial Pursuits’, an online tool that facilitates engagement in meaningful activities for people living with dementia, thus helping them to live more independent and rewarding lives; ‘The Dementia Cookbook’, a mobile app which supports people to cook independently and eat healthily; and ‘Maggie’, a mobile app that helps young children to learn about dementia through fun, creative and interactive tools, centred around the story and experiences of Maggie, a fictional character living with dementia.

The aim of these tools is to help people living with dementia at home to flourish through increasing their sense of independence and self-sufficiency; to facilitate their participation in community group activities; and to foster healthy intergenerational relationships between young children and people living with dementia.

If you would be interested in learning more about this innovative work, please contact Mehrangez Rahman, Trusts and Foundations Officer, at +44 (0) 20 7040 8008 or Mehrangez.Rahman.1@city.ac.uk.

Innovative turbine engine research

Professor Abdulnaser Sayma and his team at City have achieved a major milestone for their solar dish power generation project.

Known as the Optimised Microturbine Solar Power system (OMSoP), the project is initiated and led by Professor Sayma and is co-funded by the European Union’s 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development. It is aimed at providing and demonstrating technical solutions for the use of a state-of-the-art concentrated solar power system (CSP) coupled to micro-gas turbines (MGT) to produce electricity. The intended system is expected to be modular, producing electricity in the range of 3-10 kW.

The MGT will be integrated with the CSP at the Casaccia Research Centre, 25km northwest of Rome, in early 2016. It is expected to generate 6 kW of electricity. Assisted by the European Turbine Network (ETN), City provides coordination and management of the project. The OMSoP project began in 2013 with eight partners from five countries and a total budget of €5.8M.

The Brussels-based ETN is a non-profit association which consolidates the entire value chain of Europe’s gas turbine technology community. It facilitates gas turbine research and technology development, promoting environmentally friendly, stationary gas turbine technology, with reliable and low-cost operation.

Professor Sayma, who is an active member of the ETN Project Board and chairman of the ETN’s Operational Flexibility Technical Committee, said: “We are elated with our progress so far and we have demonstrated that we are on course to achieve our objectives in terms of our target capacity for generating electricity. Our research represents a considerable advance in the possibilities for clean, reliable and sustainable energy solutions.”
This year’s *Diary* showcases several outstanding City alumni events around the world over the past academic year and scenes from the January 2015 Graduations. Alumni events offer a wonderful opportunity to network, rekindle old friendships and learn about how City is changing.

### Events in 2014/15

1. [Image](#)
2. [Image](#)
3. [Image](#)
4. [Image](#)
5. [Image](#)
6. [Image](#)
7. [Image](#)
1. Cocktail reception and fundraising evening, hosted by Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou (pictured centre), as part of the annual Cass Alumni Weekend in Monaco. 2. BBQ party, Cass Alumni Weekend, Monaco. 3. Santander ‘Thank You’ event at Cass. 4. Alumni reception in Dublin, with guest speaker Archie Kane (centre), Governor of the Bank of Ireland. 5. Alumni Christmas Party at CityBar for graduates from 2011 to 2014. 6. Bletchley Park visit with Professor David Stupples, Director of City’s Centre for Cyber and Security Sciences. 7. Bar Professional Training Course 25-year anniversary, held at The City Law School’s Gray’s Inn Place campus. 8. Graduates pose for a ‘selfie’ at Graduation on 26th January 2015. 9. Alumni Reception, Beijing, attended by Rt Hon The Lord Mayor Fiona Woolf CBE, the then Chancellor of City University London. 10. Alumni Reception, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Shanghai. 11. Scholarships, Bursaries and Prizes Reception at Northampton Square. 12-14. From left: scenes from recent Graduations on 27th, 28th and 29th January 2015.
15. Alumni Reception at The British Consulate General, Hong Kong. The opening address was delivered by Deputy Trade Commissioner Richard Flood, followed by a speech from Mingkang Liu (MBA, 1987), former president of the Bank of China. 16. Alumni Reception, Seoul, at the British Embassy with Professor Stephen Cottrell, Head of the Departments of Music and Culture & Creative Industries. 17. An evening Alumni Reception at Scottish Television (STV) in Glasgow, which included a talk by Rob Woodward, CEO of STV Group and Chair of Council, City University London. 18. Mandana Mofidi (MA International Journalism, 2010), Producer of the Vice series on HBO (pictured left) interviewed Nicole Young (MA International Journalism, 2003), award-winning Senior Producer for CBS News and the renowned 60 Minutes programme (right) at an alumni event in New York. 19. Nicole Young (far left) and Mandana Mofidi (second left) raise a toast at the New York alumni event.

Events in 2015/16

We are now planning our events calendar for 2015/16. Highlights will include:

- 5th Annual Cass Alumni Weekend in Monaco, 4th-6th September 2015
- Visit to National Museum of Computing, Bletchley Park, 3rd October 2015
- Department of Music 40th Anniversary Party, 10th October 2015
- Recent Graduates Christmas Party in CityBar, 17th December 2015. If you graduated between 2012 and 2015, please save the date!

To receive our bi-monthly events bulletin and sign up for the events you would like to attend, please join our Online Community (details on opposite page) and make sure your email address is up to date.

City also hosts a range of public lectures, seminars, conferences and concerts throughout the year, which all alumni are invited to attend.

For details of events being hosted at City over the year ahead, please visit www.city.ac.uk/events.
City graduates are entitled to a wide range of benefits and services from the University, including continued access to the library and discounted membership of CitySport, the University’s brand new fitness centre on Goswell Road.

Benefits and services

Library membership

City alumni are entitled to free use of the University libraries for reference and an 80 per cent discount on the annual rates charged to external visitors for borrowing privileges. Membership includes access to the main University library in Northampton Square and libraries at Cass Business School and The City Law School.

Registered members of the Alumni Online Community can access e-journals and databases remotely through Emerald Insight, Business Source Premier Alumni Edition, JSTOR, Refworks and Sage (coming soon). There is also on-site access to other online resources through the University libraries at Bunhill Row and Northampton Square.

CitySport

CitySport is our brand new sport and fitness centre and offers competitive membership fees and special rates for alumni. It has leading-edge equipment with high-quality trainers, smart facilities and studios. We also have Olympic-quality courts for several team and individual sports, so why not come along for a game of badminton or a five-a-side football match?

To join CitySport or the library, please contact us for your Alumni Network Card. You will need this to verify your status as an alumnus when visiting for the first time. Please go to www.city.ac.uk/alumni/benefits-and-services or telephone +44 (0) 20 7040 5557 to request your card.

Eye care

City’s newly refurbished Fight for Sight Clinic recently joined forces with Topcon, a manufacturer of optical equipment for ophthalmology and surveying, putting it at the forefront of developments in eye care technology.

Not only will you receive a thorough eye examination at the clinic, your support will enable our Optometry students to continue to develop their clinical skills.

Get free eyesight tests, contact lens fittings, aftercare and up to 20 per cent off a complete pair of glasses, including exclusive designer styles.

To book your appointment please call +44 (0) 20 7040 8338 or email eyeclinic@city.ac.uk.

Connect

Keeping in touch with your alma mater is an easy way to expand your network and learn more about the latest developments at the University.

Join the Alumni Network on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and blog to get the latest updates from our community – you will find all of the links on the back cover of City Magazine.

Online Community

Have you moved house or changed job recently? To access all of the benefits listed on this page (and more), please remember to review and update your contact details using the Online Community. You will then receive invitations to local City events and information relevant to your profession and industry.

To join:
If you are a City alumnus, visit community.city.ac.uk/city/home.
If you are a Cass alumnus, visit community.city.ac.uk/cass/home.

Ask Alumni E-Mentoring

Ask Alumni is our relaunched e-mentoring platform. Simply register and create a profile to provide or seek informal, ad hoc careers advice. You can link your Ask Alumni profile to your LinkedIn account to make getting set up even easier. Once logged in, you can search the database for mentors based on their location, experience, course or what type of support they are happy to provide (everything from email advice to work shadowing).

To sign up to Ask Alumni, either as a mentor or mentee, please visit www.city.ac.uk/alumni/ask-alumni.

Other benefits

Graduate Loyalty Discount
A fee discount of at least 10 per cent when enrolling for one of 150 postgraduate taught courses.

Career and employment services
Whether you are a job hunter (up to three years after graduation) or recruiter, our Career & Skills Development Service can help.

Lifelong email
Alumni who graduated from 2013 onwards can continue to use their City email account.
A lifelong relationship

Become part of a global network and help others to succeed

International Ambassadors

City is one of the most popular universities in the UK for international students. Over 25 per cent of our alumni live outside the UK and our global alumni network ensures that former students, no matter where they are in the world, can maintain their connection with the University.

Since the last edition of City Magazine, the Alumni team has continued to work closely with former students around the world. Here Juliet Ye Zhu (Erasmus Mundus MA in Global Journalism, 2008) explains why she is proud to volunteer as City’s International Ambassador in Singapore:

“As an Ambassador, I want to help my fellow alumni stay in touch and promote City to prospective students. I have been doing this by helping City’s International Office at recruitment fairs and answering questions from prospective students. I also assist at alumni events in Singapore and welcome those who relocate here.

“In future, my aim is to organise regular local events with other active group members. The role is very enjoyable and rewarding and I would encourage others to get involved.”

For more information about our International Ambassadors Scheme, please visit www.city.ac.uk/alumni/international-ambassadors or call +44 (0) 207 040 5567.

City alumni inspiring success

Feedback from City students has shown that innovative ways to engage with alumni and ‘real-life’ exposure to industry are rated very highly. In response, the Alumni team works closely with the Career & Skills Development Service to offer a range of ways for alumni to meet current students and help them prepare for employment.

The Professional Mentoring Scheme is one of the University’s outstanding success stories. Here Kenneth Emeka Okoroafor (BSc Economics and Accountancy, 2005) explains why he has volunteered as a mentor for the past five years:

“I moved from London to Singapore in 2010 and was eager to expand my network. I contacted the Alumni team but there wasn’t an Ambassador for the area organising any local activity. I volunteered so I could give something back.

“The year I had at City was the most intense of my two-year course yet the most rewarding, both academically and professionally. I was lucky enough to find an internship in a company near the main campus, which turned out to be the company I am still with more than eight years later. The Careers Service at City gave me a lot of valuable advice, both as a student and after my graduation.

“I absolutely plan to continue mentoring for the foreseeable future. “I see it as an opportunity to solve problems. And nothing beats solving problems that change lives using what I know and the resources around me.”

Could you mentor a current City student? Inspiring, dedicated mentors are crucial to the success of the Mentoring Scheme at City. To find out more, please email professionalmentoring@city.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 207 040 0288.

Insight into Industry

Our Insight into Industry Scheme offers City’s most proactive students an opportunity to shadow professionals who have specific knowledge about the occupation or career in which they are interested. This is a competitive scheme where students apply for a place and complete a series of assessments and training tasks. This helps ensure we send the brightest and best students who are prepared to make the most of your valuable time.

We recognise that, in some cases, it can be difficult to arrange structured work experience so we have devised various ways for you to get involved, from hosting a few days of work shadowing in your office to holding a short meeting at City.

For more information about the Insight into Industry scheme, please email industryinsights@city.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 207 040 8425.
Throughout its history, City University London has been the recipient of significant donations from many former students, staff, trusts, foundations, corporate entities and the City’s Livery Companies. City is extremely grateful for this support which has helped to change the lives of many. In increasingly challenging financial times, the University needs such generous support more than ever. Those wishing to donate can help to provide scholarships and bursaries, fund world-changing research or help us to develop our estate.

**Fundraising**

**Hyams Bursary boost for DLIS**

Throughout its history, City University London has been the recipient of significant donations from many former students, staff, trusts, foundations, corporate entities and the City’s Livery Companies. City is extremely grateful for this support which has helped to change the lives of many. In increasingly challenging financial times, the University needs such generous support more than ever. Those wishing to donate can help to provide scholarships and bursaries, fund world-changing research or help us to develop our estate.

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April saw Cass Business School enter into a Corporate Partnership with Tullett Prebon Information (TPI), a leading global provider of financial market data. The aim is to collaborate on research into comparative regulation of over-the-counter (OTC) markets, which will then be made available to the wider industry.

Professor Steven Haberman, Dean of Cass Business School, said: “Our collaborations provide our students with the best opportunities for the future, while building bridges with the world of business and providing practitioner expertise, perspective and input.”

Students electing to conduct research into aspects of the OTC markets will have access to TPI’s proprietary data and its support teams.

Frank Desmond, CEO at TPI, said: “We look forward to fuelling studies that could shape future industry developments. We welcome the chance to work closely with the faculty and student body at Cass. We’ll also offer an internship programme at TPI.”

The Corporate Partnership scheme at Cass has been designed to be relevant and address the specific business needs of world class organisations using the School’s academic and practitioner expertise. The scheme is suited to a wide range of market sectors and industries.

Benefits to Corporate Partners include: dedicated support in identifying new talent and skills; bespoke and off-the-shelf Executive Education and Management Development courses, at discounted rates, for employees; access to a wealth of leading academic research and capability; and multiple opportunities to attend high-profile events, with leading speakers, at Cass and City.

Students benefit from exposure to real-world markets, leading to the further development of skills and talent across the sector. Some of our established Corporate Partners include City, BNY Mellon, Czarnikow, Generali, Santander and Threadneedle Asset Management.

**If you would like to find out more about Corporate Partnerships, please contact Ruth Velenski, Head of Corporate Development: +44 (0)20 7040 5251; ruth.velenski.1@city.ac.uk.**

**Hyams Bursary boost for DLIS**

City’s Department of Library and Information Science (DLIS) has received a generous grant of £100,000 from the estate of the late Montagu ‘Monty’ Hyams.

The funds will go towards an annual bursary for a student on the Department’s longstanding MSc in Information Science and are aimed at encouraging applicants with first degrees in science.

Hyams, who died in 2013, was the founder of Derwent Publications, now part of Thomson Reuters. For four decades, Derwent was at the forefront of the dissemination of scientific information with a particular focus on patents and pharmaceuticals. There have been many links between the company and City.

The grant will also assist in maintaining the Hyams Archive. City’s Centre for Information Science has taken responsibility for maintaining the archive, which gives an insight into a period of rapid change in communication with printed publications becoming digital and migrating to the internet.

Funding for the bursary and maintenance of the archive have been provided by way of Monty’s sons, Peter and Stephen Hyams (pictured). Stephen is a City alumnus, having studied on the MSc in Information Science in the 1980s. The archive and bursary are being managed within the DLIS by Dr Lyn Robinson and Professor David Bawden.

**If you would like to find out more about shaping City’s future through a gift in your Will, a Trust or an individual donation, please contact Tanya Bukvic, Head of Individual Giving: +44 (0)20 7040 5220; tanya.bukvic@city.ac.uk.**

**City Magazine**
Anna Pantelia, pictured in the Silent Study area in the main University Library.
Considered one of the most promising documentary photographers of her generation, Greek photojournalist Anna Pantelia came to City last year to study a Masters and enhance her career prospects. From the Large Hadron Collider at CERN to her homeland’s troubles with immigration and racism, her skill at encapsulating complex stories in a single image is evident. Chris Lines sat down with Anna to hear about her work in photography to date and the path that led her to City.

Louder than words

In February this year, the influential photographic agency Magnum Photos announced a ‘30 Under 30’ list identifying emerging photographers aged 18 to 30, with the aim of recognising and providing a platform for burgeoning photographic talent. Among them was City MA student Anna Pantelia.

“It was the most important thing that’s ever happened to me,” she says. “I could never have imagined this happening – it really means a lot.”

Magnum, founded in 1947 by some of the world’s leading photographers as an ‘international photographic cooperative’ and owned by its photographer-members, is seen as a standard bearer in documentary photography. For 23-year-old Anna, a ringing endorsement from those she most admires means everything to her. It’s also a clear indicator of her potential and the latest step in her fledgling career. But even before Magnum drew attention to her talent, Anna had already had some remarkable experiences behind the lens.

Early days

In her home country of Greece, there is a tradition at the end of high school for students to embark on a five-day trip. Most students partake in this rite of passage but Anna had other ideas. “I said to my dad, ‘I don’t want you to pay for me to go on this trip. Can you give me this money to put towards a new camera instead?’”. Up to that point I had been taking photographs with a pocket camera.” Her father relented and bought his daughter a Canon SLR.

“It was a very good camera to have when I was only 16 or 17,” she says. “Normally someone of such a young age would never have such high-quality equipment. I remember my mother saying to my father, ‘If she asks for a Ferrari are you going to buy her one of those, too?’”

Although her father was a keen amateur photographer, Anna taught herself the basics of photography by experimenting with the camera. She took to it like a natural and was quickly producing art photography of a sufficient standard that it was published at a small exhibition in Athens for new artists. Her interest suitably stimulated, she opted to study for a BA in Photography and Audiovisual Arts at the Technological Educational Institute of Athens.

Heading to CERN

“My family thought I should do something else,” she says. “My marks were way higher than the entry requirements and they worried I might be wasting the good grades I had achieved.” Architecture and physics were both suggested to Anna as alternatives. These conversations led to her father arranging for her to meet a customer of his, who worked in the University of Athens’ Faculty of Physics. While the physicist failed to change Anna’s mind, it nonetheless proved to be a fortuitous encounter.

“We later spoke again and he asked if I would be interested in coming to...
work as a photographer at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, where he was working as part of the Greek team.”

Anna expressed her interest but assumed her father’s customer was just making polite conversation. She sent him her cv and subsequently received an application form that she completed and returned. A letter later arrived on 2nd April confirming she had a place at CERN, conditional on passing her final examinations. “I wondered if it was an April Fools’ joke that had been delayed in the post,” she recalls.

By chance, while Anna was busy revising in the last few days before her finals, news broke that the Higgs-Boson particle (often referred to as the ‘God particle’ and long considered the missing piece in the jigsaw for physicists trying to understand how the universe works) had been discovered at CERN’s £6.2 billion Large Hadron Collider (LHC). It was one of the most significant discoveries in the history of particle physics, not to mention the biggest story ever to come out of CERN. “The news was everywhere, all the professors were giving interviews on television,” she says, recalling the intense distraction of wall-to-wall coverage for an organisation she was tantalisingly close to working for.

“I couldn’t believe it, because if I didn’t pass the examinations then I wouldn’t be able to go to CERN.”

Thankfully she did pass and was initially taken on for a two-month paid internship as a photographer at CERN. She proved a popular and hard-working addition to the team and was subsequently hired for a further year as Official Photographer. With CERN enjoying a well-earned shutdown after its momentous discovery, Anna had the freedom to visit (and photograph) absolutely everything, including all 27km of the Large Hadron Collider. Nothing was off limits and she was able to put together a remarkable body of work, at times using a bicycle to expedite travel along the lengthy tunnel housing the LHC.

She would also be posted to cover events such as open days, concerts and, most memorably, the visits of VIPs to CERN. Professor Stephen Hawking and actor Morgan Freeman are two that Anna picks out, with Freeman even taking time to quiz her on her background and her photography. “He was very friendly, not like a VIP at all.”

A friend working at a Greek national agency asked if she could interview Anna about her experiences. Anna agreed to help as a favour and neither of them thought any more of it. The day the interview was published, Anna was on holiday in Israel when she suddenly started getting telephone calls from Greek national television and radio stations. They all wanted to talk to the young Greek woman working at CERN.

“I got so much attention and all because of a single article,” she says. “This helped me to understand how the media works. It’s all about whether you are lucky, whether somebody will discover you or write something complimentary about you.” The realisation that she needed to become more media-savvy would soon lead her to City.

Refugees and racial tension in Greece

Anna’s experiences at CERN gave the media a feel-good angle they could work with. The same however cannot be said of the photojournalism she had produced prior to CERN. Having started her degree at the same time as the global financial crisis was enveloping her country, she saw her peers becoming increasingly xenophobic, even racist, as the jobs market dried up and desperation started to creep in. She paints a bleak picture of a country in turmoil.

“Greece has a history of its people migrating to other countries, such as Australia and Germany, so we were always sympathetic to other people coming here,” she says. “Greeks didn’t have any racism in their blood, but as the crisis boomed from 2008 to 2012, things changed quickly. Some 52 per cent of young people in Greece are unemployed nowadays and 26 per cent of the total population. This all happened within a few short years and people had no explanation for it. This is why racism started; people needed somebody to blame for their problems and, of course, people don’t blame themselves.”

In 2012, during the Greek national elections, the far-right political party Golden Dawn gained unprecedented support from the Greek electorate, garnering seven per cent of votes, enough for the party to enter the Hellenic Parliament for the first time with 21 seats. Plainly this was not an easy time to be an immigrant in Greece.

“The situation continued to get worse, partly because Greece couldn’t keep its borders secure,” says Anna. “Most immigrants have no legal documents, so it’s difficult for the authorities to even ascertain where they come from if they did want to send them back. All
the group and later visited him at a kiosk in Athens who, despite their own difficult situations, were selling falafel to raise funds to leave. They got around border controls by arriving by boat up a river. They then walked all the way from northern Greece to Athens. “It’s impressive to learn these stories,” says Anna.

Anna went with her camera to visit an old building with no windows or doors, where refugees from Syria were living. Some families were very welcoming and wanted to have their stories told, but as she left a man was screaming at her from the balcony. “He was angry and yelling that the BBC had come, CNN had come, people always took photographs and videos but yet nothing had changed with their situation in months,” she says. “I wish I had more time to enjoy their teaching. I particularly admire Dr Carolina Matos; she’s a very dynamic woman. She has taught me a lot about how media can make a positive difference in developing countries.”

Anna realised while working at CERN that it is communications professionals, not photographers, who plan photographic assignments and make decisions about what gets published. Studying communication would allow her to work for a wider range of employers, from brands to charities and NGOs.

“Ideally I would like to work for an NGO or charity as a communications officer and photographer. I would like to do both, even more than pure photography, because as a photographer you can sometimes feel like a tool. I want to have an input into the direction, the communication strategies and techniques.”

She is benefitting from a year studying at City, which has included being shortlisted in the Student Photographer of the Year category in The Guardian Student Media Awards 2014. “There are some very good professors at City,” she says. “Opportunities for photojournalists are not good in the UK, especially if you plan photographic assignments and make decisions about what gets published. Studying communication would allow her to work for a wider range of employers, from brands to charities and NGOs.

Learning valuable skills at City

While the photographs Anna took of the immigrants were also those submitted to Magnum and subsequently exhibited at The Photography Show at Birmingham NEC in March this year, she had struggled to get Greek media to pay attention to her work. In contrast to the clamour to interview her when she was at CERN, the miserable circumstances of refugees were not a subject the Greek media wanted to present to their audience. Anna, growing somewhat cynical of the workings of mass media, knew she needed to get under the skin of how media and communication works. She needed to box clever if she was to achieve her ultimate aim of using her photography to make a difference.

London seemed like an ideal destination, loaded as it is with media companies, communications agencies and third-sector organisations. And City had the perfect course to offer, a Masters degree in International Communication and Development. She successfully applied and started the course last autumn.

A former editor of business and consumer titles, 2003 Periodical Journalism alumnus Chris Lines is Publications Officer at City and the Editor of City Magazine.

Anna became acutely aware of the immigrants’ plight. Rejected by the society around them, they often occupied abandoned buildings, living in squalor and unable to find work or the better life they craved. Yet many doubtless viewed their situation as preferable to the one they had fled in their homeland but were forced to leave. They got around border controls by arriving by boat up a river. They then walked all the way from northern Greece to Athens. “It’s impressive to learn these stories,” says Anna.

They were mainly Syrian and Palestinian immigrants of a similar age to me, 20 to 25. These people came from their countries more or less on foot.” Many of those she met had been students in their homeland but were forced to leave. They got around border controls by arriving by boat up a river. They then walked all the way from northern Greece to Athens. “It’s impressive to learn these stories,” says Anna.

She went with her camera to visit an old building with no windows or doors, where refugees from Syria were living. Some families were very welcoming and wanted to have their stories told, but as she left a man was screaming at her from the balcony. “He was angry and yelling that the BBC had come, CNN had come, people always took photographs and videos but yet nothing had changed with their situation in months,” she says.

Anna got to know some of the immigrants quite well. She met a group of Syrians at a kiosk in Athens who, despite their own difficult situations, were selling falafel to raise funds to send back home. She befriended one of the group and later visited him at a building where a community of Syrians were living. “The next day I messaged him and asked how he was. After several hours came the reply: ‘Good morning, I am in Sweden’. He hadn’t mentioned anything the previous day. Some immigrants have no option but to travel illegally, so they don’t want anybody to know. They try to escape and sometimes they manage to do it.”

Anna Pantelia
In this year’s edition of Five to Watch, we meet graduates going places in the worlds of optometry, television news, engineering, management consultancy and law.

Abbas Asaria
BSc OPTOMETRY, 2007

Abbas enjoyed studying in the heart of London while at City, not least being surrounded by dynamic personalities and “inspirational” academic staff. “I just knew I wanted still to be part of that even after graduating and that determination led me to where I am today,” he says.

After qualifying, Abbas initially worked as a freelance optometrist to allow him to explore his career options. It led him back to City as a Clinical Tutor and he went on to become a Clinical Skills Tutor and Lead Clinician. He has since joined leading optical equipment manufacturer Topcon as a Clinical Affairs Specialist and currently holds the position of Area Sales Manager and Product Specialist.

He cites showing his gratitude to City with the incorporation of a fully sponsored and equipped Teaching Suite and a personal acknowledgement from the Dean as the highlight of his career so far. His aims are to help the next generation of eye practitioners, become involved in global product development and “help revolutionise the way eye care is perceived and practised through modern advances in automated technology”.

Arthy Ravichandran
MEng AERONAUTICAL ENGINEERING, 2011

Arthy started her career at GKN plc as an International Leadership Development Programme member. As part of her programme she had secondments in the UK, India and USA in areas of engineering, purchasing and programme management.

She joined the Aerospace Growth Partnership (AGP) team in September 2014 as Programme Manager. The AGP has led to a step change in the relationship between government and industry, while encouraging UK companies to cooperate more closely in addressing problems that affect the sector as a whole.

Managing a busy schedule while studying at City taught Arthy how to manage her time effectively. The management training she received also helped her gain an understanding of the business environment, preparing her as an eligible graduate for any company.

Arthy says: “Most of my lecturers had a great industrial and research background and hence could relate the lessons to current problems faced by the industry. They would force you to think outside the box in every aspect and would encourage you throughout the whole course.”

Her ambitions for the future are to continue on the path she has started and to play an important role in developing the AGP and UK aerospace.
Hilary Moore

EXECUTIVE MBA, 2011

Hilary is now a Communication Specialist at international management consultancy McKinsey & Company. “I support their clients and consultants with a huge range of challenges – I love it,” she says.

Hilary did an Executive MBA at Cass Business School, which she describes as being fun, stimulating and satisfying. She says: “I graduated with four powerful benefits: insight, network, confidence and prestige. Regarding insight, I understood every element of business on a strategic level. Through networking, I left with a powerful web of contacts and friends throughout London’s business scene. In terms of confidence, I left with raised ambitions and belief in my ability to create change. And in terms of prestige, an MBA from such a good school definitely helps open doors.”

Other highlights of her career include being a concert harpist, doing an MA and PhD in the USA, completing a year's volunteer work in Africa and becoming a published author.

In her spare time Hilary is forming a non-profit organisation called Brave, Strong Girls which creates and sells children's books with strong girl characters. The proceeds will go towards empowering and educating girls in the developing world.

Roy Appiah

LAW LLB, 2012

Roy is an associate in the litigation department at Clifford Chance LLP. He qualified in February and is currently working on several commercial disputes. Prior to qualifying in litigation he completed stints in private equity (where he worked on the purchase of We Buy Any Car by British Car Auctions), general banking and asset finance (where he had the unique experience of going to the Airbus facility in Toulouse and overseeing the purchase of an aircraft for a client).

During his time at City, he mentored students from a pupil referral unit, was a course representative and was nominated student graduation speaker. “The thing these roles all have in common,” he says, “is that I found each daunting and thought I might not be equipped with the ability to succeed in them. The main benefits from my time at City were being encouraged to do things outside my comfort zone and understanding when to ask for help, which established a desire constantly to seek ways to become a better version of myself.”

Roy’s life goal is to make a difference. The manifestation of this as a career goal is to identify the sector of law that he is extremely passionate about and become one of the leading litigators acting in that field. He aspires to work on cases that interpret and shape the law in that sector.

Rhiannon Mills

PG Dip BROADCAST JOURNALISM, 2002

Rhiannon has worked for Sky News since 2010 and at the start of the year became the channel's Royal Correspondent. It has proved to be a busy first few months. She reported from Davos on allegations made in America against Prince Andrew, went to Japan to follow Prince William and most recently travelled to New Zealand on a tour with Prince Harry.

She says that broadcasting live on the birth of Princess Charlotte was “an amazing buzz”, while securing a world exclusive interview with Prince Harry, about his future away from the army and his desire to have children, proved to be an enormous scoop.

After completing a History degree at Leeds University in 2001, her postgraduate course at City gave Rhiannon the chance to focus on her ambitions to enter journalism. Media law training was essential and she gained great contacts in the industry. Her first full-time job was at Hereward FM and offered a chance to put into practice all the skills she’d developed at City.

“From reporting on the Soham murders to the Rolf Harris trial, flooding in the West Country to the phone-hacking scandal, I’ve certainly had a varied career to date,” she says.
Flavours of City
City University London is not short of entrepreneurial alumni who have rolled up their sleeves to launch startup businesses in the competitive but exciting world of food and drink. For starters, ex-Business Studies students Matthias Gilles, Olympia de Proyart and Jules Couten founded pop-up style restaurant Flambée, which celebrates the traditional Alsatian and South German dish *tarte flambée*. Meanwhile, Economics graduate Garvin Bhangu quit his job in Dubai with Deloitte last year to take charge of London-based Fusion Catering and Fusion Rasoi, two bespoke catering companies gaining a distinguished reputation for their Asian-influenced cuisines. And then there’s 23-year-old Peter Honegger, who launched Austrian wine store Newcomer Wines in trendy Shoreditch pop-up shopping centre Boxpark while studying at Cass Business School.

But perhaps the biggest success story is that of former hedge fund manager and City University London alumnus Niall MacArthur who, together with his wife Faith, founded award-winning sandwich chain empire Eat in 1996. Starting with their first outlet close to Charing Cross railway station, the predominantly London-focused business has mushroomed into a network of more than 100 branches across the country. Eat sells 6.5 million cups of coffee a year. It is proof, if it were needed, that mighty oaks do indeed grow from little acorns.

With this in mind, *City Magazine* caught up with four former students to hear why they chose to take the plunge and dive into the food and drink industry.

James Dawson, *Humble Grape*

By his own admission, former Cass Business School MBA student James Dawson has always been fascinated with wine. Besotted even. The 41-year-old is what’s known as an *oenophile*. “I really love the product and I’m so passionate about it,” he explains at the Canada Square headquarters of his boutique wine merchant and tasting event business Humble Grape. “The romance of the industry and the vineyards really grabs me. I’m...”
totally obsessed with wine and learning more about it.” It was while working in the City six years ago that he decided to import 20 cases of wine and organise informal wine tastings in his dining room. The next day he would strap the bottles he sold the previous night to his motorbike and crisscross London delivering his cargo before commencing work. Yet this moonlighting left some friends and family members a little bemused. “A lot of people said to me ‘you’re an MBA at a FTSE 100 company and getting paid really well so why are you working evenings and weekends doing these wine tastings to earn just £75?’”

But this wine connoisseur remained undeterred: after establishing Humble Grape with £10,000, he rented a warehouse and imported wines directly from France. He also organised tastings for financial institutions, law firms and tech startups. Indeed the corporate market, which accounts for around 40 per cent of revenue, insulated the fledgling business from the prolonged economic maelstrom. “People were concerned about buying wine when they had mortgages to pay. It was definitely tough. We wouldn’t have survived 2012 and 2013 were it not for the corporate events.”

Today, Humble Grape employs six people and imports wines from 54 family-owned vineyards across seven countries. Dawson recently raised over £500,000 in capital, including £360,000 from equity crowdfunding site Seedrs. Most has been ploughed into creating a Humble Grape wine bar and shop in Battersea Rise (opening in July 2015), alongside a subscription-based wine club whereby a ‘vinotyping’ algorithm selects wines to suit members’ palates based on questionnaires. “We’ll have about £50,000 left after the wine bar opens, so for the first six months we’ll try to break even and keep the lights on – it’s pretty hairy.”

For now though, Dawson, who moved to London in 1997 from South Africa and now lives with his wife and four-year-old twin girls in Clapham, doesn’t regret swapping finance for fine wines. Indeed, he credits Cass for giving him the impetus to take the plunge. “I met a bunch of people there who were thirsty to set up businesses and who thought anything was possible. Cass gives you the confidence that you can just go out and do it.”

Htet Myet Oo, Rangoon Tea House

Htet Myet Oo had long yearned to resettle in his homeland of Burma – a country he left at four when his parents, both doctors, migrated to the UK. And that urge intensified for the City Economics graduate at the turn of the decade when the Southeast Asian country began to open up economically and politically. “People have an image of Burma that it’s a third-world country, there’s poverty and it’s violent. But it’s really not like that here,” Myet Oo explains.

The 25-year-old grafted 20 hours a day for six months in order to launch his co-owned upmarket teahouse in the steamy commercial capital Yangon, formerly known as Rangoon. “I’ve always loved food [his Instagram account showcases a cornucopia of international cuisine from his travels] and when I came back here in the past I would get food poisoning quite regularly because of the way food is sold here on the street and the chemicals used. There was no place selling Burmese food to the level of Indian or Italian food in the UK, so there was a big gap in the market.”

Teahouses are an institution in Burma – typically down-at-heel venues with an assortment of plastic chairs and stools spilling onto the pavement. However, the more salubrious Rangoon Tea House, situated in a historic, colonial building, caters for a burgeoning middle class and the steady influx of foreigners, including diplomatic staff (the American and British ambassadors have visited).

Myet Oo admits to being very much hands-on, spending seven days a week at the teahouse, which opened its doors in November 2014 and can accommodate up to 75 diners. He employs over 40 kitchen, bar and floor staff and two permanent electricians because the city is plagued by intermittent power cuts during the summer months. In fact, the teahouse’s back-up generator blew up on the day Myet Oo spoke to City Magazine.

“Being able to improvise and make decisions on the spot are your biggest assets in Burma – Htet Myet Oo”

“Being able to improvise and make decisions on the spot is your biggest learning curve”. Ultimately, though, the goal is a chain of Rangoon Tea Houses in Yangon and abroad. “In four or five years I’d love to open this in the UK.” Don’t bet against him doing just that.

Carmel McConnell, Magic Breakfast

It’s not often a boss candidly admits to wanting to see their enterprise put out of business. But that’s exactly the mindset of Carmel McConnell, founder of charity Magic Breakfast, which provides free, nutritious breakfasts – porridge, cereals, fresh fruit and bagels – to 17,000 children in 440 schools. “We absolutely plan to solve this problem and make sure there is no child hunger in our schools at all in five years – we want to put ourselves out of business,” she states emphatically.

But McConnell, who completed an MBA at City in 1993, certainly isn’t resting on her laurels, especially with 300 schools currently on the waiting list – the highest since she established Magic Breakfast in 2003. “This is a poverty problem,” she explains. “Very often parents are working long hours in low income jobs and their costs are higher than their income. Plus there is a lack of food knowledge and skills in some families, as well as fairly chaotic homes. Kids are hit by this triple whammy.”

McConnell was first alerted to the issue while penning a book about creating a fairer society. As part of her research,
she visited schools in London’s East End and probed the teachers on egalitarianism in society. “Their response was ‘well, we’re bringing in food for hungry kids so what does that tell you?’ It was pretty shocking that children close to my offices in Liverpool Street were too hungry to learn.” Moved by their plight, McConnell took it upon herself to deliver bagels to five schools for the next 12 months. And her altruism immediately led to tangible improvements, with teachers noting better attendance, punctuality, concentration and behaviour. Inspired by the impact the food was having, she founded Magic Breakfast. “I realised the cavalry wasn’t coming to save these kids, so the best way was for me to crack on myself.” Commercial partnerships with Quaker Oats and Tropicana later allowed Magic Breakfast to expand from 50 to 180 schools. Today, the charity has 34 core corporate partners and has passed the milestone of doling out six million healthy breakfasts.

Yet McConnell, whose varied cv includes everything from management consultant to anti-nuclear protestor, shows no sign of slowing down. “This is what I live and breathe.” For her it’s simple: hunger shouldn’t be a barrier to education. “The education system in this country is excellent and these kids will do well, but they won’t if they are going hungry.”

Keith Abel, Abel & Cole

In the summer of 1988, Keith Abel needed a job and so hatched a curious plan to buy a bulk-load of potatoes from Covent Garden Market and go knocking on doors around South London selling them in 10lb bags. It begs the question: had Abel astutely spied a major gap in the market? “No, I just didn’t want to work in a bar,” the 51-year-old recalls with a smile.

As well as convincing friend Paul Cole to go into business with him, Abel, a 1992 graduate of The City Law School (then known as the Inns of Court School of Law), says his mother helped with the selling and his father bought him a pick-up truck to replace his spluttering £300 Sherpa van. However, it was when he met a Devon farmer who informed him of the concoction of chemicals sprayed on Abel’s potatoes that he decided to switch to organic, agrochemical-free spuds. That pivotal decision spawned the Essential Organic Veg Box.

“It was a bloody good product,” he says. “You knew exactly how many customers were ordering so you could get farmers to grow stuff for you and cut it straight away. It was all nice and fresh and there weren’t lots of middlemen.” This was at a time when consumers were taking an increasing interest in food provenance and organic was perceived as somewhat trendy. Indeed, many of Abel’s early customers were a mixture of journalists and, as he describes them, “it people”.

To reduce costs, the trio were themselves handling telephone orders, orchestrating delivery distribution routes and doing all the marketing. Partly through word of mouth, the business began to snowball. And by the mid-1990s, turnover was £3 million a year. Then the internet arrived. “It was really an internet business set up waiting for the internet,” says Abel.

Cole left the company (amicably) in the 1990s, but Abel’s eponymous operation soon expanded into organic and ethically sourced meat, fish, poultry, dairy and all manner of household items. Today Abel & Cole boasts an annual turnover of around £75 million, handles 80,000 weekly deliveries and employs almost 1,000 people across the company’s 12 depots. “The business just wants to keep getting better at what it does,” Abel says. “It’s still very healthy, with double-digit growth.”

“We plan to make sure there is no child hunger in our schools at all in five years – we want to put ourselves out of business” – Carmel McConnell

To find out more about the companies founded by the four alumni profiled in this article, visit:

www.humblegrape.co.uk
www.facebook.com/RangoonTeaHouse
www.magicbreakfast.com
www.abelandcole.co.uk
Looking back
Since the late 19th century, Optometry has been taught at City. George Wigmore takes a look back at Optometry’s proud history at the University and considers the outstanding contribution of Professor Robert J Fletcher to its success.

Our eyes, and the sight they afford us, are one of the most fundamental aspects of what makes us human. From the everyday world, to art and the environment, vision is vital. For over 100 years academics at City have been striving to find out more about our incredible optical system in health and disease, helping hundreds of thousands of people see again in the process.

One of the oldest establishments to educate opticians in the world, the relationship between City and Optometry began in 1896 with the incorporation of optometry teaching from Finsbury Technical College, which had started offering it 10 years earlier.

Optometry at the Northampton Institute developed further in 1898 when the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers offered to pay the salary of an instructor in visual optics, but it was several years later in 1903 with the foundation of the Technical Optics department that the Northampton Institute (itself founded nine years earlier) developed a significant presence in the area.

Initially founded with the objective of promoting ‘the industrial skill, general knowledge, health and well-being of young men and women belonging to the poorer classes’, the addition of optics to the original suite of courses made sense considering the Institute’s proximity to many of the optical businesses in the City and provided an important service to Clerkenwell and the City of London with its offer of a strong technical education.

A core component of research and education from the outset, its creation heralded the real start of City’s important contribution to the study of optometry, with 75 students enrolling for the first opticians’ evening class in 1903, including the first course in sight testing. Full-time classes then started the next year, with around 200 students across all three years taught in the early days.

In 1927, the Institute built on this foundation with the establishment of the Department of Optometry and Visual Sciences, subsequently becoming one of the first establishments in the world to educate optometrists – something which remains to this day as City is still the only institution in London to offer a BSc in Optometry.

Henri Obstfeld, a City staff member and alumnus, who worked for many years at the University’s Optical Appliance Testing Service testing high street glasses and sunglasses until his retirement last year, also remembers the University from a different time.

“Twas a student here in 1961, so that was my first stint at City. I’ve been in and out over the years,” says Obstfeld. “I studied Optometry in the College Building upstairs at the...”
Professor Robert J Fletcher’s achievements were celebrated this summer with a symposium at City marking his 90th birthday.

Another figure who has gone on to play a prominent role in the optometry world is Robert Roope, a 1962 alumnus, who, inspired by his love of eyewear in the jazz era and dissatisfaction at the badly made and poorly designed spectacles on the high street, created Black Eyewear. Since the creation of the company, Robert’s designs have become extremely popular and are worn by celebrities ranging from Lady Gaga to Will I Am.

More recently, the development of optometry at City continues, as after 15 years at Bath Street the Fight for Sight optometry clinics are moving to a new home on Northampton Square in the Tait Building. The new clinics are due to be handed over to the University mid-August and will open to the public around the beginning of October. The move is very exciting for the Department, not just because the facilities will all be on one floor, but for the first time the clinics will be on the main University site providing ready access to eye care for staff, students, alumni and local residents. Offering thousands of free eye examinations and contact lens fittings every year, the clinics will continue to offer a valued service to the community and also training to our students.

One of these students is Dhruvin Patel. Graduating this summer from the BSc Optometry course first established by Professor Fletcher, Patel has during his time at City developed an innovative product called OcuShield.

Winning the CitySpark competition for student innovation in 2014, OcuShield is a blue light screen that protects your eyes and aids sleep by cutting out the blue light transmittance from electronic devices, as such frequencies are known to cause eye strain, fatigue and increase the likelihood of eye diseases.

“Studying at City meant I could utilise my Optometry background and the Department’s help in developing OcuShield as well as calling on Cass Business School’s expertise,” says Patel. “Winning CitySpark in 2014, with a prize fund of £3,500 and the amazing support of the CityStarters team meant I had all the ingredients to launch my business and take it from strength to strength.”

Launched in January, OcuShield is stocked in over a dozen opticians and sells on one of the largest UK stocked in over a dozen opticians and websites and Amazon. This summer sees Patel working full-time on the business as he aims to extend his product range and he will begin his pre-registration as an optometrist in August.

As a result, with Patel and other young optometrists coming through, City is in great hands as it continues to deliver the best possible research and eye care to people in the UK and around the world, building on the legacy of Professor Fletcher and those innovative optometrists who paved the way at City University London and the Northampton Institute before it.
University is a life-changing experience for all students, both through education and through the relationships which are forged and strengthened. In this article four alumni explain the role that City has played in their families.

Binnie and Paul Barnes
Lynda ‘Binnie’ Barnes (Psychology with Nursing Studies and Registered Nurse training at St Bartholomew’s School of Nursing and Midwifery, 1987) met her husband Paul (Mechanical Engineering, 1988) at City. They have four children, including daughter Maddie who has applied to study Computer Science with Games Technology at City from September. Binnie says:

“Back in the 1980s the ‘brand-name’ hospitals in London for training were ‘Tommy’s’, ‘Guy’s’ and ‘Bart’s’ [St Bartholomew’s was incorporated into City in 1995]. My course compacted three years nursing tuition with a degree over a total of four years and four months. I preferred that to the idea of a nursing degree, which were still very new then.

Most of our lectures were in the College Building. I remember getting lost over and over again on the spiral staircase, never quite working out the floor numbering. I also remember the magnificent swimming pool.

I found Shorinji Kempo, a martial art, in my second year at university. Paul started the year after, when a mutual friend suggested it was a good place to find me. We’d train in Kempo on Wednesday afternoons for two hours then head to Saddlers Bar for the next four. We both went on to get our black belts and then teach Shorinji Kempo. Paul ran the club at City for 10 years after he graduated and we even won...
City’s ‘Sports Club of the Year’. We both still practice Shorinji Kempo and Maddie is now a blue belt.

I have had a varied career, including setting up a consultancy business with Paul, Beaumont Barnes Ltd, working on NHS re-structures and the closure of the Audit Commission. I am now about to start a new job as a cardiac rehabilitation research nurse and Paul will be going to Doha for five months on a new health project.

I would recommend City to anyone who wants a London life and an outward-facing university that can help you achieve a global career. As parents now, Paul and I are aware that the best job opportunities may exist abroad and it is therefore very important to us that our children have relevant skills. We insist they study a language to at least ‘AS’ Level. When you get to university, you then have to be proactive in networking. The trick is to join clubs and societies that will bring you in touch with a range of other people.

I think the main difference between my experience of applying to University and Maddie’s is that there is so much information to sift through now. We as parents can help Maddie look through it and weigh up the pros and cons, whereas Paul and I didn’t get any help from our parents; we were the first generation to go to university.

I still keep in touch with most of the other nurses on my course – we were a close-knit group. The Alumni Office helped me to organise a reunion a few years ago. Of the twelve nurses on my course, five of us met our future husbands at City.”

Bronwyn and Roesheen Cosgrave

Bronwyn Cosgrave (International Journalism, 1993) recommended City to her sister Roesheen Cosgrave (Finance MBA, 1996). Bronwyn is now working as an author, curator, consultant and journalist in the US. Roesheen is Director of Investment Banking at UBS. Bronwyn says:

“Roesheen and I grew up in Toronto but I felt it was vital to attend a journalism school outside Canada to gain an international perspective. This is why I chose City: it is based in London, the centre of the world. My classes were great. I was on a one-year course and so it was all very direct and ‘get on with it’; just what journalism is about.

When I first moved to London I shared a flat in Hampstead with another journalist. I then moved to London House, a residence for Commonwealth graduate students, where my sister also lived when she was studying at Cass Business School.

I was very lucky and got a full-time job while still at City but was then made redundant. I started freelancing and that was the making of me. I’m an active mentor today, especially to young women as I know how difficult it is to get started. Last year, the Alumni Office connected Roesheen and me with a student who was looking for some professional advice. She has since gone on to complete the MA Magazine Journalism course at City.

At the moment, a production design exhibition I co-curated, Designing 007: Fifty Years of Bond Style, is touring the world and has just opened in Madrid. It will open in Paris in the autumn. I am also a contributing editor to Vogue India and the UK edition of Town & Country. I owe my diverse career to City. I have applied the skills I learnt from my course, which was so rigorous and methodical, to many different projects over the years.”

Jenny and Colin Chilton

Jenny Chilton (Optometry, 1976) met her husband Colin (Ophthalmic Optics, 1974) at City, as did her mother Brenda Hiorns (Optometry, 1953) and father Tom Bond (also Optometry, 1953). Jenny says:

“My parents met at what was then the Northampton Institute. I applied to City not only because they had studied there but also because it was considered to be the best university for optics and I wanted to live in London for a few years.

I have lots of fond memories of City. Colin and I both lived in Northampton Hall for the three years of the course, but as Colin was two years ahead of me, we only lived there together for one year. However, as he remained in London after leaving City, he was around so often that many people assumed he was still a student. He even got an invitation to one of the ‘formal dinners’, which were held monthly by the tutors. I also remember several parties in what was known as the ‘BCR’ (Balcony Common Room) at Northampton Hall.

We still keep in touch with our friends from City. There is a group of about seven of us who have met for a weekend
every year for over 30 years. We have been all over the UK for our weekends and also to Paris, Berlin and Barcelona. Our children are in their twenties and thirties now so they don’t come with us anymore, but they do have their own get-togethers.

My mother sadly passed away in 1995 but my dad still meets up with his friends. They call themselves “the first of the thirds”, in reference to the fact they were the first year when Optics became a three-year course.”

Len and Tom Tyler

Len Tyler (Business Systems Analysis and Design, 1987) is proud that his son Tom (Professional Legal Skills, 2010) followed his footsteps into City. Len says:

“In 1986 my then employer, the British Council, was looking for staff to train in IT. I was in Africa at the time working on aid projects, but I took and passed an aptitude test and was given a year off to do an MSc. The British Council had already researched courses and told me to apply to City. I never questioned their wisdom at the time or subsequently.

I was fortunate that City happened to be my local university. I could walk in every morning, which was great but also meant I never had a decent excuse for being late for a lecture.

After City I went back to the British Council as planned and ran its small systems department for some time before becoming Director of Office Systems and Telecommunications. This was considered, for some reason, excellent experience to qualify me for the post of Cultural Attaché in Copenhagen, which is what I did next. Later I left the British Council and became Chief Executive of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. After that I wrote crime novels and am now Chair of the Crime Writers Association. I can’t complain that I haven’t had a varied career.

I wasn’t surprised when Tom chose City for his law course – he’d followed me to Oxford University for his BA so in a way it seemed entirely logical that he should also do his postgraduate where I had. For Tom, everything about the course was right – its reputation and position – and of course he could walk to the University just as I had. Tom is now working as a lawyer in the employment team for health sector specialists Capsticks. I guess you could say that City worked out quite well for both of us.”

If you would like to share your City story with us, we would love to hear from you. Please email alumnicomms@city.ac.uk.

CitySport

Alumni membership

CitySport, the largest student sports facility in central London, opened in March. More than just a gym, it offers sector-leading facilities for fitness, well-being and competitive sport.

Use your City Alumni Card for discounted membership of just £30 per month and access to 120 fitness stations, a free weight area, four studios including a Virtual Myride® indoor cycling studio and Sport England-standard courts for team, solo and class sports.

To experience this new and exciting fitness centre, please contact the CitySport Team at sports@city.ac.uk or stop by for your free tour at 124 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7DP.

www.citysport.org.uk
Cyberjacking: a new threat to air travel?

When Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 vanished en route to Beijing in March 2014, the horror and mystery of the story captivated the public. And as with any mystery, the lack of a definitive answer left a void for speculation and conspiracy theories. Was the aircraft shot down? Was it hijacked and flown to an unknown location? Was the plane’s computer system somehow hacked allowing it to be controlled remotely?

It was this latter theory that most interested Professor David Stupple of City’s Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Professor Stupple is an expert in networked electronic systems and, prior to becoming an academic, spent many years developing military surveillance systems for the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment. He also designed secure communications for surveillance satellites and air defence systems for the Hughes Aircraft Corporation.

The MH370 mystery got him thinking: was it possible to ‘cyberjack’ a civilian aircraft? If so, are we at the beginning of a new and terrifying era for commercial air travel?

To answer these questions, it’s useful to look at how aircraft have evolved. In the 1970s the US government developed the F-117 fighter plane, the first designed around stealth technology and therefore undetectable by radar. Unfortunately the design made the aircraft aerodynamically unstable: the only way it could be flown was if it had a computer on board.

The computer flies the plane

By the 1990s, Airbus had introduced computers on commercial aircraft and today, with the introduction of the firm’s 318, 319 and 320 series, its planes are now almost totally computer controlled. As Professor Stupple says: “The pilot flies the computer and the computer flies the plane.”

Today’s modern aircraft have numerous systems, including those for flight controls, automatic pilot, navigation,
We accept lengthy queues in airport security as a small price to pay for a couple of weeks in the sun. But could the latest threat to air travel be something that can’t be picked up by metal detectors and x-ray machines? Is cyberjacking (hacking into a plane’s computer systems) a possibility? City’s Professor David Stupples warns that it is possible. But there’s no need to cancel that holiday just yet, as he explains to Anthony Coleman.

communication, engine management and even passenger entertainment. If these systems can be accessed by anyone with malevolent intentions, the consequences could be disastrous.

In recent years there have been numerous cyberjacking scare stories. In 2008, for example, the United States Federal Aviation Authority reported that the computer network in Boeing’s 787 Dreamliner passenger compartment was connected to the aircraft’s control, navigation and communication systems. This grave security concern was subsequently resolved by Boeing.

And in April this year, a security researcher was prevented from boarding a United Airlines flight after tweeting that he could hack the plane’s systems.

So is it possible to cyberjack a modern civilian aircraft? Professor Stupples says yes – but there’s a very large ‘but’.

A tough nut to crack

“Cyberjacking by a passenger is going to be exceedingly difficult,” he says. “He can’t come through the Wi-Fi system, that’s not possible. He could perhaps interfere with the navigation but the aircraft would warn you. All the systems are totally integrated. How then could he take control of an aircraft? The only way is to get malware on board.”

Malware is software designed to cause harm to a computer system, for example to disrupt it or steal sensitive information. Most of us have received suspicious-looking emails asking us to open attached files: these are often malware viruses ready to infect our PCs.

“One way to get malware on board would be for the software developers to put it on when they develop the software,” he adds. But of course that means having a rogue employee working for the software company. “For someone to develop the malware who is outside the aviation industry, that is again a difficult task because the systems are all totally integrated. The other way is to load the malware by accessing the aircraft’s on-board electronics bay. This is possible but access controls are very sophisticated.”

Professor Stupples and his colleagues recently carried out research into the most likely ways that a system can become infected with malware. They calculated that the biggest threat came from a rogue or coerced employee, backed by serious organised crime or even an state.

So what can companies do to protect themselves? Can a system ever be totally safe? Professor Stupples explains: “We’ve started working with Airbus and Cranfield University and what we’re doing is not looking at how you can protect a system from a cyberattack – because I think a great many of the controls are already in place and it’s debatable how much more secure we can get – but looking at cybersafety, which is something quite different.

“If there’s malware on the system – and we’re talking about any system, whether it’s aircraft, trains or nuclear power stations – the system needs to recognise it’s behaving in an irrational manner and then revert to a safe state.”

Professor Stupples gives the recent example of the Germanwings air tragedy, in which the co-pilot appeared deliberately to crash the plane. “The aircraft started to dive into a controlled but deep descent in an area with no landing facilities,” he says. “The system [if a proposed failsafe was in place] would recognise this is an unsafe situation and the aircraft would then take itself to a stable state. We’re looking at whether it’s possible to take any system affected by malware to a safe state.”

It’s still early days for this research. But in such an increasingly connected world, a security system that detects abnormalities would be highly valued, particularly when the consequences of malware could be catastrophic.

The all-seeing radar

Another threat to the aviation industry comes from drones. Widely available for just a few hundred pounds, remote-controlled aircraft have become a popular gadget. Although relatively small, when willingly or accidentally misused in public spaces they can potentially cause harm. More ominously, they can be armed with cameras, transmitters or even explosives and flown into controlled areas unnoticed. They could be used by terrorists for reconnaissance or flown into a descending passenger plane. There is also concern they may interfere with aircraft navigation or train controls.

Due to their size, drones often can’t be seen by conventional scanning radar, so for Professor Stupples’ latest research he’s working with Cambridge-based company Aveillant to develop a new kind of radar. This collaboration has led to what Aveillant calls “the world’s first 3D holographic radar system”. What makes this so unique is that it’s able to ‘look’ in all directions at once, rather than be on target once every few seconds. As a result it can pick up the tiny drones.

While this advancement may be good news for the likes of Airbus, Professor Stupples says that it could have ramifications for the world’s most expensive plane: the multibillion-dollar F-35 Lightning II stealth fighter.

“I believe this new radar will be able to see it, which makes you question whether [the F-35 is] the correct route to go down,” Professor Stupples says. “Not only me but a lot of other people in the radar world take the view that this is not money well spent.”

The US and UK governments, who have nailed their colours to the mast of the F-35, would probably beg to differ. Regardless, Professor Stupples’ research raises an important issue.

Undoubtedly, we are living in a world where increasing digitisation and interconnectivity are bringing us many advantages. But with those benefits come new risks. Thanks to academics such as Professor Stupples and others at City, we are able to understand those risks better and introduce measures that will protect us all.
Born and raised in Walthamstow to a Ghanaian mother and an English father, Fleur East studied for a BA in Journalism and Contemporary History (a joint programme between City and Queen Mary University of London) from 2006 to 2008 and performed in ‘DiverCity’ showcases in the Great Hall during her time at City.

In early 2014, after years of striving to make a name for herself in the music business and working part-time as a waitress to finance her ambition, Fleur had reached something of a low ebb.

A previous attempt at finding fame on The X Factor as part of a girl group ended with elimination in the first week of live shows. Wondering if she may never reach her goals, her motivation started to wane. Friends and family helped to lift her spirits and persuaded her to audition for The X Factor again.

At the finals, she was catapulted into the limelight when she performed the as-yet-unreleased Mark Ronson track Uptown Funk. Her remarkable performance saw her become the first contestant to reach number one on the UK iTunes chart during the competition. Ronson, who was unaware she would be performing the song, had to rush forward the release of his own version of the song by five weeks. Having spent several months perfecting the song, he knew he risked missing his chance to capitalise on the buzz.

The Guardian critic Stuart Heritage described Fleur’s performance as “two minutes and fifty three seconds of all-out attack”, saying that it was “possibly the biggest moment that any Cowell show has produced since we first met Susan Boyle”. Fleur’s performances convinced Cowell to sign her to his Syco record label in January 2015.

She is currently recording a debut album that she describes as “up-tempo and uplifting”, with the help of musicians including Wayne Hector, writer of thirty Number One hits, including seven for Westlife; Grammy-nominated trio The Invisible Men; Jack Splash, who has written or produced singles for Alicia Keys, Christina Aguilera and Katy Perry; and TMS, who have worked with Emeli Sandé, Olly Murs and Little Mix.

Since her Uptown Funk performance Fleur has spoken to Ronson, whose own version of the song has subsequently become the biggest-selling single of 2015 to date. Ronson admitted that he probably owes her a drink.

In profile: Fleur East

Since studying at City, Fleur East has become one of our most high-profile recent alumni, thanks to her starring role in the 2014 series of The X Factor.

She finished runner-up and was responsible for one of the biggest talking points in the show’s 11-year history.
Over to you

We would love to hear your thoughts on this year’s City Magazine, your memories of City and news of your life since graduation.

We are always keen to hear from alumni willing to share their experiences with current and prospective students or interested in acting as an alumni ambassador.

Please contact us using the postal address, email address or telephone number below. If you would like to provide feedback on the magazine and help us to plan future editions, please complete our short survey by visiting city-magazine-2015/feedback.

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