

... and related

The Newsletter for *Academic Related, Professional Staff* in Higher Education

Representing administrators, librarians, computing and other professional staff in HE

Winter 2015 issue

Chair's Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of '... And Related', the magazine for Academic Related, Professional Staff (ARPS) members of UCU.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome new ARPS Committee members Mark Dover, Paul Siddall and Sharon Sweeney. We also welcome Paul Bridge, who has taken over as committee secretary.

This issue introduces two of our new committee members, and focuses on one of the committee's current priorities: the challenge of recruiting ARPS members to UCU. We also consider Price Waterhouse Cooper's report "The 2018 university – how ready is higher education to embrace the future?" and its impact on ARPS in particular.

Helen MacCarthy
ARPS Committee Chair

Introducing new committee members

Paul Siddall



I work at the University of Essex in a research department called ISER (Institute for Social and Economic Research) which grew out of another department set up in the late 1980s called BHPS (British Household Panel Study). I am their Computer Systems Manager and

I've been doing that job since January 1993 after I was made redundant from the now defunct Woolwich Building Society.

I joined the union nearly straight away and joined the AUT committee in late 1990s. I've been the UCU secretary at Essex since 2005 (I think!) after the then secretary became our UCU president. I still hold that post.

I've attended most of the Academic Related annual meetings each year since 1994 and so when the vacancy arose for the ARPS committee I decided to join as I wanted to be part of those who are able to discuss the many and various issues that we all face being in the non-academic side of things at our institutions. I also wanted to make sure that UCU itself didn't "forget" our side of things at Conference, etc.

It's my first year on the committee and it's very much a case of finding my feet, but I've discovered that the other committee members really are a friendly bunch and they've made me, and the other newcomers, most welcome.

I'm looking forward to becoming more involved in things as I, myself, become more familiar with all things UCU.

Mark Dover



My twitter bio probably sums me up best, and also has the advantage of being short: "Senior GIS Cartographer at Southampton University. Ex-Archaeologist, all about Maps and Spatial IT".

I'm a relatively new member of UCU. I joined in December 2013, in response to the strike action

held by Southampton University trade unions. I supported that and subsequent national strike actions (usually to surprised questions from my non-union colleagues). However, I imagine, like many members, I wasn't ready to become more actively involved in the Union.

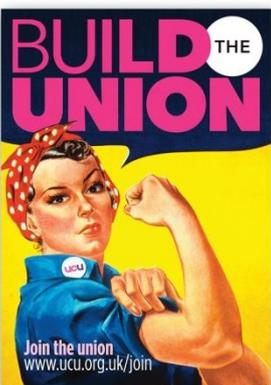
That changed when I went to UCU for support over a workplace issue. I know without the support provided by a local caseworker, the result could have been very different. I realised then that volunteering more than my subscription fees to UCU was something I could and should do as an Individual.

I'm currently Academic related rep on our local branch executive and an active caseworker. I also contributed as a rep on the local Reward project which seeks to bring Academic related staff appraisal policy in line with previously negotiated plans for Academic staff.

Perhaps I'm lucky, as my UCU branch acknowledges academic related, professional staff particular needs, recognition and defined contribution to success. With a new VC, and the results of a PWC business review forthcoming, I am sure there are interesting times ahead locally. One thing does remain constant, the continuing professionalism and generous support of my Union colleagues.

I've seen the commitment and drive the ARPS committee members bring to publishing, highlighting and communicating the importance of the staff they represent to UCU and to the institutions they work for. I'm delighted at this opportunity to contribute.

Recruitment challenges



Around a quarter of employees in the UK, 6.4 million people, belong to a union, according to a report issued in June by the Office of National Statistics (Ref 1). This compares to over 13 million members in 1979. While the number of union members in the private

sector has risen slightly over the last 4 years, membership is falling in the public sector, and the average age of union members continues to rise, with younger people less likely to consider joining a union.

In the education sector as a whole, around 50% of staff belong to a union. In tertiary education, continued cuts in government funding have led to increased redundancies and a consequential fall in union membership, but UCU is still the largest post-school trade union in the world, with 120,000 members. So far Further Education has borne the brunt of spending cuts in the UK, but as indicated by the recent Green Paper on the future of Higher Education, we all face an uncertain future. It is vital that we work together to maximise UCU's recruitment potential, build our union, and strengthen our voice.

As noted in the motion passed at HE Sector Conference in 2015, there has been a proliferation of new academic-related, professional roles in HE institutions over the last few years, and this represents a largely untapped pool of potential members. But identifying these staff and then targeting recruitment at them presents a number of challenges. In order to address these challenges, it is first necessary to understand the changing nature of ARPS roles, and so the motion called on UCU to investigate the changing face of academic related, professional staff.

Many staff in these 'new' roles come from outside academia, where there is no tradition of union membership. Many of them are not hostile towards trade unions: we are simply outside the realm of their experience. Often even those who are hostile simply do not realise what a trade union could do for them. Many suddenly discover our usefulness when they need our help. We need to recruit people into union membership before this: but first we need to understand who our potential members are, and then target our recruitment efforts accordingly.

Traditional academic related job titles are fast being replaced by a wide variety of esoteric roles. One of the tasks on which the ARPS Committee is currently working is to update UCU's Academic Related

Manifesto. When it was written some years ago, it attempted to describe as many as possible of the roles held by our members. With the number of roles growing exponentially, to try and describe the whole glorious diversity of jobs now carried out by ARPS staff would result in a book the size of a telephone directory.

An increasing number of universities are abolishing the term 'academic related' staff, and a variety of alternative convoluted terms have been coined to describe us. While this may feel like extinction by stealth, UCU retains recognition rights for 'academic related, professional staff', and has successfully fought off several attempts by rogue institutions to change this. The different unions recognised within HE each have their spheres of influence enshrined within local agreements, and this needs to be respected by all parties. In seeking to recruit members in 'new' roles, the aim is not to poach members from other unions, but to understand what new roles fall within our remit. There is also the issue of 'academic related' jobs being replaced by lower-paid, lower-skilled jobs, not represented by UCU, and we need to understand how, why and where this is happening.

UCU is not just a union of academics, however the media may portray us, and we need to get that message out to people. We need to let our potential academic related, professional members know what the union can do for them, and what they can do for the union. We want them to know that joining a union is not an act of heresy, and we also need to educate our academic colleagues, so that they understand the range of people covered by our union.

As part of the development of new recruitment literature, we would love to see any examples of leaflets and posters developed by branches. If you have any examples or ideas you would like to share, please contact us at academicrelated@UCU.ORG.UK.

Ref 1:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431564/Trade_Union_Membership_Statistics_2014.pdf

“How ready is Higher Education to embrace the future?”

(<http://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/education/2018-university/how-ready-is-higher-education-to-embrace-the-future.html>)

PWC'S 'University of 2018' is a series of documents and infographics supporting their consultancy services, available on their website.

Their vision of change might initially read like science fiction, but it's a narrative being noticed and engaged with by some universities today.

PWC are brought in to align to the new 2018 model, starting the process of change, gathering data and reporting back. Rebrands, business models and implementation plans swiftly follow,

PWC's views of the University of today seem to highlight that:

- 40% of Academics' time wasted on Admin
- Student customers not engaged in their journey through higher education
- Inefficient support staff and IT systems not fit for purpose

These are polarising viewpoints. ARPS members may recognise it as refrain that has led to a constant cycle of change, initiatives following one after the other.

Staff are not given the chance to stop, reflect and work with the new systems, before they are deemed outdated and the cycle begins again. Change fatigue leads to workers disenfranchised from their institution, far from the engaged, committed employees championed as the final outcome.

For PWC, it seems the future consists of centralising ARPS staff, even sharing services between institutions, removing Academics from control and engagement with the “business” of the University to concentrate on research and teaching.

This is a future where the barriers between colleagues is finalised, and the shared relationships which enrich student experience are forgotten.

PWC's suggest their 2018 vision can be achieved by:

