



# SDF UPDATE

Spring 2015



## Welcome Spring...

### Hope you all had a wonderful Easter break and are fortified for the future challenges ahead!

This will be my final introduction to the SDF Newsletter as Chair as my term of office formally comes to an end in July 2015. This coincides with my leaving the University of Manchester to undertake new ventures and pursue different interests. At the time of writing we are still looking to recruit volunteers to the Chair and Deputy Chair roles and I wanted to do a brief piece to encourage would be applicants to put themselves forward for these positions.

I have been involved in SDF as Regional Rep, Deputy Chair and Chair for around 6 years or more and can say that I have found the experience exciting, fun, and of great personal benefit development wise. It is a great feeling to be part of coming up with new ideas of how to support developers within our community and to be able to see them come to fruition – of course as a team effort with other able, committed and skilled colleagues. The SDF Developers' Conference has an identity of its own

and a great feeling of camaraderie and mutual support. It is an absolute privilege to be able to welcome colleagues and sponsors each April and November, learn from them and extend networks and acquaintances. An additional benefit is that members of the SDF Executive do receive free attendance at the two Conferences. As Chair I think I have negotiated my way through some pretty tricky meetings and refined a wider set of skills around ensuring all views are heard, compromises reached and win-

win solutions arrived at. I have been fortunate to extend my knowledge and other contacts in agencies around the HE sector and made some fantastic friendships with others that I would never otherwise have made. Career wise it has made little difference to me but for those more ambitious taking up position as Chair or Deputy gives an extra dimension to the CV that you have demonstrated your capability to be part of the management of a wider sector organisation outside of your own institution and I do believe that can carry some cache.

So is quite a wrench standing down but I suspect I would have done so anyway irrespective of leaving Manchester. I became involved in the SDF many years ago as I felt at that time it tended to be the 'usual suspects' involved in running the show. I now suspect that I am becoming a 'usual suspect' myself (lot of suspicion there Paul!) - so is

time for new blood. It doesn't matter whether you have worked in the HE Sector for 10 months or 10 years. If you enjoy working with others and get a kick out of supporting them consider putting yourself forward!

Finally I would just like to say a massive thank you to all those who I have worked alongside over the years on things SDF and also wish all those who have engaged with SDF well for the future. We have a wonderfully supportive community of talented, committed creative people and I hope it continues to prosper.

**Go Well.**



Paul Dixon  
Chair of SDF





# Review of North West Developers Retreat

The North West SDF Group held its annual retreat in the Lakes on the 22nd/23rd of January subsidised by a Regional grant from SDF. The two day event included a range of sessions covering: Development of OD Strategy, Developing Personal Impact, Digital Learning Strategies, Laughter Yoga and Transactional Analysis. Feedback was excellent about gaining new ideas and learning, and having fun as part of the North West Community.



## North West Developers Retreat Feedback Form

### What did you enjoy the most?

Being there as part of the NW network, meeting new people. Laughing!

It has to be the laughter yoga - not only was it great fun, it was good to be reminded of the benefits of laughter both for general health and in the workplace. I have to say I was cynical before the session but waxed lyrical when we got back and we're thinking about how/when we could do sessions here.

Networking, finding out what peers are doing, developing/learning new skills

Exercise and methods on self-reflection and strokes

Session prompted thoughts about where we are at with regard to the OD agenda that led to further discussions back in workplace - and whilst it highlights the challenges - it's important to keep on the agenda and be aware that others face similar difficulties

I really enjoyed the Retreat, as always! It is great to catch up with colleagues in other NW unis and share what we're all up to - the successes and the challenges (it's good to be reminded others grapple with the same issues :)). Also, the hotel was great the food was super, the rooms lovely and spacious, the staff friendly and helpful and the soap in the loos amazing! (We went into Ambleside to buy some of the soap after the event). THANK YOU for organising the event again - look forward to the next one!

# What's on My Mind Lucy Thorne

In this edition, Dr Lucy Thorne, Organisational Developer at Lancaster University shares...

This time last year, I was the Senior Faculty Administrator in the Faculty of Science and Technology at Lancaster University, busy supporting the Dean and Heads of Department with the annual planning and resource allocation process, and ensuring that the year's forward timetable of committees was scheduled appropriately.

Some might think that a move from an administrative function into the role of an OD professional is an odd one but for me, it was a chance to reconnect with my background in educational research and use this to enhance the way in which Lancaster functions.

## So what has this changed required of me?

A move away from a heavily process-orientated and procedure-led role has meant that I've had to dig deep and remind myself of how to conduct research and development and how to evaluate and work with evidence appropriately. Clearly these are all important traits for any OD professional, and are arguably particularly important to ensure that OD has credibility within a higher education setting.

My experience of working within the institution's structures and protocols, my appreciation of its quirks and cultural oddities and my sound relationships with a range of colleagues in different roles, disciplines and at different levels across the organisation stood me in good stead for the role. All of this allows a 'way in' for exploration, analysis and testing and helps to build connections across seemingly unconnected bits of the institution. What is new is the challenge of getting that initial foot in the door. While previously, I could use the lever of 'the Dean would like you to do x, how can I support you with this?' Now I don't have that lever to work with and so I'm forced to make approaches in different ways. So less about compliance, and more about a sell...

## And what am I learning?

For eight years I saw the institution through the lens of a faculty-endeavouring to provide a quality service to the Deanery, Heads of Department and other staff within the faculty, as well as those within the central administration and other parts of the organisation (and I recognise that this notion of 'service' may vary across the different constituent groups mentioned). It is now genuinely interesting to see faculties and other parts of the university from a new perspective and appreciate some of the same



challenges but from a very different point of view. And then there are the new ones...as we enter the new academic year and are about to 'go live' with a raft of brand new professional development offers, I now realise the enormity of the challenge that is 'recruitment'. Experiencing the sense of exposure and risk that a central service faces in promoting its wares is daunting and not something that I had fully appreciated before living and breathing it for real.

The key thing that reassures me in my moments of doubt is that we haven't just concocted these new development offerings on the back of an envelope but they are all borne out of structured and systematic analyses of Lancaster's needs. They are informed by evidence of what has worked well historically, influenced by the institution's current drivers and direction of travel and respond to what colleagues tell us they think they need.

In a few months' time, I hope that I'll be able to reflect on the challenge of flexing our offer to accommodate unprecedented demand...

# Spring SDF Conference April 2014

## Talent – Planting, Growing and Nurturing

The spring SDF conference provides an excellent time in the yearly cycle to renew oneself as a staff development practitioner and get thinking about what's ahead for our respective organisation and the people within them. It was with delight that the London staff developers group took on the challenge of creating an agenda for our two days together, taking direct inspiration from the season and focusing the gathering on "Planting, Growing and Nurturing Talent". Over the two days, over seventy practitioners across all levels and roles congregated at Horwood House in the wilderness of the manor to learn, discuss, enrich each other's practice and network.



The day was rounded off with experiential activities focused on team building provided by Metalog followed by winning raffle prizes, fellowships awards and a disco or quiet chats over a drink next door.

- The spring sunshine shown through the meadows of the staff developers manor house bourne, through the echo of the previous day, and day two had a distinct buzz of camaraderie, excitement about the day ahead and new and renewed friendships which is a key aspect to this gathering. Day 2 kicked off with a presentation from the CEO of the Leadership Foundation, Mark Pegg presenting why and how all new leaders need to grow talent and be developed. Mark highlighted the key successes of new programmes offered by the foundation. The talent theme was expanded on in more parallel sessions with a combination of fellow practitioners sharing their approaches to talent development as well as exploring motivation for development and learning about how work shadowing schemes can support talent development within the staff development community. The day closed with an address from Anne Franke, CEO of Chartered Management Institution who shared interesting stats that build a compelling case for working to develop good management practice.

Here are a few:

- Good management achieves growth and productivity, boosts employee engagement and wellbeing, and attracts and retains talent yet 80% of UK employees think their manager sets a bad example.
- 72% of UK organisations say they lack good management & leadership.

Anne shared her 5 key step makeover to developing good management for institutional success and to develop talent.

- The post conference feedback suggests that the spring conference was a success. 97% of respondents said the spring meeting had a good range of presenters and 100% saying they would recommend the SDF conference to others after coming on this one which is very exciting! 61% thought the conference had a good theme and 60% said it achieved the aims set.

Key highlights noted in the feedback responses were:

- the opportunity to network with fellow peers and sharing best practice across the sector
- lovely energy and feeling part of the group
- a good mix of sessions with enough scope for leaders in SD

and staff wishing to develop their own career in Staff development

- opportunity to significantly increase one's CPD.

The organising committee would like to acknowledge and thank all of the contributors and sponsors of the spring meeting. Their engagement and wholehearted giving has significantly added to making the meeting a huge success.

Full programme and slides of the conference can be found on <http://sdf.ac.uk/past-events/720/spring-conference-2014.html>

Magdalena Bak-Maier and Parul Modha  
Co-Chairs for the London Staff Development Group



# SDF Fellowship News



**Julie Mulliner**  
*formerly of the University of Chester is the latest applicant to be approved as a Fellow of the Staff Development Forum.*

*Julie is a flexible, dynamic, fun professional who takes massive pleasure in turning her hand to anything – whether it be a PhD or writing and publishing her special book! We wish her well in her new career and life in St Kitts. We asked Julie to provide a few words prior to her move abroad:*

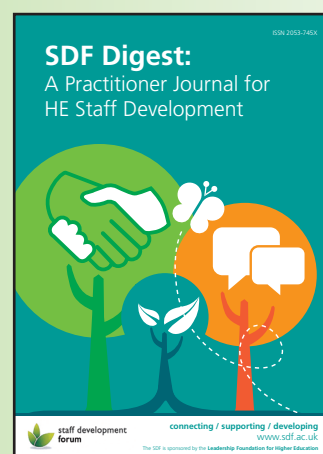
The most challenging project I embarked upon during my time working within the HE sector was the implementation of a performance appraisal process which included performance ratings and a behavioural competency framework - this was a pivotal time in terms of understanding and experiencing the concept of academic freedom - something I was not aware of given my more commercial business focused background; in contrast the achievement of Gold iF status in 2014 was certainly a highlight, a quality standard which recognised the contribution the HR function and staff development team have made to the University of Chester.

I can honestly say I have loved working for the HE sector in the UK and very much look forward to extending my HE experience in warmer climates working for the DeVry Education Group, the parent organisation of Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine based in St.Kitts and Nevis; lots of new experiences which I hope to continue to share with fellow staff developers and HR professionals albeit 4000 miles away. I will leave you with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." it is the only way!

If you wish to find out more about applying to become an SDF Fellow or Associate Fellow please go to <http://sdf.ac.uk/fellowship.html>

My experience working within the HE sector over the last 9 years has certainly been unique, hard work, exciting, challenging and rewarding; an environment which has enabled me to add value by pushing boundaries and existing practices to improve stakeholder experiences. Personally, I have developed my knowledge, skills and experience as a HR professional through the support of many colleagues from within the University of Chester and in particular regional Staff Developers.

The second edition of the Digest has been fantastically well received. If you have not yet had chance to have a look please go to <http://sdf.ac.uk/resources-outputs/sdf-digest-2.html>. We plan to produce the third edition to coincide with the November SDF Conference and are looking out for articles to include highlighting: new and innovative practice, thinking and technique. We are also looking for colleagues to contribute to the production process either as reviewers, or mentors of authors. Anyone interested please get in touch with [Becky.Robson@sdf.ac.uk](mailto:Becky.Robson@sdf.ac.uk)



## Introducing New Members of the SDF



**Linda Robson**  
SFHEA - Treasurer

*Linda has been a lecturer and Staff Tutor at The Open University since 2001.*

*Her role involves the management of remote staff, in addition to writing distance learning materials and supporting students. She has*

*particular interests in academic development, and support for students and staff with disabilities.*

*Outside work, Linda's two passions are endurance sport (running, cycling and kayaking) and eating cake!*



**Emily Hopkinson**  
SDF Secretary

*Emily has been involved in staff development pretty much her whole career, and has been at The University of Sheffield since 2005.*

*As HR Manager (Staff Development) she manages a team providing development for all staff regardless of their role which includes coordinating the Development Everywhere offering as well as managing Induction, the annual appraisal process, mentoring and supporting faculties. Emily is particularly interested in team development. Outside of work Emily enjoys playing netball and open water swimming.*

## About SDF UPDATE...and a call for contributions

Update is a twice-yearly newsletter for staff developers in Higher Education. Limited numbers of paper copies are distributed to HEIs in the UK, and it is available as a PDF download from the SDF website. We'd love you to share your news or a practical tip or information about a resource, or if you have a suggestion or comment about this issue, we'd really like to hear from you, especially about ways it can be improved.

Contact: Becky Robson, SDF National Coordinator, [becky.robson@sdf.ac.uk](mailto:becky.robson@sdf.ac.uk).

[www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk)

