

Putin's War, Knowledge, and the Public Good

We caught up with Dr Shane O'Rourke, Dept of History, following his fascinating talk at YorkTalks 2023 to find out more about his role as an academic in knowledge exchange for public good, in this following personal reflection.

Putin's brutal war in Ukraine is being fought on many fronts. Most importantly the war is taking place on the battlefields of the Donbass and southern Ukraine and against the civilian population of Ukrainian cities. But the Kremlin is also waging an information war by which it seeks to impose its narrative of the war on its own people, Ukraine's Western allies and the wider world. It has, at its disposal, a sophisticated propaganda machine, unlimited funds and a host of sympathisers in the West. In this version, Russia is the victim, the West the aggressor and the Ukrainians Nazis.

As an academic historian of Russia this information war confronted me with stark questions. What is the role of an academic in this situation? What should a university do? I am a fluent Russian speaker, have spent nearly 40 years accumulating knowledge about Russia's history and have been to the country dozens of times. For me the crux of the matter was: do I participate in this information war or stand aside? I have never sought a public profile or to become a media don. Until this war, I had done a couple of radio and press interviews over the years, but that was it. All that changed on 24 February 2022. Immediately the war began, calls from local and national radio and press started coming in. Overnight, an insatiable public appetite for information about Ukraine and Russia appeared. Where there is demand, a supply quickly appears. Many of those satisfying that demand had no knowledge of Russia, Ukraine or the relationships between them. Worse, a malevolent state actively sought to take control of that debate.

To me it seemed impossible to stand aside. Universities are public institutions and academics are partly publicly funded. Putting my knowledge, accumulated at public expense, into the public domain appeared a moral duty. In fulfilment of that duty, I decided to answer every request for an interview, for information or for an opinion on the war. **Public Good is the core value of the University of York** and that good demands the participation of academics in public debate on matters of national and international importance. Knowledge produced in a university is not private possession, but a public good in every sense of the word.



Impact? Knowledge Exchange?



Focus on the Corporate Training Team

Developing and delivering short courses, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and executive education programmes for external organisations or individuals are all great examples of knowledge exchange.

If this is something you are interested in then the Corporate Training Team, part of the Research Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Directorate, is there to provide support and advice. Whether taking research and turning it into a course or taking a module of an undergraduate or postgraduate course and turning it into a CPD module, the team is there to help.

A wide range of support is on offer, from helping with costing and pricing of courses, market assessment and marketing, and course administration. With over twenty years of experience of supporting CPD courses, the team is able to help academic departments ensure CPD course development and delivery is efficient and effective.

The benefits to academics of delivering CPD include: creating impact and reach from their research, informing teaching and developing relationships with external organisations. CPD also supports the university's strategic aim of being a university for public good, by contributing both to the lifelong learning journey for learners and to helping drive economic growth regionally, nationally and internationally.



Work is currently underway to create an ambitious plan to grow the university CPD portfolio, so if you or members of your team have an idea for a new course or want to expand your current CPD offering, please contact the Corporate Training Team on cpd@york.ac.uk or contact Anna Hastie, Head of CPD, on anna.hastie@york.ac.uk

Under the Microscope

The Bioscience Technology Facility has used Zeiss equipment for many years and has recently become an official Zeiss Labs@Location site, giving researchers, from both the University and across Europe, access to cutting edge equipment at the microscopy facilities here at York.

In turn this allows staff in the Technology Facility the opportunity to develop in-depth knowledge and to provide dedicated services on specific new technologies and ensures York's international reputation at the cutting edge of microscopy research.

This collaboration not only provided benefits to the Technology Facility, but also provided opportunities for PhD students, Summer Internships and Undergraduate Summer Studentships. Last summer, as part of the BBSRC Professional Internships for PhD Students (PIPS), Jodie, a PhD student, completed a three-month

Dr Peter O'Toole, Head of Imaging and Cytometry, explains how fostering a close relationship between the Department of Biology and Zeiss, has delivered mutual benefits and opportunities for Knowledge Exchange.

non-research placement within the Technology Facility as part of her PhD. This enabled Jodie to learn new technical skills, to get a feel for a career supporting science, as well as to learn more about the administration associated with the day-to-day operations of the facility. The PhD internships have proven mutually beneficial and enabled the Facility to develop new tools and services.

Jodie:

'This was a unique opportunity to experience what it would mean to be a technician working in a facility like the TF. I was able to get an in-depth understanding of the business model of the TF, how services and provisions are costed and also learn more about the operation of specialised equipment.'

Undergraduate student, Beatrice, also completed two ten-week Studentships,

conducting beta testing of new Zeiss microscopes using research samples from different academic groups across the Department of Biology. This provided great work experience for Beatrice and had significant benefits for the academics who were able to see the benefits of the new technologies on their research. This work was also important in maintaining York's standing at the cutting edge of cytometry and microscopy both in the UK and across the world.

Beatrice:

'I previously had very little microscopy experience and this placement enabled me to learn how to operate a number of super-resolution systems. I was also involved in helping researchers across the biology department see how new systems could further their research.'

Learning and Training News

Royal Academy of Engineering, Accelerator Program Event

Wednesday 22 February,
ISA Building, Heslington East,
12.00 to 15.00

Are you considering starting a business based on your research? Join this lunch and informative workshop to learn how you could apply to the Royal Academy of Engineering's Fellowship programme where you could receive a grant and full programme of support. The programme is for academics who have a protectable engineering or technology innovation and the ambition to create and lead a business. [Find out more.](#)

To attend the event please email admn1542@york.ac.uk to secure your place.

Introduction to Intellectual Property and Commercialisation Support

The Commercialisation Team runs a 30 minute training course "Introduction to Intellectual Property & Commercialisation Support Available". The session provides a brief overview of what intellectual property (IP) is and how it can support research impact. You will also learn how to identify potentially valuable IP and how the Commercialisation Team can support you.

[Book your place](#) and learn how the Commercialisation Team can help support you. The next sessions are:

Wednesday 22 March 13:00 to 13:30
Wednesday 19 April 13:00 to 13:30
Wednesday 24 May 13:00 to 13:30

Promoting your research using social media

[Promoting your research using social media](#) (login required) This online session will cover a look at promoting yourself and your research online and the issues, tools and how to evaluate your progress.

Monday 6 March 10:00 to 12:00
Thursday 11 May 15:00 to 17:00

Hope into Action Social Sciences Impact Conference

20 to 21 March 2023: Registration closes on Tuesday 28 February.

[Find out more.](#)

The University of Bristol is offering free training sessions

The University of Bristol is offering free training sessions run online to support academics to understand the potential impact of their research and supporting them with how to get there.

RESEARCH IMPACT: WHY? HOW? WHAT?

In this short, introductory session for Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy (SHAPE) researchers run by Associate Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Dr Dave Jarman at University of Bristol, we will help participants explore how their research can be developed for both impact and career progression. With examples of best practice and practical advice and guidance we hope to offer a useful starting point for any researcher.

[Book your place](#)



RESEARCH IMPACT: IDEA TO IMPACT

In this practical workshop for Social Sciences researchers, run by University of Bristol's Dr Dave Jarman, Associate Professor in Innovation and Entrepreneurship, we will help participants explore the potential stakeholders for their research and think about how impact and value can be created and sustained for the benefit of all involved.

We will explore how the principles and practices of user-centred design and value proposition testing can aid researchers in enhancing the impact, profile, and legacy of their work. This workshop follows on from what you will have learnt in the Research Impact: Why? How? What?

[Book your place](#)

For further information about either of the sessions, please contact Lorraine.Fairbanks@bristol.ac.uk Translational Hub Manager, University of Bristol.

For information and support for Knowledge Exchange please [visit our webpage](#)