

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NEWS 27

A BUZZ OF COLLABORATION AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE UK LAUNCH

Amanda Selvaratnam, Associate Director (Business and Knowledge Exchange) in Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange and Chair of Knowledge Exchange UK was one of the speakers at the launch of Knowledge Exchange UK (KE UK), held in the ornate halls of the House of Lords in February.

The event marked a pivotal moment for KE, reinforcing its role in **driving innovation, economic growth, and real-world impact**. Guests heard from **key sector figures**, discussing the challenges and opportunities ahead for KE professionals as they navigate an evolving research and innovation landscape.

Representatives from government, funding bodies, research & development businesses, universities, and professional service providers networked, all eager to celebrate KE UK's potential.

Opened by Professor Lord Lionel Tarassenko, the evening's highlight was undoubtedly the series of short, impactful speeches. Professor Trevor McMillan, Vice Chancellor of Keele University and Research England KE Champion, set the stage perfectly, outlining the transformative power of knowledge exchange and its potential to drive real value and impact across the UK. He painted a compelling vision of a nation benefiting from the seamless flow of ideas and innovation.

Adam Williams, CEO of the Intellectual Property Office UK, followed with a fascinating perspective on the crucial role of IP in successful knowledge exchange. He emphasised the importance of protecting innovation while simultaneously fostering collaboration – a delicate balance that's key to unlocking the full potential of KE.

Finally, Professor Charlotte Deane, Executive Chair of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, offered a glimpse into the future of research funding and its connection to knowledge

exchange. Her insights into how research councils are supporting and incentivising KE activities were particularly well-received.

The event wasn't just about the speeches, though, it provided a **key networking opportunity**, bringing together universities, businesses, funders, and policymakers to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and shape the future of KE.

It's clear that KE UK has the potential to be a real game-changer, and I'm excited to see what the future holds.



SPOTLIGHT ON YORKTALKS 2025 RESEARCH

This month, we showcase some of the fascinating and innovative research presented at YorkTalks 2025, highlighting the diverse and groundbreaking work at the University of York.

- **Looking to the past and present of electrical healing, to understand if we can heal people using electricity.** **Dr Stuart Higgins** discusses the Complex Interface Team's research into electrical healing, drawing on historical and current practices to develop new bioengineering tools.
- **The Art of the Copy: How They Did It Before Photoshop.** **Dr Jane Raisch** informs us of research on historical copying methods, specifically pre-1800 approaches to creating facsimiles, such as Francesco Foggini's 1741 facsimile of the Codex Mediceus.
- **Colombo is Our Home: A People's Manifesto.** **Dr Asha Abeyasekera** advocates for inclusive urban regeneration and the recognition of residents' rights in Colombo.

[Watch the full talks and learn more](#)

THE ART OF THE COPY: How they did it before photoshop

Dr Jane Raisch, Department of English and Related Literature

The modern world is filled with facsimiles, from the photographs on our phones to the PDFs in our emails. Our understanding of the world and how we interact with it is often mediated through copies and duplicates.

As a researcher of classical antiquity and its influence in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries, I wanted to understand pre-1800 approaches to copying. Since a facsimile is usually defined as an 'exact copy', I investigated methods used for creating these before the advent of photography and lithography. This complex question is fundamental to both the history of printing and typography, so I focused on case studies, one of which I'll explore here.

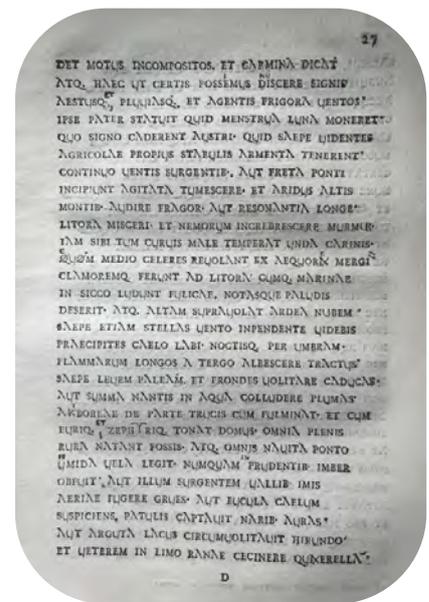
In 1741, Francesco Foggini created a facsimile of the Codex Mediceus, a 5th-century Latin manuscript of the Roman poet Virgil's works. Held in Florence, the Codex is known for its age,

rustic capital handwriting (an ancient way of writing Latin) and the presence of corrections made by an early reader. To make his facsimile, Foggini commissioned a special typeface for two letters (A and U) to recreate the manuscript's writing and had each copy hand-corrected to match the manuscript's edits.

This early facsimile demonstrates the ingenuity involved in creating a copy with technological limitations. Though not exact, it is strikingly original and reminds us of the effort involved in reproduction, which we now often take for granted.

Studying historical copying methods helps us understand the evolution of reproductive technologies and provides context for our current era of rapid technological development. It involves working with archives and libraries across the world and is a compelling example of how understanding the way we

read is not just a literary project, but requires thinking about the history of technology and information science as well.



A page from the 1741 Virgil edited by Foggini. It shows the unusual 'A' and 'U' letters created specifically for this book as well as the inclusion of corrections and cross-outs added by hand.

LOOKING TO THE PAST AND PRESENT OF ELECTRICAL HEALING, TO UNDERSTAND IF WE CAN HEAL PEOPLE USING ELECTRICITY

Dr Stuart Higgins, UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, School of Physics, Engineering and Technology



A new research group, the **Complex Interface Team** led by **Dr Stuart Higgins**, draws from both historical and current clinical practice to help direct their work.

In the 1800s and 1900s, electrotherapy was claimed as a medical cure-all, but its effectiveness was often questioned. Today, devices like pacemakers and deep brain stimulators demonstrate the potential of electrical impulses for medical treatment, improving the quality of life for many.

Contemporary research explores the influence of electromagnetic fields and currents on bone and wound healing and the use of electrical therapies for neurological conditions. Biological studies are also revealing the critical role of bioelectrical signalling in organ development and limb regeneration. While the scientific evidence is varied and complex,

it continues to fuel scientists' long-standing fascination with the interplay between electricity and living systems.

In our team, we use biomaterials, such as electricity-conducting plastics (originally developed for flexible computer displays), to build new devices that probe fundamental electrical mechanisms in living things. We aim to contribute to both fundamental understanding and engineer translatable systems for future medical devices.

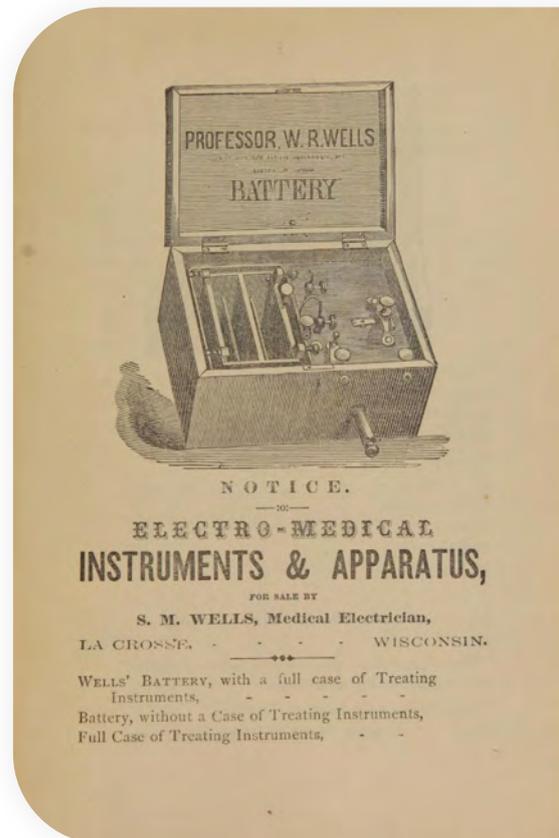
Engaging with relevant stakeholders early on is important. Understanding clinical and commercial environments can influence our design choices, making us better placed to translate those findings. Understanding timescales and regulatory hurdles allows us to develop realistic and achievable goals.

As part of my fellowship, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), our research team is now looking to engage researchers, clinicians and industrial contacts via a new network that directly explores the interaction between bioelectricity (biology) and bioelectronics (engineering). This will support our research, help stakeholders connect with relevant academics, and support the development of our early-career researchers.

It is still in the early days, but an awareness of both the historical

and present contexts for the role of electricity in healing helps shape and inform our research.

[Learn more.](#)



*The historical advert image was taken from this digitised book from the **Wellcome collection**.*

COLOMBO IS OUR HOME: A people's manifesto

Dr Asha Abeyasekera, Centre for Women's Studies

Efforts to transform South Asian cities into "world-class" status over the past two decades have unfortunately exacerbated the urban problems they aimed to solve. In Sri Lanka, the Urban Regeneration Programme, initiated in 2009 after the civil war, focused on beautifying Colombo to make it a luxury destination. This strategy of "liberating under-utilised" land led to the forced evictions of working-class communities and their relocation to high-rise buildings on the city's outskirts. Consequently, many long-term residents of central Colombo lost their homes and communities to developments like malls, luxury apartments, and hotels.

For me, as someone who studies people and cultures, the main issue with these urban development projects is that they treat land as more valuable than homes and the people who live there. Starting in 2020, I spent time with a community facing eviction to understand what it's like to live in that uncertain space, knowing you're about to lose your home. As a feminist, I especially wanted to highlight the work women do to

create and maintain their homes, even when things are politically unstable and money is tight, and how they rebuild their lives and communities after being forced to leave.

Following the release of our **2024 documentary film**, which featured four women leaders working to protect their community, a general sense of despair had settled with regard to the possibility of influencing policy change. To address this, I created a workshop using 'utopian thinking' as a way forward, playfully challenging participants to draw their ideal homes and envision Colombo as a utopian city.

The result of the workshop was a Community Manifesto on Housing and Urban Planning that calls on the state to recognise their right to the city - 'Colombo is our home; the city is our village'. It offers an alternative to relocation, and advocates that urban regeneration must be committed to creating healthy and liveable homes, caring communities and an inclusive city.

In December 2024, the newly elected Prime Minister - Dr Harini

Amarasuriya - quoted from the manifesto when addressing a meeting of property developers. I am currently working with a policy think-tank to launch a social media campaign aimed at drawing more attention to the Manifesto.



Photo: A group explains their alternative plans to 'regenerate' their neighbourhood during the community workshop.