



Newsletter

Autumn 2014 No. 73

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From the Editor



A new me on the beach – still body boarding (or plain crazy) after all these years...

Ah...autumn...

Time for another edition of the newsletter.

Once again, thanks to all who have contributed to this edition especially so as we are all so very busy at this time of the year. The Newsletter reflects the changes being made to ITTE, and hosts a collection of new articles amongst the old favourites.

There is the usual report from the Chair, Andy Connell, which brings the discussions on the future of ITTE together with a final exploration of ITTE's options and possible way ahead. I've also included the minutes of the AGM that was held for people to see how things are moving.

Once again, I am grateful to Christina Preston for her valuable and numerous contributions and to Avril Loveless and John Woollard for their thoughtful reflections on where we are today. Finally to Neil. What can I say? The man's timing is amazing, and he came up with his wanderings and recommended books just in time to stop me losing sleep over where he had got to. Many thanks Neil.

I hope you continue to enjoy this newsletter and find time to contribute in whatever way you can – it's very much appreciated. Best wishes to all for a great Christmas – you know it's on the way, you've seen the M&S adds!

Abi Hamill

Chairs Report - September 2014

Andy Connell



2013/14 has been a busy and challenging year for ITTE and an interesting one to be Chair.

Back in October, we began a review of ITTE's position in the new world of education. This discussion has continued all year. A new strapline 'Influencing Policy and Practice', was one visible outcome, with a revamped website www.itte.org.uk, thanks in the main to David Longman, revamped leaflets, thanks to Margaret Danby and a revamped newsletter, thanks to Alison Hramiak.

We have been visible nationally through a variety of forum and groups, including a continued presence on the Computing Subject Expert groups, the UK Forum for Computing Education (UKForCE) Steering Group and the Council for Subject Associations (CfSA).

ITTE has made a number of formal responses to consultations and official committees, including to ETAG in June, responses to media and official bodies on recruitment to Computer Studies ITE courses, contribution to the interim report 'Digital Skills for Tomorrows World' by the UK Digital Skills Task Force and soon will submit our response to the Carter Review of ITT. These responses are on the web site.

The Chair and Vice Chair presented at EducationICT2014 on 'becoming digitally wise', promoting the services ITTE can offer. Feedback was very positive.

ITTE became a founder member of MESH <http://www.meshguides.org/>

Our journal, TPE, has grown in circulation and worldwide recognition.

Much success then, and some influencing of policy, but it has continued to be important that we reflect on ITTE's position and plan for the future. Teacher Education has changed and continues to change. ITTE must too. Our traditional membership base has shrunk. We are trying to broaden out appeal to School ITT Alliances and SCITTS and Collaborations, but with limited success so far. CAS dominates this area at the moment, with greater resources and political backing than ourselves. For the first time ever, we had to cancel the ITTE Conference, due to lack of bookings.

That is why we recently ended the year of review, by bringing the discussions together with a final exploration of ITTE's options and possible way ahead. Members had been invited to share their views on how ITTE should adapt to meet the current and future needs of teacher educators in all aspects of digital technology, or, indeed, whether there is a place for ITTE at all. Many thanks to all those who contributed.

The overwhelming view from the membership and Committee is that ITTE does have a future. Therefore, the committee is proposing a number of strategies to move ITTE forward. These will be presented formally at an EGM in the near future.

As a flavour, it was agreed that ITTE has a unique role to use research to inform pedagogy and influence policy in Computing, IT, DL and TEL. ITTE's independence and academic reputation are important levers in having political clout. That is why we believe we should not seek a merger. Co-badging with 'friendly' fellow organisation as a strategy can potentially be financially advantageous and such collaboration would strengthen our impact with policy makers. We recommend actively developing this as a strategy. We could also capitalise on the research being undertaken by holding events such as 'think tank' meetings on issues of concern to policy makers and in order to respond to consultations.

Representing a significant membership opens doors politically. This remains a challenge for us and we need to be creative in broadening our membership. How do we attract Teaching Schools/Alliances, School based teacher trainers and, should we look to also attract student teachers?

We believe that ITTE has accomplished its original mission, which was to ensure and promote recognition for IT in HE-based teacher education, and we should celebrate this. TPE is flourishing and should be central in our future plans. However, in the current educational context, it is time to 'reinvent and rebrand' the association. It should be exciting.

Best wishes

Andy

ITTE AGM



The Open University in London 26th September 2014

Apologies: Alison Hramiak, Lis Bundock, Lynne Dagg, Dawn Hewitson, John Owen, John Woollard, James Bird, Chris Shelton, Kate Watson, Mary Webb, Sarah Jones

Minutes of the last AGM (6th July 2013) The minutes were accepted as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Matters Arising None

Vote for new committee members. There were no objections to any of the candidates who stood for election to the committee, thus Jon Audain, Moira Savage and Alison Hramiak were duly appointed to serve on the committee for three years.

Chair's report (circulated prior to the meeting) Andy Connell identified changes over the preceding year to the website, publicity flyers and newsletter. ITTE is still visible; formal responses have been made to ETAG, to media and official bodies on recruitment to computing ITE courses and is represented on UKForce and primary and secondary expert groups. The presentation by the chair and vice chair to Education ICT 2014 was well received. ITTE is a founder member of MESH. The context in which we work has changed significantly and ITTE is facing major challenges.

Treasurer's report (circulated prior to the meeting) Income and expenditure have reduced. The 2013 conference made a loss. Running costs have also reduced but there is scope for further efficiencies. Reliance on TPE income is increasing. Margaret Cox suggested looking into insurance to cover conference losses, which the treasurer agreed to do. The Chair offered thanks to Pete Bradshaw for his work in maintaining the accounts.

Membership secretary's report (circulated prior to the meeting) Membership has declined significantly this year due to changes in initial teacher education and financial cutbacks. Institutional membership, which has always been the mainstay of ITTE, has fallen by a quarter. An attempt to attract school-based members failed. Margaret Cox queried the email address that was used for the schools mailing as, if not recognised by the school, the emails may have been treated as spam and not reached the intended recipients. Neil Stanley asked whether Naace membership has declined but no-one knew the answer. The association needs to decide how best to respond to this situation. In principle, subscriptions will be kept at the same level as last year

but this will be kept under review as discussions about the future of the association proceed. Jon Audain asked for clarification of what constitutes 'institutional' membership. Some discussion ensued about offering incentives to new members. Margaret Danby is to stand down as secretary at the end of December. Pete Bradshaw proposed thanks to Margaret, seconded by Christina Preston, for her work as secretary.

Journal editor's report (circulated prior to the meeting) Worldwide 2000 institutions have subscriptions to TPE; a good article is downloaded 200-300 times. It's impact factor is at a mid point compared to other educational journals. Submissions run at 200-250 per year but only 20% are accepted. The authors of all rejected papers receive feedback. Taylor and Francis (T&F) are very happy and have offered improved terms for the next five year contract, together with an increase from three to five editions per year. The lack of UK submissions is a concern. T&F are to produce a free virtual special edition containing a selection of good UK articles in a bid to attract new authors. Discussion ensued about additional ways of doing that, including clarifying a developmental pathway for publishing from newsletter articles to the journal and making subscription and download data available for institutions to add to their REACH data. Patrick Carmichael noted an error in his report: the annual advance royalty offered is £10,000, not £8,000. Peter Twining noted that other journals, e.g. BERA, receive much more generous income from their publishers and agreed to investigate that further. Patrick and Sarah Younie have obtained funding from the British Council to run a workshop on publishing research.

Newsletter editor's report (circulated prior to the meeting - editor not present) Andy Connell has asked for a slight postponement to the Autumn publishing date to allow the AGM and strategy meeting discussions to be reported. ITTE needs to consider whether the format of the newsletter needs to change. Thanks were offered to Alison Hramiak for her editorship of the newsletter over the past year.

Web editor's report David Longman submitted a detailed report to the committee earlier this year, which is still being considered. He noted that the website is not attracting as much interest as ITTE needs and that we are not making the most of our investment in Drupal. Also, that managing the website is not a one person job as it demands four distinct levels of expertise: technical, graphical, management of content, editorial. David is willing to continue managing it in the short-term until the new strategy is decided.

Honorary membership award (Citation circulated prior to the meeting) The meeting ratified Steve Kennewell as the recipient of an honorary membership award.

A.O.B. None raised.

ITTE: Shut down or restart - a summary of points raised:

A broader publishing strategy is needed - a range of options; non-textual as well as textual.

Conferences and events - co-badge one-day seminars with other organisations for greater impact and reduced costs; research-based conferences are the better attended ones.

Research as a key role for ITTE members at practitioner and higher levels; consider offering small-scale funding to stimulate that.

Influencing policy - ITTE must be political; independence and academic reputation are important levers in having political clout; representing a membership opens doors politically.

Administration and membership - these are key roles: consider virtual meetings to reduce costs and involve members who would not otherwise be able to attend; develop a strategy for retaining and recruiting members; good communication and marketing are vital.

Marilyn Leask offered thanks to long-term members of the committee for the work they are doing.

A reflection on changing the curriculum – from ICT to Computing

John Woollard

I remember the ‘good old days’. I’m sure they were not the rosy picture we’d like to portray. Back in the late ‘70s I was teaching 11 to 14 year olds on the school’s first and then, only computer – a Commodore Business Machine’s personal electronic transactor – a PET.



The pupils were programming in BASIC and a machine code language called CESIL. Also, we had a card punch machine and we could create a programme by hand punching cards – I’d take the 10 mile bi-weekly round-trip into the local institute for the cards to be RUN, collecting the results on computer printout on the following visit. But, pupils were programming – they were doing the sort of algorithmic thinking, decomposition, abstraction and generalisation we talk about today – but we didn’t use those words.

Since 1980 a few things have happened – a computer in every classroom, an integrated office suite of software, rooms of multimedia computers, the internet and then the world wide web. Teaching IT and later called ICT was pulled away from ‘hardware, how it worked and making it work’ to:

- using it for a purpose;
- using it to make really interesting things;
- through to using it to make, do and share with the whole world.

All of that was really good stuff but was a long way from understanding how things work.

The change in the curriculum has been motivated by (with the fear of offending):

- businesses, industry, the public sector and security services needed more people with the capability to do the jobs;
- numbers of students wanting to do computer science at University was falling;
- our post-16 computing courses were not popular;
- some ICT lessons in school were boring;
- many ICT teachers didn’t know what computer science was; and
- we had over-credited examination courses with little computing substance.

Describing the challenge, the driving force and Chair of the group, Simon Peyton-Jones, explained, “It was rather like being at the bottom of a deep well, looking upward and shouting ‘Computer Science is important!’” Policy change did occur and in September 2014 the National Curriculum programme of study for Computing became statutory for all pupils from age five to age 16.

We can now leave behind us some of the criticisms we poured on ourselves and others for the errors in ICT and now look forward to a renewed interest in pushing forward computing with IT, digital literacy, computer science and technology enhanced learning.

The new curriculum begins,

“A high-quality computing education equips pupils to use computational thinking and creativity to understand and change the world”

and from the age of 5, all pupils should be taught to,

“understand what algorithms are; how they are implemented as programs on digital devices; and that programs execute by following precise and unambiguous instructions” and “create and debug simple programs”.

Now this is a challenge worth facing.

Changes to the curriculum <http://www.tinyurl.com/Computing-Why>

John

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Reflections on ITTE as a work in progress: A voice from the past



Avril Loveless

My first ITTE conference was in 1988 when I became part of the ITTE community. For many years, the community played an important role in my professional development. I served on the Committee as a member and the Chair, and edited *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*. In recent years, my professional life and work have moved away from the core of information technologies in teacher education, but I owe a debt to ITTE for the ways in which the community has shaped my thinking and activity.

I know that it feels as if the debates about the future of ITTE are taking place in a cold climate in 2014. This isn't the first time that we have had such discussions. In the 1980s the government departments didn't speak to teacher education at all. At the turn of the century ministers, government officials, agencies and quangos were all represented on our committee and attended our conferences in order to learn from and contribute to our community. In current times, it often seems that the pedagogic argument for capability with digital tools is crowded out. Yet on reflection, the threads of the debates in the past 30 years about ways of knowing with digital tools have endured.

In 2009 I spoke at the conference about the features that I think have characterised ITTE over the years. In my experience, the community has demonstrated how it is:

- counter-cultural in maintaining its purpose beyond immediate policy directives;
- aligned in its general sense of direction; innovative in helping its members to think differently about the uses of digital technologies in education;
- committed to holding each other to account; bearing witness and leaving a trace through our research and publication;
- supportive of and affectionate to its members.

I am currently writing a chapter for an edited collection on international stories of 'Transition and Transformation in Teacher Education'. It is an autoethnographic analysis of a professional life of over 3 decades in the field. Interestingly, ITTE has featured in each phase. The extracts below might be of some interest to those who are new to the community, or wondering about the sense of direction in the next 30 years. It is a call to consider the longer view of working in community to help each other out in good times and bad.

1980s

A powerful influence and support for my thinking and practice was the national professional community, the Association for Information Technology in Teacher Education (ITTE). Established in the mid-1980s, it was a community of teacher educators in Higher Education who were trying to figure out how to develop the profile of IT in Teacher education through lobbying policy makers, supporting each other in course design and resources, and developing theory. Among the many active members of ITTE for example, Somekh called us to pay attention to the sociological imagination and the theoretical frameworks that we use in our research (Somekh, 2004), and Fisher placed educational ICT and teachers' work into wider critical perspectives and social theories (Fisher, 2008).

1995-2005

There were considerable delights and satisfactions of working in a developing field with a community such as ITTE, and a growing international network of colleagues with a burgeoning programme of conferences and seminars. We were active, stimulated, and enthusiastically engaged with practice, policy and research.

As the Chair of ITTE (1999-2001), I represented the Association in regular termly meetings with officials in the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), Department of Education and Employment (DfEE), and Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted), alongside connections with members of BECTA and Futurelab. They too took time to attend our conferences and research seminars, or be represented at our committee meetings. Their responsibility was to advise on and implement policy initiatives for the British Government that could be 'scaled up' for all schools and colleges. Ours was to inform on how these might work on the ground; warn that 'what works' might not always work in different situations; and advise on the role and needs of teacher education at that time.

We were invited to meet the Right Honourable Michael Wills, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Learning and Technology, to voice both our support for and concerns about recent New Labour policies for ICT in teacher education. The meeting embodied some of the contradictions between a future-focused prospective view of promoting the use of technologies in learning, and a past-focused retrospective view of knowledge demonstrated in mandatory ICT tests for the award of Qualified Teacher Status. I have not been bedazzled by pomp and circumstance since childhood, so found the escorted visit to the Houses of Parliament entertaining rather than awe-inspiring. The conversation was 'quick-firing' and lasted about fifteen minutes before we were bundled out of the way of the next appointment. The Minister seemed amiable, yet unmoved by our arguments that we already had more substantial ways to assess our student teachers' ICT capability than context-free tests. I left the meeting feeling a little disconcerted, yet having gained some insight into the tangled skeins of lobbying and influence.

Postscript. Baron Wells now sits in the House of Lords. There is no Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Learning and Technology in the current British government. The QTS ICT tests were scrapped in 2012. The IT curriculum has been revised to focus more on teaching computing. ITTE is

facing challenges of purpose and representation of teacher knowledge with technologies similar to those of the 1980s, yet without engaged policy support.

2014

[An] enduring thread through this story of a teacher educator is friendship: in professional communities; in collaborative work; and in the friendships that grow between colleagues and students. These friendships have been apparent as we work together in the contexts of education in a digital age over three decades, bearing witness and leaving traces through our teaching, publication and professional participation.

The professional association ITTE itself was a remarkable community and network in my professional life for over twenty years. It was countercultural, staying focused and small when other professional organisations were merging; supportive through sharing and offering opportunities for critical friendship, from annual conferences, research seminars, regional meetings, journal, newsletter; and aligned in purpose and trajectory, enacting an effective community of practice. Through our active participation in ITTE, I joined a smaller group of collaborators. Meeting to craft funding proposals, engage in fieldwork, and write reports and articles was always a pleasure, involving conviviality and much laughter. Indeed, over the years our informal motto became 'If it's not fun, we're not doing it'. Together we devised prototypes of interactive tools to support metacognition (Denning et al., 2003); reviewed literature on teachers' learning technology (Fisher et al., 2006); researched how teachers used early location-aware devices to create imaginative 'mediascapes' with their pupils (Loveless et al., 2008), explored teachers' knowledge of learning purposes with digital tools (Fisher et al., 2012); and analysed an overview of the field of education technologies in teacher education through international journals over 20 years (Denning et al., 2011).

We gradually realised how collective and seamless our approach and analysis had become when we could no longer identify where one person's thinking and suggestions merged into the next. Having each been early adopters of education technology, we were bewitched, bothered and bewildered together, through changes in teacher education curriculum, inspection regimes and university/school partnerships. Our respect, affection and care for each other went beyond the professional, particularly when anxiety or illness beset us or our families at different times. As we move towards retirement from our professional roles, our work will be done. Our friendship stands and the good work of trying to do the right thing for the right reasons together will abide with us.

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Update from Mirandanet: Dr Christina Preston

Move-It-Online MOOC: International Learning Design Challenge

http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/researchexchange/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WP_20130306_005.jpg

The London Knowledge Lab, Institute of Education, have just become partners in the EU HandsOn ICT project. As a result two events have been held there; on the 26th September, Sarah Younie and Christina Preston demonstrated the EU Handson ICT software to the participants at the What the Research Says seminar; on 16th October, in preparation for the third pilot of the Dr Patricia Charlton held a workshop to introduce MirandaNetters and other international participants to the lesson planning software, Learning Designer that is being used in one of the modules of the the EU HandsOn ICT third pilot, Move-It-Online.

The aim of Learning Designer is to provide ways of describing and sharing most effective teaching ideas, especially those that illustrate 'pedagogically purposeful uses of technology for learning'. In the workshop participants learn how to use this simple web interface that enables the user to browse learning designs for selected learning outcomes, topics and activities. It is possible to search for designs, review designs and adapt designs and create your own design. A core focus was the design of learning design activities with a particular focus on teaching and using ICT in particular teaching ICT in a broad sense e.g. digital literacies, IT, Computer Science and e-safety. In addition there were opportunities for the participants to comment on the CRAM tool as well which helps in identifying the hidden costs of online learning, to make suggestions for changes, critique existing designs, and develop their own designs and experiment with resources and cost modelling when moving from face-to-face to online teaching.

There is still time to join this MOOC which is led by Professor Diana Laurillard and her http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/researchexchange/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WP_20141015_017.jpg team, in collaboration with Building Community Knowledge, MirandaNet, Creative Digital Solutions and Hands-On ICT project. Join here. <http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/>

Learning Designer is based on Professor Diana Laurillard's research into effective teaching and learning over many years. The two key books, Rethinking University Teaching: A Conversational Framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies and Teaching as a Design Science: Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology can both be bought on Amazon <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Diana-Laurillard/e/B001HMKDV6> .

EU MOOC: HandsOn ICT third pilot.

MirandaNet have been partners in the EU HandsOn ICT project since 2013. The four members of the team are Theo Kuechel Ian Lynch, Christina Preston and Sarah Younie. All the details are on the blog including the presentations that we made in the summer at the MakeLearn

<<http://makelearn.issbs.si/>> and the MoodleMoot conferences in June in Slovenia and Key Competencies in Informatics and ICT (KEYCIT) <<http://www.informatikdidaktik.de/ifip2014>> in Potsdam, Germany.

<<http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/researchexchange/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/A-poster-session-at-Portoroz.jpg>> The third pilot in Canvas is very ambitious. More than 2200 participants from 120 different countries have registered. As a result of feedback this module is being offered in 7 languages in parallel: Catalan, English, French, Greek, Slovenian and Spanish. Also Bulgarian thanks to the OUNL partner and Sofia University, which is a key Associate Partner and contributes to the project by disseminating the MOOC among its contacts and staff but also by providing participants and facilitators for the Bulgarian group. Associate partners are organizations that are not part of the Consortium but contribute in some way to the project through dissemination, technologies, running pilots and so on.

It is not too late to join this MOOC here <<http://handsonict.eu/join-the-mooc/>>

Regards

Dr Christina Preston

Founder of the MirandaNet Fellowship

Trustee of World Ecitizens

Professor of Educational Innovation, University of Bedfordshire

New in Print

Some useful publications following on from an online survey last year by Matthew Kearney: who has just published a paper, based on data from the survey, in the journal **Computers and Education**.

Kearney, M., Burden, K., & Rai, T. (2015). Investigating teachers' adoption of signature mobile pedagogies. *Computers & Education* 80, 48-57

(Abstract via <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131514001821>)

Also,

Kevin Burden (UK) is leading a new project to develop the mobile learning toolkit we mentioned in the survey. It should be available in 2015.

The project website is: <http://geoges.ph-karlsruhe.de/mttep/>

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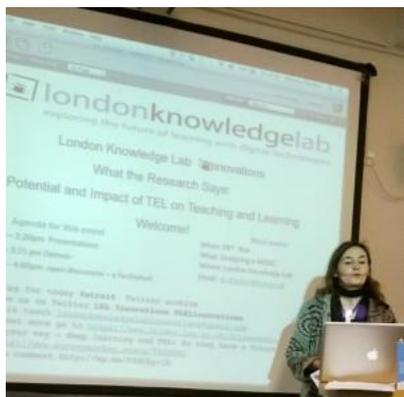
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Web: <http://www.uts.edu.au/staff/matthew.kearney>

Innovations in MOOCs:

Sarah Younie and Christina Preston who are both on the ITTE committee have been experimenting with MOOCs through the MirandaNet EU HandsOn ICT partnership. ITTE members can still join these pilots now for free if you want to see how MOOCs work.

Move-It-Online MOOC: International Learning Design Challenge



The London Knowledge Lab (LKL), Institute of Education, have just become partners in the EU HandsOn ICT project with MirandaNet and partners in Catalonia, Greece, Slovenia and The Netherlands. As a result of the partnership with LKL, two EU events have been held at LKL; on the 26th September, Sarah Younie and Christina Preston, MirandaNet Fellowship demonstrated the EU Handson ICT software to the participants at the What the Research Says seminar; on 16th

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Dr Christina Preston

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Alison's Google Gleanings

Anyone who knows anyone who struggles with Maths will find this useful from Steve Chinn who has been working over the past two years on a collection of videos to support children and adults who are having difficulties learning maths and their teachers. It went on-line on Friday 7th November 2014. Use the URL www.mathsexplained.co.uk to view the site.

Autumn Reading

Now this is where I slow down, (and where Neil leaves me standing, the man's a reading machine!). I did manage to drag myself through classic Russian Short Stories (and wondered how I managed to read all those massive novels when I was an undergrad!) but I can't say I recommend them...Back to Patrick Ness then for another sweep through his offerings after we listened to the whole of the Chaos Walking Trilogy in the car this summer. .

If you have time, please check out my son Ben's second novel (he's now 14) "World War Me" on the writing site Figment at: <http://figment.com/books/848767-World-War-Me>. You have to register but it's free and so very much appreciated!

Alison Hramiak

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Web Wanderings

Neil Stanley

Firstly a couple of downloads: pixlr.com/desktop is a photo editor and kritastudio.com/krita.html a painting program, both free.

The new Google Computer Science search is at www.cs4hs.com/resources/cscs.html and other resources can be found at mrcolley.com/ict-resources/ and, with an interesting presentation metaphor, jenniferbarnett.wikispaces.com/My+Web+Wardrobe.

There are some programming resources for Python at www.pythontutor.com/visualize.html#mode=edit and interactivepython.org/courselib/static/pythonds/index.html. Spherly and Pixly may interest too: outreach.cs.ua.edu/spherly, outreach.cs.ua.edu/pixly. And if you are into BASIC try www.quitebasic.com.

If you have relatives that served in WW1 then you may care to 'remember' them on livesofthefirstworldwar.org (I found my maternal grandfather and updated his details). You may also be interested in the Sassoon notebook scans at cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/sassoon.

A map based interface for Ofsted reports can be found at www.watchsted.com.

As yet a limited set of towns is covered but walkit.com will help you plan an efficient route on foot.

This article, www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/nov/12/time-saving-apps-teachers?CMP=share_btn_tw, points to some interesting apps – the multiple choice answer scanner looks interesting. Have you tried photomath.net?

Here are the silly ones (warning 1st one has some visually dodgy side links) - www.worldofcrap.co.uk/10-random-things-from-the-1986-argos-catalogue.html and lego.gizmodo.com/this-lego-particle-accelerator-should-be-the-next-brick-1657426389.

New on the bookshelf

Neil Stanley

Well that's all 23 Brunetti novels read; now I'll have to wait on Donna Leon while she writes her next one. As I'd visited Venice before and during reading them I'm not sure whether that helps you become more immersed in the books. Mind you I've always avoided reading novels based where I'm holidaying whilst I holiday, as I feel that would distort my view of the location. Donna Leon's *Jewels of Paradise* (Cornerstone) is still set in Venice but with no police detectives. It's an interesting mystery, though you may guess the outcome before the end.

In keeping with the Venice theme I also read *The Serpent of Venice* by Christopher Moore (William Morrow): if you've read Moore you'll know he is a quirky writer and if you like that then this won't disappoint. It may help if you understand the Shakespeare references more fully than I did.

I enjoyed *Cockroaches* by Jo Nesbo (Vintage) – this time Harry Hole is 'banished' to Bangkok to

support local police investigating a case involving a Norwegian national with Harry's bosses hoping he'll mess up. I'm liking the way I'm getting introduced to this main character (not Brunetti, but ...).

Lindsey Davis has moved on a generation with her series of ancient Rome based detective stories. *The Ides of April* (Hodder & Stoughton) has Flavia, the adopted daughter of Falco, taking on his role as investigator. She has always been portrayed as a tough character and is well equipped to have some adventures that should mean she's a worthy successor to her father.

The Feast of Artemis (Bloomsbury) is Anne Zouroudi's 7th outing for her fat Greek detective with the white plimsolls. These are gentle reads but seem to pierce the culture of traditional Greece. I'd been price watching this on Kindle before I bought it – it seems odd that it can cost so much for e-versions that you only licence to read and can't pass on to a friend or a charity shop.

JK Rowling, writing as Robert Galbraith, has produced the second of her Cormoran Strike novels. *The Silkworm* (Sphere) is based in a squabbling literary circle where competition for clients leads to strife. A good read and a continuation of what may become a very good series.

Christos Tsiolkas' *Barracuda* (Atlantic) was a slow read for me – it moves around in the time sequence of the life of an Australian of Greek heritage who has the potential to become an Olympic champion swimmer. I suspect that not really getting into the skins of any of the characters was the problem for me.

In *The Villa Triste* (Pan) by Lucretia Grindle we again are bridging time – a contemporary murder leads to the story of sisters involved in the Italian Second World War resistance. I was reading this just as the BBC4 Saturday crime slot was showing a series with a similar context. The links between now and then are well spaced and generated in a very rational way meaning you do feel involved in the tale.

Another variant on the 'Curious Dog' Asperger's line is *The Rosie Project* (Penguin). Graeme Simsion's protagonist Don only does set time schedules, meals and routines. However when he starts out to find a partner he finds that a questionnaire is perhaps not the best way forward and he gets pushed out of his narrow zone of comfort.

Murder of a Dead Man (Accent) by Katherine John involves the shocking death of a vagrant who apparently had died 2 years previously. In Jim Kelly's *The Water Clock* (Penguin) a journalist with issues (don't most of them in books) is investigating a body found frozen in the Cambridgeshire Fens. It is very atmospheric and you get a real feel of a bleak cold environment.

Separated at Death (Herringbone) by JJ Salkeld feels like a TV crime drama, detectives from different backgrounds (at least one with a troubled backstory) and based in the rewardingly visual Lake District. However it was a good tale and was only a 99p Kindle deal. *Trick of the Dark* (Sphere) by Val McDermid is a tale of complex lesbian love and murder in pursuit of that love.

A Magnus Mills book is always a treat and *A Cruel Bird Came to the Nest and Looked In* (Bloomsbury) is no exception – it doesn't really go anywhere but it paints a picture of a world that may be seen as an allegorical version of ours. We see that world through the eyes of our narrator, a recently appointed Minister. Of course the Ministers have no expertise in their own department and the Emperor is on an extended absence...

Of course, the most important new title is A Practical Guide to Teaching Computing & ICT in the Secondary School (Routledge) by Andrew Connell and Anthony Edwards with Alison Hramiak, Gavin Rhoades and Neil Stanley ... but then I may be a little biased! **(I can't argue with him here and have already got our university library to purchase a few copies! Ed)**

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