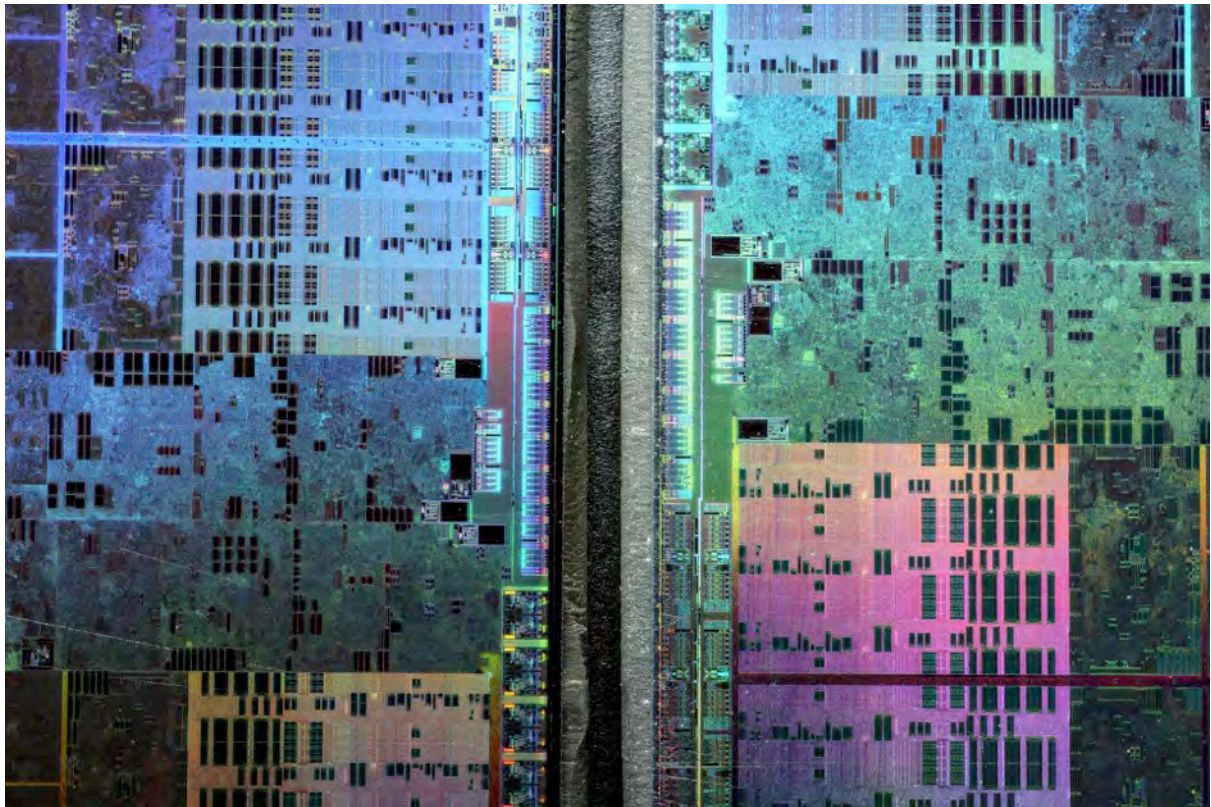# UK Association for Studies in Innovation Science and Technology AsSIST-UK

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 17
November 2022

Fritzchens Fritz / Better Images of AI / GPU shot etched 5 / CC-BY 4.0

Welcome to the quarterly newsletter from AsSIST-UK sent to all registered members of the association. Please ensure your contact details are up to date, and if they have changed, contact the Chair of the Executive Committee; Professor Robin Williams robin.williams@ed.ac.uk. For all ongoing news visit the website at https://assistuk.org/. This newsletter was compiled by EC member, Dr Jennifer Chubb.

WELCOME NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

It has been a busy period for the AsSIST-UK Executive Committee. We have met on numerous occasions this past term, including our very successful Early Career Researchers summer school (7th September 2022, Guildhall, York). This was followed by a well-attended public lecture organised by colleagues at the University of York to celebrate the life and work of our dear colleague, Professor Andrew Webster, which will become an annual occurrence. We were delighted that members of Andrew's family joined and that we were able to award the AsSIST UK PhD prize - now renamed the Andrew Webster PhD prize - in his memory.

The Executive Committee will be meeting in January 2023 to discuss priorities for the coming year, including increasing our ECR development activities and the AsSIST UK 2023 conference - our next biennial national conference. We will be asking for nominations for the next Andrew Webster PhD Prize with further details in the next newsletter.

Building a Culture of Respect and Care in STS

Content warning: sexual harassment, abuse of power and disillusionment

AsSIST-UK Executive Committee has noted the recent allegations[1] of bullying and harassment at Harvard STS. We have considered these and would like to issue a statement of solidarity and support for those who have recently spoken out. These testimonials reflect a need to address toxic practices[2] and behaviour in research culture - they should be fully investigated and treated with sensitivity and respect. Dismissal and or whitewashing of serious allegations of sexual harassment, humiliation and bullying is not tolerated by our STS community at AsSIST-UK.

We applaud and stand with our colleagues and related associations for their commitment to providing a voice to these matters and on building new policies (see a statement by The Italia STS Association, a commitment to building a new policy from EASST and a thoughtful piece from Warren Pearce in Sheffield's Sociological Studies Research Blog). These issues understandably raise questions amongst early career researchers about the reluctance of senior academics to question historic or current bad behaviour on the part of leaders of the field. We are working to build better practices and have incorporated representatives of the Postgraduate Forum on STIS and early career group into our wider executive team meetings in order to ensure that their voices are better heard.

To read more about the issues surrounding the management of such complaints in universities and research institutions, see Dr Anna Bull's (co-director of The 1752 Group[3]) latest article Will academia ever have its #MeToo moment? Please contact the AsSIST-UK Executive Committee to discuss any of these matters as we work to build a better research culture.

---

[1] https://medium.com/@claudia_gertraud/on-its-20th-anniversary-my-testimonial-on-the-harvard-sts-program-64100f6caac7

[2] https://sts-news.medium.com/costs-untold-sheila-jasanoff-and-metoosts-6a101d361999

[3] https://1752group.com/

New Membership System Introduced

A very warm welcome to all our new members. We have developed a new membership system that enables for online profiles to be set up and allows members to easily update details, etc.

We kindly ask all members to register with the new system here: https://assistuk.org/register/

The existing spreadsheet-based register will be phased out over the next few months and due to data protection regulations, we are not able to transfer your names and contact details automatically.

Please register with the new system as soon as you can and heed the reminders we will share in due course, as otherwise you may accidentally drop off the register of A-UK members. Many thanks for your support and cooperation.

ASSIST NEWS

Andrew Webster Annual Lecture. Guildhall, York | 7 Sep 2022

The University of York hosted the inaugural Andrew Webster Annual Lecture in celebration of the life and contribution of AsSIST-UK's co-founder, Professor Andrew Webster (1951-2021).

The lecture was given by Professor Klaus Hoeyer, University of Copenhagen on the topic of Health in space: Making sense of the experience of data-intensive cross-border healthcare In addition to the lecture, the event included a small panel of invited participants offering their reflections on Andrew and his intellectual contributions. We used the occasion to award the Andrew Webster Prize made by AsSIST-UK for an outstanding PhD in STS/innovation studies. We are so grateful to all who came, spoke and supported this event. We are delighted to have been joined by the Webster family to celebrate Andrew's life and work.

Andrew Webster 2022 PhD Prize

AsSIST-UK awards an annual prize for a PhD thesis that demonstrates outstanding quality in the STS/Innovation Studies field. The Prize is an important way in which the Association supports the work of new scholars. From 2021 onwards, the prize has been dedicated to the memory of AsSIST-UK cofounder, Prof. Andrew Webster.

The Prize is awarded for a thesis that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- exploring the links between STS and Innovation Studies;
- links to other disciplines and working across the sciences and humanities;
- different forms of public/policy impact and engagement;
- opening up novel areas of inquiry for STIS.

We are delighted to announce that the 2022 Andrew Webster Prize was awarded to:

Dr Daniel Robins, University of York, for his thesis:
The Production of Value in Corpse Disposal

Daniel's thesis examines the disposal of corpses in England as a production process where value is generated out of the waste materials of the dead body, looking at two contemporary corpse disposal cultures; cremation and natural burial. Daniel's novel interdisciplinary work draws on and contributes to death studies, waste studies and STIS, and beyond.

It explores the environmental concerns of corpse disposal and questions how death industry technologies function in an environmentally friendly way. He actively questions the tense relationship that new environmental initiatives in the death profession have with capitalism, drawing attention to the ways in which environmentally friendly corpse disposal initiatives are undermined in favour of processing of value out of waste, and raising policy-relevant questions about the management of chemicals in the dead body.

We will be asking for PhD nominations for the Andrew Webster PhD Prize with further details in the next newsletter.

AsSIST UK EARLY CAREER SUMMER SCHOOL (7 SEPT 2022)

On the same day as the lecture and prize giving, we invited Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to join a day of activity at The Guildhall in York, designed with and for ECRs as part of a programme of activities organised by AsSIST-UK to support ECRs in the post-pandemic period.

Planned plenary and small group sessions included developing your postdoc career; publication strategy, funding application workshop and "rent-a-mentor". Thanks to generous support from the University of York, Science and Technology Studies Unit/Sociology, there was no charge for the event. This event received excellent feedback and we thank all those involved.

EARLY CAREER PUBLISHING WORKSHOPS

In the spring, AsSIST-UK, in collaboration with the editors of two Science Technology and Innovation Studies (STIS) journals, offered two online early career researcher sessions on publishing. The sessions were well attended. Brief summaries are below and recordings of the sessions are available here.

Publishing in *Science as Culture*: advice from the Editors*,* 8th March 2022

In March, the editorial team from the journal *Science as Culture* (Les Levidow, Kean Birch, and Mascha Gugganig) gave tips about what editors and reviewers look for in a journal article, including what to include in your submission, how to structure them, and what to avoid. For example: the research question should drive the work and the paper; it should be explicit what the main STIS theoretical concept is being used and have a separate theory section; think about the concept having its own social life – engage in how other authors have thought about and used them; and, engage with the editors in dialogue about ideas for papers.

Publishing in leading STI journals: advice from the editor of *Research Policy,* 3rd May 2022

In May, Ben Martin (from SPRU's 'Science Politics and Decision Making' research mobiliser group) shared advice and insights as long-term editor for the journal *Research Policy*; although, much of the advice related to all journals. Such as, check out journal description and keywords, make sure you cite potential referees and provide evidence that you have researched and

identified a gap in theory. Ben encourages people to be bold with their papers, even though they may receive more critical reviews, as they may have higher impact in the long run. The journal doesn't have a fast publishing rate (c15 months) and 60% are desk rejected. The remaining 800 papers are reviewed by 3 people.

BETTER IMAGES AND REPRESENTATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Executive Committee member Dr Jenn Chubb from the University of York has been appointed as an advisor to the better images of AI project led by We and AI. Jenn's work also looks at how AI is sonically framed through voice and music.

Image by Alan Warburton / © BBC / Better Images of AI / Quantified Human / CC-BY 4.0

Abstract, futuristic or science-fiction-inspired images (and sounds) of AI hinder the understanding of the technology's already significant societal and environmental impacts. Images relating machine intelligence to human intelligence set unrealistic expectations and misstate the capabilities of AI. Images representing AI as sentient robots mask the accountability of the humans actually developing the technology, and can suggest the presence of robots where there are none. Such images potentially sow fear, and research shows they can be laden with historical assumptions about gender, ethnicity and religion. Finding alternatives can be difficult, the better images project repository is a good place to start. Alternatively contact jennifer.chubb@york.ac.uk

DONALD MACKENZIE RECEIVES HIGHEST HONOUR FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF TECHNOLOGY

Many congratulations to Donald MacKenzie (Sociology, University of Edinburgh) who has received the Leonardo da Vinci Medal, the highest recognition from the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT).

Donald received the medal for his 'outstanding contributions to the history of technology, through innovative research, imaginative teaching, sustained publications, and significant contributions to technology and culture, and other society activities.'

The society said: "For an astonishing four decades, MacKenzie has been at the forefront of advancing scholarly understandings of technology's interactions with politics, society, science and culture."

It added: "For advancing our understanding of the history of technology, for exemplifying new and productive research methods and strategies, and for widely and creatively communicating the results, Donald MacKenzie is a worthy recipient of SHOT's 2022 da Vinci Medal."

Donald picked up his award at the SHOT Awards Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

For more information about ASSIST-UK activities, please contact a board member:

The AsSIST-UK Executive Committee has recruited new members over the past year to replace retirements and to support our increasing range of activities. A note of thank you goes to Barbara Ribeiro (Manchester) and Anne-Marie Coles (Westminster) who stood down during the year - we thank them for their contribution as, respectively, Vice-Chair/membership secretary and Newsletter co-editor.

The current Executive Committee comprises:

Robin Williams (chair) & Matjaz Vidmar, University of Edinburgh robin.williams@ed.ac.uk, Matjaz.Vidmar@ed.ac.uk
Kieron Flanagan & Julia Kasmire, University of Manchester kieron.flanagan@manchester.ac.uk j.kasmire@manchester.ac.uk
Vanessa Ashall & Jenn Chubb, University of York vanessa.ashall@york.ac.uk, jennifer.chubb@york.ac.uk
Rachel Hale, Cardiff University HaleR3@cardiff.ac.uk

Katerina Psarikidou, University of Sussex A.Psarikidou@sussex.ac.uk
We also welcome three new members who, as doctoral students, will pay particular attention to reviving our Early Career Researcher organisation.
Louise Elstow, University of Lancaster, James Besse & Xiao Yang, University of Edinburgh
l.elstow@lancaster.ac.uk, J.W.Besse@sms.ed.ac.uk Xiao.Yang@ed.ac.uk