

# U2B

UNIVERSITY TO BUSINESS

Winter '07/08

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Winner Of £25K Entrepreneur  
Competition

On the Innovation **TRAIL**

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**Sophiasearch**  
making meaning from content

 University of  
**ULSTER**

BELFAST ■ COLERAINE ■ JORDANSTOWN ■ MAGEE

COURSES



RESEARCH



WORKING WITH BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY



# Welcome...

## Success breeds Success

Since the creation of Ulster's Office of Innovation, as reported in the last edition of *U2B*, the University's commercial output has continued to accelerate and grow.

The annual Higher Education - Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey which concluded in January 2008 highlighted a massive

430% increase in the number of consultancy assignments undertaken by Ulster's academics, a 240% increase in the level of research contracted by local companies and a 15% increase in technology transfer activity. We are delighted with our increase in performance and aim to build on this momentum in 2008.

This edition of *U2B* highlights how the application of University expertise to a range of business

needs, has led not just to industry recognition, but also international acclaim.

I would encourage anyone who is interested in any of the stories, or who would be keen to engage with the University to see how it might help their business, to contact our Business Liaison Office on 028 9036 8019 or email [enquiry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:enquiry@ulster.ac.uk)

**Tim Brundle**  
Director of Innovation

## SOPHIA Search: Don't just Search your Information, Understand it!

### Business Profile

**WHO:**

Dr David Patterson

**EDUCATION:**

BSc Biochemistry, Queen's University Belfast; MSc Computing and Information Systems and PhD, University of Ulster

**CAREER:**

David's first job was as a researcher in Artificial Intelligence. He then accepted a post as a lecturer in computing before becoming a senior lecturer in 2006. He co-founded SOPHIA Search in 2007



**LINKS WITH ULSTER:**

David's links with Ulster stem from his days as a Masters student in 1990. Since then he has either studied or worked at the University

SOPHIA Search Ltd, a spin-out from Ulster in partnership with Saint Petersburg State University, was named the overall winner at this year's £25K Entrepreneur Competition, sponsored by Science Parks and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

SOPHIA Search has developed a sophisticated search engine for organisations with vast reserves of unstructured data.

SOPHIA automatically trawls through documents, identifies key themes that they contain and then groups them into themes to which they are topically most similar. Therefore when a user requests information, SOPHIA returns coherent themes relating to the query, each one containing topically similar documents. For example, if you searched for java, possible themes would include programming, an island and coffee. This knowledge improves decision-making as users no longer have to sift through long lists of topically diverse information to find what they need.

Dr David Patterson, CEO of SOPHIA Search explained: "SOPHIA just doesn't find relevant information for customers, it also empowers them with an understanding of the meaning of the information returned. Using conventional search is akin to using a torch in a dark room (the torch represents the search engine and the room, an organisation's information). Only the parts of the room that have the beam of light focussed on them can be seen at any one time, with limited understanding of the information in view. Using SOPHIA is like flicking the switch for a bright ceiling light. The whole room can be seen and all information understood at once."



Dr David Patterson



For additional information on SOPHIA Search, please visit the website [www.sophiasearch.com](http://www.sophiasearch.com), telephone 028 9093 0030 or email [info@sophiasearch.com](mailto:info@sophiasearch.com)

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Front cover picture: Dr David Patterson champions the use of SOPHIA Search as a decision making tool.

Photocredit: Alastair Nevin for the University of Ulster

## Communicating with Business

The School of Communication delivers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in communication, advertising, public relations, lobbying, health communication, counselling and linguistics. In order to meet the needs of business, the School is continually developing its range of courses.

As part of current planning and development activities, the School wishes to engage with businesses across Northern Ireland. Market Research is being conducted in the form of an online questionnaire. To access and complete the questionnaire, please log on to [www.ulster.ac.uk/cpdsurvey](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/cpdsurvey)



For further information contact Dr Diane Hazlett, Head of School of Communication, telephone (028) 9036 6453 or email [de.hazlett@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:de.hazlett@ulster.ac.uk).

## Knowledge 2B: Transferring Knowledge and Helping Business Grow



The University helps businesses to grow through two knowledge transfer programmes – Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) and the cross border FUSION programme.

### Global Armour - Design for the Future

**The KTP between the University of Ulster and Global Armour is focusing on redesigning soft body armour protection for international markets as well as developing new products, including shaped body armour for females.**



Building multi-layer Kevlar into 3 dimensional form

Project leader, Janet Coulter, lecturer in fashion design explained: “The company was making a product that was technically compliant with Ministry of Defence specifications, but design limitations meant tendering opportunities were potentially being missed.”

Embedding good design practice at the core of the company not only ensured a more aesthetically pleasing product, but new features are being factored into the garment design.

The company has taken the opportunity to use innovative textiles such as Kevlar; however, an increase in knife crime has meant that new fabrics have had to be sourced to prevent knife penetration.

Janet explained: “Kevlar cannot stop a knife from piercing the armour so the challenge is to find a knife resistant material that can still be cut at manufacture stage – we have been testing new ways of cutting the knife resistant materials, including trials with laser cutters at the University.”

A key part of the project is to implement an in-house computer-aided-design (CAD) system for technical design and manufacture. This will ultimately enhance design, reduce costs and streamline production.



**To find out how your business could benefit from a KTP Programme, please contact the KTP Office, telephone 028 7137 5236 or email [ktp@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:ktp@ulster.ac.uk)**

### Leaders in their Game: Meedja Ltd

**Meedja Ltd is a rapidly growing media studio, with offices in Dundalk and Dublin. It has established itself as a leading developer of web-based games and applications.**

With an eclectic client base and portfolio, the company's work to date has included projects as diverse as web and CD-ROM games, e-learning content management systems, television game show software and database-driven CD-ROMs.

In order to develop wide area gaming (WAG), the company enlisted the support of Dr Kevin Curran from the School of Computing and Intelligent Systems. Dr Curran proposed the use of radio frequency identification

(RFID) technology, which enabled gamers to be identified accurately outdoors, with the help of electronically tagged objects ‘broadcasting’ their location to the mobile devices.

Peter Mee, company founder said: “By bringing these two technologies together, Meedja are in a strong position to capture this embryonic gaming market and become world leaders.”



A handheld personal digital assistant (PDA) scanning a tag to find the next clue in an outdoor treasure hunt game



**The FUSION programme is being relaunched by InterTradelreland and more funding has been made available to help more companies improve their competitiveness and profitability. For further information on FUSION, please contact Dr Janet Johnston, telephone 028 9036 8215 or e-mail [j.johnston1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:j.johnston1@ulster.ac.uk)**

## 'Fresh' Insight for Farmers

The School of Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Strategy has joined forces with the *dunnhumby* Academy of Consumer Research at Kent Business School, Tesco and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), in an initiative to provide consumer insight to Northern Ireland farmers.

The *dunnhumby* data enables local farmers and small food producers to gain insights into consumer preferences. An initial pilot project, focusing on ice cream producers, illustrated that increasing demand for locally produced food requires sound understanding of the market.

Arnaldo Morelli, Morelli Ice Cream, said: "As an ice-cream supplier, the data allowed us to gain a unique understanding of the market which will prove to be invaluable to us as a small operator."

Dr Gillian Armstrong, School of Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Strategy, explained: "It is essential that farmers and small producers know how and why consumers behave."

The Director of the *dunnhumby* Academy, Dr Andrew Fearne, sees opportunities to replicate this initiative in other agri-food sectors within Northern Ireland: "Farmers and small food producers have benefited hugely from analysing the *dunnhumby* data to make effective marketing and business planning decisions."



The University is delivering consumer insight to local farmers and small food producers

For further details, please contact Dr Gillian Armstrong, School of Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Strategy, telephone 028 9036 6472, or email [ga.armstrong@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:ga.armstrong@ulster.ac.uk)



## Marketing your North West Business

The Certificate in Marketing and Advertising Practice (C.MAP), an initiative between the University of

Ulster and Letterkenny Institute of Technology, has just been launched. It aims to support small companies in the North West cross border region to improve their marketing capabilities and gain a third level qualification.

Course participant Collette McGrade, Studio Manager, Lairdesign, explained: "Lairdesign is a busy design practice operating in a competitive market. C.MAP is providing me with the opportunity to think about how we are marketing our business. The practical focus of the course is very useful for small businesses and the networking opportunities help us learn from each other."

Professor Dolores O'Reilly, Head of School, International Business, commented: "With increasing levels

of international competition entering the marketplace, it is vital that marketing becomes an integral function within local SMEs and not an adhoc activity that simply reacts to competitive market pressures."

Part financed by the European Union's INTERREG IIIA Programme for Ireland/Northern Ireland, the C.MAP programme provides participants with a University accredited qualification, mentoring in marketing and access to a small budget for test marketing activities.

For further details, please contact Edel Griffin, Course Director C.MAP, telephone 028 7137 5196, or email [e.griffin@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:e.griffin@ulster.ac.uk)

## Collaborate, Innovate, Improve

Through the Innovation Promoters Programme, the University is partnering with businesses throughout Northern Ireland to place innovation and research at the core of their development. The programme offers support to businesses by matching them with University experts, equipped to advance their innovative projects.



From left: Johnny Wallace, senior lecturer in computing science; Cllr Robert Smith, Mayor of Craigavon; Kerry Thompson, Office of Innovation; and Alderman Stephen Moutray, Chair of Development

Jonathan Wallace, senior lecturer, Faculty of Computing and Engineering, said: "Typically the kind of projects being supported under the programme include a feasibility study of a new business concept, physical prototyping of a new product or service, process improvement or applied research. The University is keen to develop long term relationships with each business and to continue to share knowledge and expertise as the business grows."

A previous participant on the Innovation Promoters Programme, Peter Donnelly, Bluescope Medical Technologies, concluded: "The University has brought a body of research and considerable knowledge to supporting Bluescope's technology platform and product portfolio and we can certainly see a long term partnership developing."

The programme is currently being supported by Lisburn City Council, Craigavon Borough Council and Omagh District Council.

To find out more, please contact Kerry Thompson, Office of Innovation, telephone 028 9036 8603, or email [k.thompson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:k.thompson@ulster.ac.uk)

## On the Innovation TRAIL

The University of Ulster's TRAIL (Technologies for Rurality, Ageing and Independent Living) laboratory has joined the European Network of Living Labs (ENOLL). The concept of Living Labs represents a new approach to research, development and innovation, engaging stakeholders in the innovation process.

Dr Maurice Mulvenna, senior lecturer, School of Computing and Mathematics, explained: "TRAIL is a new kind of laboratory, called a living lab, which stimulates innovation and empowers people – it offers ageing and disabled people in Northern Ireland new ways to participate in designing products that can make a difference to their lives. For example, giving people with dementia more meaningful reminders during their day or alerting carers when these people wander".

The establishment of TRAIL will build on the University's research and teaching excellence in innovation. The lab is supported by the University and project funders include the Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) R&D Office and the European Commission's Information Science Technologies (IST) Programme and INTERREG Programmes.



To find out more about TRAIL, please contact  
Dr Maurice Mulvenna, School of Computing  
and Mathematics, telephone 028 9036 8602,  
or email [md.mulvenna@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:md.mulvenna@ulster.ac.uk)



## Avec finds 'Solutions' with Ulster

Ulster is committed to supporting business growth within social enterprises through a range of bespoke services and training. The focus is on helping social enterprises provide an innovative, client-focused business service, which strengthens their social impact at community level.

Among those social enterprises that have benefited from consultancy support using University of Ulster academic expertise, is Avec Solutions.

Avec works throughout Northern Ireland, providing cost-effective consultancy and support services. Their range of services includes ICT and management consultancy, finance and accounting services, computer network installation and support, website development, VoIP phone systems and internet hosting.

Avec had identified a need for support on employment law and Pat Maxwell, Ulster's School of Law provided an immediate and tailored response, as well as carrying out a review of Avec's contractual documentation and employment handbook and policies.

Maurice Kinkead, Chief Executive, Avec Solutions said: "I gladly acknowledge the help we received from the University of Ulster; the support was excellent and offered in a very professional, user-friendly manner."



To find out more about  
support available to social  
economy businesses, please  
contact Kerry Thompson,  
Office of Innovation,  
telephone 028 9036 8603,  
or email [k.thompson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:k.thompson@ulster.ac.uk)

## Doing the Twist!

Whale (Munster Simms Engineering Ltd.), a Bangor based manufacturer and supplier of Marine & RV equipment, has worked with the University to design and produce an innovative deck shower.

Patrick Hurst, Managing Director said: "Having attended a trade show, I realised that manufacturers and suppliers of deck or transom showers were not providing customers with a well-designed and innovative product to integrate into their vessels."

The company had a sound vision of how the product should evolve and approached Stephen McGilloway and Justin Magee, lecturers in product design at Ulster, to provide support.

Working alongside the University, the team examined the aesthetics of the product and the design for manufacture and assembly. The finished product centres on a single 'wand' design that integrates the hot and cold function inside the shower handle, with no external 'taps' necessary. This also provides a very cost-effective solution, by reducing part and labour costs.

The product was very well received by the industry at its European launch at Amsterdam RAI, organiser of the annual Design Award METS (DAME Award) competition, where it was short-listed for the prestigious DAME Award. At the US launch, the product was also nominated for a National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) Innovation Award at IBEX 2007, Florida.



For information on consultancy  
support please contact Joel Ferguson  
at UU Tech Ltd, telephone 028 9093 0016 or  
email [j.ferguson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:j.ferguson@ulster.ac.uk). For design  
queries, please contact Stephen McGilloway,  
lecturer in Product Design, telephone  
028 9026 7298, or email  
[s.mcgilloway@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:s.mcgilloway@ulster.ac.uk)

## ManageMint Ltd 'SPEED' towards Success



Jeremy Baird, ManageMint Ltd

The Faculty of Business and Management provides a range of opportunities to assist students undertaking either full-time or part-time courses, in starting their own businesses.

The SPEED (Student Placement for Entrepreneurs in Education) Initiative and Invest Northern Ireland's Start a Business programme, provided crucial seed funding for Jeremy Baird and Alistair Smith, after they completed their Masters in Business with Information Innovation at Ulster.

They launched their own property management and maintenance company specialising in 'student lets' in the Coleraine area. 'ManageMint Ltd' was formed using entrepreneurial skills inherited during their time at the University.

## Real Estate Initiative



Daniel Libeskind

Daniel Libeskind, world renowned architect and visionary behind the masterplan to rebuild the World Trade Centre site in New York, gave the keynote speech at the University of Ulster Real Estate Initiative (UUREI)

launch. Ulster Honorary Graduate, Wendy Austin acted as compere.

The UUREI is a partnership between the University, a number of major property developers and a range of financial institutions across Ireland. Its aim is to fund research in disciplines related to the sector and to provide a forum to enable the partners to collaborate with public sector bodies to drive sustainable growth.

For further information on the Real Estate Initiative, please contact Veronica Farrell, telephone 028 90 66112 or email [va.farrell@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:va.farrell@ulster.ac.uk)

For further information on SPEED, please contact, Patrick Ibbotson, senior lecturer in E-Commerce, telephone 028 7032 4148 or email: [pg.ibbotson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:pg.ibbotson@ulster.ac.uk)

## Star of the North West

Following shortlisting by the European Commission for RegioStars 2008, the work of the University's EpiCentre is being considered for an award. RegioStars – the Awards for Innovative Projects aim to identify good innovative practices in regional development

The EpiCentre provides technology support, supervised access to equipment and knowledge transfer to local technology companies. Since its inception, EpiCentre has assisted over 70 companies and facilitated cross border training and networking.

EpiCentre, a cross border venture brings together industry and academia in the North West region. The project is led by the Intelligent Systems Research Centre (ISRC) at Ulster, in collaboration with the North West Regional College and Letterkenny Institute of Technology.



NORTH WEST REGION  
Cross Border Group

For further information, visit the EpiCentre website [www.epicentreireland.com](http://www.epicentreireland.com)



Kieran Fegan, Centre Manager of Greenshoots Newry Ltd with Dr Jo McKelvie, Evita Services

## BIG homecoming support for big idea!

Dr Jo McKelvie, a County Down vet, has established 'Evita Services', developing products to support pharmaceutical veterinary clinical trials.

Jo participated on the Border Innovation Gateway (BIG) pre-incubation programme run by Greenshoots, Newry Ltd, the technology and business incubator joint venture between Southern Regional College (SRC) and Ulster.

She explained: "The programme has been invaluable to me – the access to

academic institutions for mentoring, training and research was fundamental to the development of my business." Encouraging new participants, Kieran Fegan, Centre Manager of Greenshoots Newry Ltd, commented: "The BIG Programme is part financed by the EU through Interreg IIIA, it is free of charge, and recruitment is now underway for the next course."

For further information on BIG, please contact Kieran Fegan on 028 3026 5402 or email [fegank@greenshoots-newry.com](mailto:fegank@greenshoots-newry.com)

## Radox Laboratories has Designs on the Future

**Radox Laboratories, a large diagnostic reagent and equipment manufacturer, was founded in 1982. Since its inception, the company has developed revolutionary technology in the field of medical diagnostics.**



The Engineering division at Radox has successfully launched a range of award-winning diagnostic analysers, using their exclusive biochip technology. Aiden Walsh, the company's senior design engineer, is currently enrolled on the MDes Design and Communication programme, in the School of Creative Arts.

Justin Magee, senior lecturer in Product Design at Ulster is using his international design experience to mentor Aiden

towards future-proofing their brand and to begin design on a new rapid diagnostics product called the 'Evidence Multistat'.

Commenting on the programme, Justin said: "Aiden is being trained to develop new skills and knowledge transfer towards integrating intensive concept generation methods, ergonomic analysis and embedding the emotional domain within products, bringing added value."

The Multistat product is now at working prototype stage and has already been exhibited at MEDICA, the world forum for medicine, where it has received positive industry feedback.

Owing to the success of this project, further collaboration will take place between the University and Radox.

 **For information on consultancy support please contact Joel Ferguson at UU Tech Ltd, telephone 028 9093 0016 or email [j.ferguson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:j.ferguson@ulster.ac.uk). For design queries please contact Justin Magee, senior lecturer in Product Design, telephone 028 7137 5355, or email [jdm.magee@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:jdm.magee@ulster.ac.uk)**

## Incisions, Incisions

**The University of Ulster and Durham University have collaborated on the design and development of a surgical gown named 'Incisions' as a unique tool for teaching medical students.**

The garment, one of a series developed by the universities, will be worn and studied by medical students in their training to give them a better technical and emotional understanding of what will happen to their patients on the operating table. The team believes it could also improve communication between surgeons and patients.

Professor John McLachlan, Associate Dean in Durham University's School for Health, explained: "Current anatomical teaching aids describe but they don't evoke; they take no account of emotional involvement or the feel of the material.

"The silk and rubber gown echoes the texture of human muscles and zips have been placed over the major sites of surgical incisions, named on the cloth."



Artistic Lead, Karen Fleming, Reader in Textiles at Ulster said: "The body and garments are common objects in art and design but collaboration with medical knowledge brings a new dimension."

The research team aims to share their research with medical schools around the UK and beyond.

 **For more information on 'Incisions', please contact Karen Fleming, School of Art and Design, telephone 028 9026 7267 or email [k.fleming@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:k.fleming@ulster.ac.uk)**

## Companies getting SMART with Ulster

**The Office of Innovation at Ulster is assisting a range of local knowledge-based start-up companies to develop future products and services by applying scientific and technological know-how.**

Clearway Medical, through a SMART award from InvestNI, has developed novel technology to improve the respiratory health of asthmatics.

Gerry Burke, Business Development, Clearway Medical, said: "It would be extremely difficult for Clearway Medical to develop this product locally without assistance from expert engineers, designers and scientists within the University of Ulster."

Rory O'Loughlin also secured a SMART Award to help design, protect and further develop a new innovative health and safety product to relieve dental anxiety.

He said: "From the beginning, we received practical advice from staff and have collaborated with

the University's biomedical scientists to validate our approach."

Another SMART Awardee, Ian Savage from Spark Innovation said: "University of Ulster researchers have provided us with first class advice and direction in relation to our product research and development."



 **If you would like more information on support programmes for innovation and how the University of Ulster might assist you in the research and development of new products or services, please contact the Office of Innovation, telephone 028 9036 8019. or email [enquiry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:enquiry@ulster.ac.uk)**

## FLEX

**FLEX is the University's Foreign Languages for Export service. It was established nearly 19 years ago and has, since then, been providing language services to the public and private sectors in Northern Ireland in over 60 languages.**

FLEX provides a translation, interpreting and tutoring service for people in business, industry and public services and has twice received the Regional Award from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for the provision of specialist language material.

Regine McCullough, Flex Director commented: "FLEX has played a

prominent part in helping local industry, commerce, public services, the professions and individuals to meet the demands of an ever expanding multi-lingual market and society. At a time of increasing competitiveness, being able to communicate effectively is of growing importance in all sectors of economic life and may often be the decisive factor in securing contracts."



**For further information on FLEX interpretation, translation and tuition services, please contact Regine McCullough, Director, telephone 028 9036 6546 or email [r.mccullough@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:r.mccullough@ulster.ac.uk)**

## University Of Ulster – Purchasing Card Scheme

**Companies currently supplying goods or services to the University, or considering bidding for future contracts, may be interested to learn about new procurement policies.**

Ulster has introduced the University Purchase Card (PCard) to streamline the procurement/ payments process and to expedite the delivery of goods and services, as the administrative costs involved in procuring such items are often disproportionate to the actual cost of the goods and services involved.

Clare Egan, Procurement Manager, said: "The PCard is designed to reduce transaction costs

and is suited for use in procuring high volume, low value items. The Purchasing Card is similar in principle to credit cards used by consumers, but with extra features which make them more suitable for business-to-business purchasing." University policy only permits using the Purchasing card with those suppliers who can supply 'line item detail' which provides details of the transaction, a description of each item in the transaction and for each transaction, the net amount, the VAT amount and the total.

Suppliers will benefit from guaranteed payment within 3-4 working days resulting in improved cash flow and reduced overdraft charges, reduced process costs and reduced administration.



**For further information on the Purchasing Card Scheme, please contact Clare Egan, Procurement Manager, telephone 028 7032 4227 or email [cm.egan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:cm.egan@ulster.ac.uk)**

## People in Focus



**Peter Devine** has recently been appointed to the post of Business Development Manager of The Intelligent Systems Research Centre

(ISRC) at the Magee campus. Peter will be responsible for promoting and monitoring the commercialisation of the Centre's research output and its contribution to the economic regeneration of the region. He joined the University in 2005 having worked previously for Ericsson Services Ireland. Prior to his current appointment, he worked as manager of EpiCentre, focusing on technology transfer between academia and local industry. To contact Peter, telephone 028 7137 5263 or email [p.devine@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:p.devine@ulster.ac.uk)



**Barry Henderson** has over six years experience working in biomedical research and has also worked in sales and

marketing in the biotechnology sector for over four years. Barry currently works as a Business Liaison Executive, Office of Innovation, based at the Magee campus, developing collaborative research links between Ulster's centres of excellence and industry. A key role within his current position is the fostering and development of academic, business and clinical linkages.

To contact Barry, telephone 028 7137 5564 or email [bp.henderson@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:bp.henderson@ulster.ac.uk)

### CONTACT DETAILS

The Business Liaison Office is your gateway to the University of Ulster. Contact us with any business enquiry.

Business Liaison Office,  
University of Ulster  
Shore Road, Newtownabbey,  
BT37 0QB

T: 028 9036 8019 F: 028 9036 8265  
E: [enquiry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:enquiry@ulster.ac.uk)  
W: <http://oi.ulster.ac.uk>



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Fill out our short questionnaire online at [www.ulster.ac.uk/U2B](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/U2B) and you will be entered into a draw to win an iPod Nano. There were a number of anonymous competition entries, following our last issue. Entrants wishing to be included in this draw should insert contact details.

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