The challenge from India
Welcome to the new edition of Ambassador.

We hope you enjoy reading about recent developments in the Management School and news from our alumni.

As many of you will notice this edition of the magazine has a different format to those previously. We hope that you like the new format and find the news and articles both interesting and informative.

In this issue, we focus on activities in Asia, with updates on our China Centre and Indian alumni group as well as an article about the challenges in India from Dr Brian Tempest. We also have a fascinating article from Randall Zindler, Chairman of the Management School Alumni Advisory Board, about his experiences as CEO of Medair, an international humanitarian organisation.

We welcome you to contact us with feedback about the new magazine format, or if you have any suggestions for articles we might want to include in future editions.

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The articles printed here, to the best of our knowledge, were correct at the time of going to press. We reserve the right to edit material where necessary. Furthermore, the views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Management School or the Editor.

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The Management School, with the support of Gulf One Investment Bank, has developed a new centre for economics research. Research in the centre will focus on economics and finance in the Middle East and North Africa region. The centre, which will also offer training and consultancy to business, is being funded by a £300,000 donation from Gulf One via its CEO Dr Nahed Taher.

Dr Taher, who completed an MSc in International Business and PhD in Economics during the 1990s, said Gulf One Investment had chosen Lancaster to set up a joint research centre because “it is one of the top universities in the UK and Europe”. The partnership would support Gulf One’s strategic positioning as a knowledge-led financial institution, she explained.

“With LUMS we want to achieve high-level research for infrastructure banking products and, specifically, the challenges facing Islamic banking of privatisation deals in the Middle East and the world as a whole,” Dr Taher said.

Centre director Dr Marwan Izzeldin said the Gulf One partnership would benefit the business community by providing valuable economic and financial insights into the Gulf region.

Dr Taher and her Gulf One colleagues, Chief Operating Officer Ziyad Omar and Chief Economist Dr Mohammed Salisu, attended a special signing ceremony with Dean Professor Sue Cox and the University’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Robert McKinlay.

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Management School awarded prestigious AACSB international accreditation

The Management School has been awarded the highest possible standard of achievement for business schools after being granted AACSB International status for its programmes. This prestigious recognition means the Management School becomes one of a small group of business schools to hold triple accreditation from AACSB, EQUIS and the Association of MBAs.

Professor Sue Cox, described the AACSB International accreditation as “the hallmark of excellence in management education” after the School successfully completed a rigorous and comprehensive peer review. “The achievement of AACSB accreditation, following on from EQUIS and the Association of MBAs accreditations, demonstrates that LUMS has successfully benchmarked itself against leading business schools worldwide.” Professor Cox said.

Professor Cox said that for Management School students, both now and in the future, this latest achievement was a further boost to their employment prospects as the School now has worldwide recognition for meeting the highest international standards.

Independent Good University Guide ranks Lancaster

Lancaster University has risen nine places to be ranked in the top ten in the Independent Good University Guide 2009. The Guide ranks Lancaster 10th nationally and number one in the North West in the regional rankings.

The MSc in Management leapt eight places in the Masters in Management ranking to 18th in Europe and 4th in the UK. The programme has also been accredited by the Association of MBAs. The School is also ranked in the top 50 customised Executive Education programmes and 8th in the world for PhD programmes.

Lancaster is the only management school that is consistently in the UK’s top four across the following areas of activity: MBA, Masters in Management, Research and customised Executive Education. Professor Sue Cox added: “The consistency with which Lancaster delivers, and over so many years, is a source of reassurance to all our students and corporate customers.”

The past twelve months has seen the Management School rise in the Financial Times rankings. In the listing of the world’s top 100 full-time MBA programmes, published in January, the Lancaster MBA has risen six places to 22nd in the world. The Lancaster MBA is now 4th in the UK, and is in Europe’s top 10 MBA programmes.

Gulf One banks on the Management School’s Economics expertise with donation

Leading strategic change in Abu Dhabi

John Mackness and Tim O’Connor, of Lancaster’s Management Development Division, delivered a Strategic Change Workshop in April for Directors of the Department of Planning and Economy in Abu Dhabi.

The Workshop was the first event at a newly formed Business Academy of the Department. Participants were all directors involved in shaping the future of Abu Dhabi. John and Tim also gave a presentation to the Under Secretary and the Chairman of the Department about the strategic change process.
Memorable year for Lancaster China Management Centre

The last 12 months have been the most memorable for the Lancaster China Management Centre (LCMC) since it was established in 2001. It has been a year in which the contribution of the Management School and the LCMC to Sino-UK relations has been recognised with media coverage and a special award.

LOMC’s purposes, when founded under the Directorship of Emeritus Professor Alasdair MacBean (Economics) were: to enhance the international reputation of the School through the development of an in-depth knowledge of the China economy and China management practices, by:

• co-ordinating and facilitating China research activities within the School, including publications, conferences and institutional collaboration
• providing development opportunities for Chinese managers and officials, leading to learning opportunities and research contacts for the School
• supporting the School in the recruitment of Chinese students through institutional relationships
• supporting the China alumni activities of the School

Jointly with USTB, but also with the National University of Laos and the University of Stockholm.

These activities have helped to raise the profile of LUMS within China, whilst in the UK the profile has been further developed by two highly successful and visible events. Of particular note has been the award to David Brown of the UKTI Greater China Recognition award for 2008, a great testimony to his contribution to the development of management education and Sino-UK relations. Equally of note, and of interest to the media, was the very successful hosting of the semi-final of the 2007 CSSA Entrepreneurship competition in LUMS. David Brown chaired the Judging Panel, and then went on to chair the Panel at the final in Nottingham. The media coverage of this ‘Dragon’s Den’ style competition was significant, including by digital channel Phoenix TV and so successful were the Lancaster arrangements that the LCMC was asked to host the 2008 semi-final, the 21st century China Entrepreneurship competition, jointly with the China Innovation & Development Association (CIDA).

Research continues to be key to the contribution of the LCMC with a range of projects including Alasdair MacBean’s study into the economic impact of the Chinese community in Manchester, part funded by the NWDA and he is now seeking funding to extend this study to other UK Chinese communities.

A wide range of seminars and other events, including four successful courses for government officials and railway managers, have been hosted in LUMS, and David and Alasdair have made significant contribution to national and international conferences on China. Our own is planned, jointly with Fudan University, on ‘Sustainable Industrial Development’ in December 2008.

A major fund raising campaign has been launched to support the ambitions of the LCMC to grow its research agenda and also to have the staff and other resources to be able to teach all Management School students about China and its economy. Maggie Willan, LUMS Development Officer, is managing this campaign and any alumni interested in finding out more are welcome to contact her on m.willan@lancaster.ac.uk

TV and so successful were the Lancaster arrangements that the LCMC was asked to host the 2008 semi-final, the 21st century China Entrepreneurship competition, jointly with the China Innovation & Development Association (CIDA).
The Lancaster Indian Alumni Group is working to become a vibrant social and professional networking forum for returning graduates. The single greatest objective of our group is to create ‘Network India’: a professional business community of Indian alumni committed to helping each other. Network India will capitalise on a highly integrated alumni group well placed in India and abroad. It will facilitate job recruitment and business partnerships for returning graduates as well as existing alumni who seek career change/enhancement. This will be achieved by leveraging the contacts and insight successful alumni can provide.

On this front we have worked at compiling a database of Indian alumni, working in India and abroad, by working with the Lancaster University International Office. To date we have professional details of over 115 alumni on our local database. It was interesting to hear back from graduates as early as 1973 and to discover that approximately 10% of our alumni are on work permits in high income economies abroad.

It is still early days for Network India. We hope to have one group member as a point of contact in each major city in India to facilitate job networking. We also hope to appoint one contact person in the UK, Middle East and South East Asia as some Indian alumni are working there.

One of our first achievements was helping returning graduate Nimit Bedi (MSc Finance 2007) find her first job in Gurgaon through core group member Rupaal Singh (MSc International Business 2001).

Alumni who are Indian citizens working in the UK please note that there is an informal get together being planned in London in July.

For more information about the Indian Alumni Group please contact Vikram Bhalla: vikramaditya_bhalla@yahoo.com

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The Management School has awarded an honorary doctorate to Narayana Murthy, Chairman and Chief Mentor of Infosys Technologies Ltd. Mr Murthy received his first United Kingdom honorary degree – a Doctorate of Science – from Chancellor Sir Chris Bonington at a special awards ceremony in Lancaster.

Mr Murthy founded Infosys in 1981 with six other software professionals and was the CEO for 21 years before handing over the reins of the company to co-founder Nandan Nilekani in 2002. He served as Executive Chairman of the Board and Chief Mentor from 2002 to 2006.

Mr Murthy designed and implemented the Global Delivery Model, which has become the foundation for the success of IT services outsourcing from India. Among numerous honours, Mr Murthy was voted the “World Entrepreneur of the Year” by Ernst and Young in 2003 and India’s most powerful CEO for three consecutive years by The Economic Times.

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The previous evening Mr Murthy hosted a discussion with 150 Lancaster students and guests on the topic of India’s economy since liberalisation. Dr Rick Crawley, Director of External Relations and Corporate Communications, said Mr Murthy provided a fascinating insight into how India should tackle the twin problems of illiteracy and poverty in India, especially in rural communities. “Mr Murthy argued that education was key to driving the necessary social and economic change in India, making particular reference to the importance of teaching in English in primary education, a subject of political debate in Karnataka,” Dr Crawley said.

“Murthy’s view was that English is the language of international business, he, his contemporaries and their children had all benefited from an English language education, so why deprive India’s poor of that opportunity?” Mr Murthy’s other recommendation was to accelerate the movement of labour from agriculture to low-technology manufacturing because illiteracy levels constrained what could be done.
An Indian chemist working in the pharmaceutical industry is 30 times more productive than their equivalent in the United States due to their significantly better education, longer working hours and lower salary costs.

It is forecast that in 20 years only 8% of the Indian population will be over 65 making it the principal source of working hours and lower salary costs.

An Indian chemist working in the United States due to their significantly better education, longer working hours and lower salary costs.

The potential for movement from the public to the private sector growth. The potential for movement from the public to the private sector growth.

India has the largest foreign affairs caucus in the US congress. The 2006 visit of President Bush to India and President Clinton’s continuing interest in the country symbolise the prominence India is achieving on the world stage.

Dr Brian Tempest (PhD Chemistry, 1971), Lancaster University alum, analyses the advantages India offers to businesses, investors and partners, especially in the pharmaceutical industries in the developed world. This article provides extracts from a recent guest lecture by Brian at the Management School.

The challenge from India

It is projected that by 2050 India will be the third largest economy in the world after China and the USA. India also has the largest foreign affairs caucus in the US congress. The 2006 visit of President Bush to India and President Clinton’s continuing interest in the country symbolise the prominence India is achieving on the world stage.

There are 793 billionaires in the world, 23 of these are in India. The net worth of the 40 richest Indians is $106 billion. Billionaire shareholders are interested in long term strategy and long term valuations of their company rather than quarter on quarter profits. This can have a stabilising effect on the economy. In a 2005 survey for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) global companies were asked where they would locate research and development (R&D) facilities today. India was ranked third.

When asked why, respondents cited the huge number of scientists and engineers who were already global players in India with international alliances e.g. Ranbaxy and GSK, the English speaking environment, the introduction of the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) compliance in the country, their world class institutions that bring forward quality scientific personnel for future development.

India has the fourth largest reservoir of English speaking scientists annually producing 3 million graduates and 115,000 MScs in Chemistry compared to 3500 BSc chemists coming from the UK.

While the oldest TV channel in India is only 13 years old it has 34 news channels, symptomatic of the huge expansion in information exchange. There are 5,000 different newspapers available to buy. It is estimated that 200 million people read them daily. Between 2003 and 2005 the readership figure increased by 14%. If foreign direct investment were to increase by even a small amount the impact on India would be dramatic. The top 15 Indian domestic pharmaceutical companies increased their investment in India fourfold between 2000 and 2005. The large Western pharmaceutical companies are also making significant investments in India.

These companies are looking to invest in their discovery, development, clinical trials and manufacturing operations in India. Foreign companies should also be looking to India as a platform for building their European and US markets. It is in these areas that significant opportunities exist for mid-sized Japanese and Western generics companies in India.

Around 1 in 4 of all Abbreviated New Drug Applications (ANDA) in the USA are filed by Indian companies. Active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) filings have historically been driven very much by China and India but in recent times half of the drug master file APIs filed in the USA are being sourced from India. There are three principal competitive advantages available to Indian generic companies: a very aggressive home market; the cost of manufacture; and the main competitive advantage, the cost of innovation. The cost of doing research work in India is between one fifth and one seventh of the cost of doing the same work in Europe or the USA.

Historically pharmaceutical companies struggle to maintain levels of research productivity. In the 90s the pharmaceutical industry used to discover around 40 new molecules a year. This has now dropped to around 20 but the R&D spend over this time has doubled. Therefore companies are now looking to India for improving the efficiency of their discovery research.

The general consensus is that India could do even better. The privatisation that has taken place over the last 10 years has led to remarkable Indian growth. The potential for movement from the public to the private sector would create much more expansion.

The appreciation of the Rupee is seen as the biggest short term threat to Indian growth.

Avian flu poses a major risk; 56% of the world’s chickens are bred in Asia. If a pandemic does occur, it will have a major impact on the whole region.

The ever increasing cost of oil is also a potential downside. Almost 20% of the world’s crude oil is consumed by Brazil, Russia, India and China.

India is dependent on imported oil.

A further downside is the Indian infrastructure which could restrict potential growth.

Asian economic strength is returning to levels of 130 years ago and with it India can demonstrate many advantages. While there are undoubtedly some downsides to investing in India there is a strong feeling that the turning point has been reached. The pharmaceutical industry is well positioned in this scenario and India is becoming more pronounced as a global strategic asset for developed world businesses.

Brian Tempest is Chairman of Hale and Tempest Co Ltd and is an Honorary Professor at Lancaster University Management School. He currently advises Companies and Investment Funds on their strategy in Asia. He has previously been President, Managing Director, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Mentor and Executive Vice Chairman of Ranbaxy Laboratories (a leading Indian pharmaceutical company). He is also one of the few westerners to have led a Sensex Nifty 50 Indian blue chip multinational company. He completed his PhD in Polymer Chemistry at Lancaster University.
As CEO of the international humanitarian organisation Medair, my business travel has taken me to some of the most remote places on earth, places devastated by disasters, conflicts, and other crises.

Our headquarters are located in Switzerland, and we have offices all over the world, but our core operations take place in the world’s most vulnerable countries. We provide emergency relief and rehabilitation that focuses on three sectors of expertise: quality health care, access to safe water and sanitation, and the provision of shelter and infrastructure.

With a worldwide staff of 1,800 dedicated people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, my challenge as CEO is to provide meaningful leadership that resonates for all our personnel across the organisation. As a result, I travel with some frequency, conducting periodic site visits to build relationships with staff and to cast organisational vision. During these visits, I meet with various stakeholders, including those whom we serve, to better understand how their needs are being met through our programmes.

In the winter of 2004, my travels took me to Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan have suffered years of violent conflict, leading to massive underdevelopment throughout the country. In remote areas of the country like Badakhshan province, many essential services are simply not available. There was virtually no basic health care access here until 2002. In that year, a UNICEF study showed that the province had the highest rate of maternal mortality that had ever been recorded.

It was at this time that Medair initiated activities in Badakhshan. When we first began improving access to quality health care, there were very few clinics in the province and even fewer qualified medical professionals. The only clinic that could do operations like C-sections or give blood transfusions was in Faizabad, which for most people required at least a two-day trek. Even more problematic were the cultural traditions that prevented many women from attending health clinics, even when they were very sick.

Earning the trust of the community has taken the commitment of dedicated personnel like Gabriele Faender, a German nurse who came to Afghanistan in 2004. She travelled throughout the province and learned the local language, which gained her considerable respect from the community, even from male elders — no small feat in this traditional culture.

One night was particularly memorable for Gabriele. As she was falling off to sleep, she heard three sharp knocks on the door. It was the night duty nurse, breathlessly urging her to come to the clinic. A woman had just given birth and was bleeding heavily.

Gabriele rushed to the clinic. There was no sign of the newborn baby. Several other women were in the room with the mother, so Gabriele asked them where the baby was. They wordlessly pointed to a small bundle, lying in the corner of the room.

Immediately, she went to the boy and picked him up. As she held the tiny infant in her arms, cradling him gently, the mother suddenly spoke up. Her next words shocked Gabriele to the core.

“Would like to take him home with you?”

“He is my ninth child,” the woman continued, “but only four of my children are still alive. It will be very difficult for me to raise this child. Our only income is a small farm with walnut trees, but the long and hard winter destroyed all of the blossoming trees.”

The other women in the room instantly supported the mother’s request. They said that Gabriele was the first person they had seen caring for a newborn baby with such affection. As she stood there cradling the newborn in her arms, Gabriele felt deeply moved by their swift trust in her, but equally saddened that their offer was so reasonable to them. How could she — or anyone from a completely different culture — respond to that request?

She answered the only way she could, with compassionate silence. She drew her attention to the health of the child. The baby had not yet been breastfed, because of a cultural belief that breast milk during the first three days of life was harmful. Gabriele persuaded the mother that it was safe to begin breastfeeding and the boy began feeding immediately.

She then inquired about the mother’s bleeding. The male nurse had not dared ask the woman anything so Gabriele quickly sent for the on-call midwife. The midwife arrived shortly and managed to get the bleeding under control.

Afterwards, the young mother lay in her bed, relieved that her bleeding had stopped. As Gabriele prepared to leave, the mother and the other women in the room asked her to stay.

Soon, they all began talking about their lives, opening their hearts to Gabriele in surprising ways.

It was late that night when she finally returned to her room, amazed that her small act of compassion and loving care had forged a strong bond of trust so quickly. Three years have passed since that night, and Medair now runs clinics and health posts throughout Badakhshan. Many new health professionals have been trained, including 10 women in full-time positions. Most importantly, it is becoming more culturally acceptable for women to attend health clinics and consult with doctors, both male and female.

In spite of these behavioural changes there is still much work to be done. Medair needs to constantly seek funding to continue working in remote locations. We also need committed staff, who are willing to make sacrifices to work in places of crisis.

With consistent leadership, a commitment to high standards of quality, and strong relationships with the people we serve, the progress that Medair has already made will continue to be enriched and grow deeper, not just in Afghanistan but in vulnerable countries around the world.
Otley elected to top US Accounting Association role

Professor David Otley has become President-Elect of the Management Accounting Section of the American Accounting Association. This is the first time that a non-North American will have held the position and represents the significant commitment of the world’s premier academic accounting body to internationalisation.

The American Accounting Association promotes worldwide excellence in accounting education, research and practice. The Association is a voluntary organisation of persons interested in accounting education and research. David Otley is Distinguished Professor of Accounting and Management. He is a Fellow of the British Academy of Management and gained the British Accounting Association’s Distinguished Academic Award in 2001. He was also the founding editor of the British Journal of Management from 1989 to 1999, and has been a member of the European Accounting Association since its formation in 1976 and of the American Accounting Association for over thirty years.

New collaboration between Executive MBA and CIMA

The Management School and CIMA (the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) have entered into a collaboration, which enables CIMA Members to be eligible for entry to the Lancaster Executive MBA with a discount of 10% on the total fee.

March 2008 saw the launch of the Masters in Hospice Leadership. The Management School and the International Observatory on End of Life Care are partnering with Help the Hospices to offer this exciting and innovative new postgraduate programme, which is designed to address development needs and challenges facing leaders in palliative and end-of-life care.

A pilot programme has been developed to include chief executives, senior managers and suitably qualified people who aspire to lead hospices in the UK and overseas. The programme will enable Help the Hospices to shape and develop a framework which informs, more rigorously, the investment in leadership and management development within the current national provision in the field of hospice and palliative care.

The Masters programme will run until October 2009 and comprises interconnected modules with distance learning and action learning designed to embed learning into the working environment. Between modules, participants will carry out practical work-based assignments which encourage them to apply learning from the taught modules to their particular context.
Aspiring entrepreneurs head for the summit

The first ever university-based entrepreneurial summit in the UK was held at Lancaster University Management School from Friday the 7th to Sunday the 9th of March 2008. LUYES – Lancaster University Young Entrepreneurs Society – played host to around 300 guests comprising entrepreneurs and students from 13 universities across the UK and Belgium, who all came together for this spectacular event. Sarah Lawless, Project Manage for LUYES describes the event.

The weekend began on the Friday evening with speeches from Sophie Kain and Adam Hosker, from the hit television programme, “The Apprentice”. Sophie and Adam ran a “Dragons Den” style challenge in which teams created innovative business ideas to win prizes. Saturday was a day packed full of speakers, workshops and practical advice for the budding entrepreneurs. Joe Buglass’ idea-generation session and a visit from the entrepreneur behind www.enterprisenation.com were just some of the highlights of the day’s inspirational proceedings.

The Summit’s high light was a three-course dinner at Lancaster House Hotel on Saturday evening. Keynote speaker Allan Kenny, a former director of several multinational corporations, enthused over the power of three-dimensional thinking. The Summit’s highlights was Allan Kenny himself describing the Summit as “truly inspiring”.

The finale of the event took place over breakfast and a concluding speech from Colin Hall. Before guests began their journeys home, joint LUYES Presidents Stephen Crossley and Himanshu Kumar thanked their guests: “This event has been a huge success... we hope we have started something here that will continue for many years to come.”

Lancaster graduate gains three awards for PhD success

Dr Atkinson, who undertook his PhD in Critical Management part-time, receives a Highly Commended Award from the 2007 Emerald/EFMD Outstanding Doctoral Research Awards scheme in the Management and Governance category. By sponsoring the award, EFMD, the European Foundation for Management Development, an international network for excellence in management development, and Emerald, a leading publisher of business and management journals, seek to recognise outstanding doctoral research. Dr Atkinson’s Award follows the recent publication of his PhD research as a monograph with Palgrave Macmillan. Thinking the Art of Management: Stepping Into Heidegger’s Shoes was published in October 2007 and sold nearly half of its initial print run in the first 6 weeks.

Graduates win prestigious OR prize

Lancaster graduate Jessica Headay (MSc Operational Research, 2007) has won the prestigious May Hicks prize, awarded by the Operational Research Society for the best postgraduate project. Matthew Archbold, also a graduate of the MSc in OR (2007), completed a good competition for Lancaster by taking one of the two runners up awards. Jessica’s project focused on assessing the cost-effectiveness of a new device for detecting colorectal cancer for Colonix Ltd in conjunction with Sheffield School for Health and Related Research (ScHARR). The judges commented on the very high standard of all entries and the significant impacts made upon their clients. The variety and challenge of the work undertaken reflects highly on the vibrancy and health of OR in the UK and the talent of those entering the profession.

Brand Research

The Management School recently conducted an online survey about their brand. We would like to thank all the people who took part in the survey your comments were particularly useful. A full report of the findings will be available soon and will be emailed to all those who requested it.

Leadership that inspires a workforce of 5,000

Management School graduate Neville Richardson (BA Accounting and Finance, 1977), Chief Executive of Britannia Building Society has won a special award for Best for Leadership as part of the Times ranking of companies earlier this year. The Best for Leadership award is based purely on employee survey scores. Staff at Britannia gave Richardson a 74% positive score, and say he runs the organisation on sound moral principles. Richardson has a simple philosophy. “It’s not my responsibility to think for 5,000 people,” he says “it’s my responsibility to create an environment where difference to us all. The judges thought Jessica’s project was well structured, tailored to the timescales, using sound assumptions and taking care of all stakeholders (i.e. good soft skills).
The Centre was created under the leadership of Professor Gerry Johnson, who came to LUMS in 2006 as the first Professor Sir Roland Smith Chair in Strategic Management, following a donation of £500,000 by Lady Joan Smith. Gerry is co-author of Europe’s best selling text book on corporate strategy. His already impressive international research reputation was further enhanced when he became a Senior Fellow of the Advanced Institute of Management.

The Centre provides a focus for the research of the many faculty in LUMS interested in Strategic Management. It also seeks to promote research themes that cross academic disciplines. For example two areas of research for staffing the Centre are Strategy as Practice and Strategy in Professional Service firms.

In this interview he talks about the development of the Centre and his research over the past 30 years.

Why did you choose Lancaster? Management education has played such a huge part in my life and, as I came towards the end of my career, I decided I wanted to help create something that could be a legacy for the future. To do this at Lancaster, one of the best schools in Europe, was a great opportunity.

What are you creating? My particular interest – and that of others at Lancaster is Strategy as Practice. Most strategy research is orientated around strategy as something organisations have and has very little to say about what people who develop strategies actually do. I am interested in what people who develop strategy do in practice. In so doing I believe it is important for academic institutions to engage with organisations and that is what we are trying to set up; a Centre which takes seriously research that has an interest in what managers do in relation to strategy.

You have done a lot of research over the years – is there anything that stands out for you? My research has followed the same theme over the years: how do you account for the link between organisational strategies and the propensity for organisations to drift and decline? Is this an inevitable process; what role do managers play in it; and what can they do to really make a difference to the destiny of their organisations? Over the years I have looked at that same question in different ways; from a cultural perspective; from a cognitive perspective and from an historical perspective.

Finally, let’s pick up on some of your recent work. Over the past three to four years, together with a number of research colleagues, I have been looking at the extent to which strategic away days have an impact. We have been using insights from anthropologists’ research on ritual to look at this. One of the arguments is that the more ritualistic the event is, the less likelihood of the event having an impact ‘back home’. Our interest is the extent and how the inevitable ritualistic characteristics of strategy workshops is deliberately managed and to what effect.

Is there anything that readers of Ambassador can do to help with the Centre? The Centre is looking to work with large organisations and individuals within those organisations with responsibility for strategy development who are interested in working with others in similar positions and with LUMS on the practice of strategising. If you are interested on behalf of your organisation please contact the Centre by emailing f.riley@lancaster.ac.uk.