Editorial
Carol Banks and Jennifer Lane

Since Diffusion was first launched in June 2008, awareness of the value of research at undergraduate level has certainly increased. Many UK universities are now publishing their own undergraduate journals, although the majority of these continue to focus on the science sector. The British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR), currently planning its third conference for 2013, is further evidence of this growing significance and we are pleased to include in this issue of Diffusion five articles by UCLan students who originally presented their innovative studies at the first BCUR in 2011.

These five articles range across the disciplines, from Publishing / Criminology to Computing, Psychology and Environmental Studies, but they all share a common concern for topical issues, whether social, commercial, psychological or environmental. The desire for a ‘greener’ world prompted Jackie Wright to conduct her own research survey into the effectiveness of ‘ecological citizenship’ as an explanation for pro-environmental behaviour. The importance of the environment also fuelled Gillian Mayo’s research into the value of inner city green spaces, a project which homes in on a hitherto neglected age group – the 18-24s. As technological advances continue to reshape our world, Wayne Noble considers the impact of eBooks and the effect this is having on traditional publishing methods, whilst Charlotte Vogelsinger analyses the recent changes in the use of Twitter by leading brands to enhance their online presence. The fifth article from BCUR 2011, Clare Austin’s examination of the psychological effects of screening for cervical cancer and the human papilloma virus, similarly addresses an issue directly relevant to women in today’s society, where preventative measures against health problems are increasingly adopted, often with psychological implications.

In addition to the BCUR articles, Diffusion 5:1 continues to promote undergraduate research across a wider range of disciplines with the inclusion of three strong contributions from History, Religion and Literature. Lynne Susan Gabbutt (History) examines the ways in which the visual arts were used to promote Nazi ideologies in Germany between 1933 and 1945; Janine Coghlan (Religion, Culture & Society) explores the ways in which angels are presented in holy scriptures to question their moral function; and finally, Georgina Brown (Literature) considers the ways in which Toni Morrison constructs slave narratives in her award winning novel Beloved to re-member a hitherto suppressed, if not forgotten, African American history.
Most of the articles published in this issue originated as coursework and some have been condensed, or extracted, from much longer, final year dissertations, which gained their authors first class degrees and additional prizes. However, two of these contributions have a slightly different genesis. Janine Coghlan’s essay on angels is an independent development from her prescribed coursework, demonstrating a desire to research the set assignment a stage further, and Wayne Noble’s analysis of eBooks was produced following a period of research as an undergraduate summer intern.

UCLan’s summer Research Internship scheme began in the same year as Diffusion, 2008, and has since provided over 200 students with the opportunity to practise research skills alongside members of UCLan’s academic staff. Many of the staff engaged in these summer projects are also active in recommending articles for Diffusion and we should again like to express our gratitude to the First Readers of this issue, who were instrumental in indentifying outstanding work and overseeing the cutting and editing of longer pieces for publication in the journal.

The increase in undergraduate research activity here at UCLan means that Diffusion is now receiving more submissions for consideration and more students are also joining the Editorial Team to assist in the reading and editing process, gaining experience into the publication of an academic journal. Our pages on the networking sites Facebook and Twitter are, likewise, helping to reach a wider student community where students are invited to feedback on Diffusion articles and respond to current issues. Using the fast pace social media, we hope to increase our following, creating online discussions, topical debates, and inspiration for further papers.

Diffusion aims to showcase the talents of students who have shown outstanding innovation and well-crafted work. With the enthusiasm of the student body and the fantastic submissions we receive, we hope to continue to diffuse the excellence of our undergraduates both locally and across a wider readership.