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AEA DIGEST

Issue no 55
Winter 2020



Some of the many who attended our conference in Glasgow in October 2019.
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Conference photographs by Val Bissland

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FROM THE CHAIR.....

Keith Percy

I have recently been reading through the 2019 updated version of the Manifesto of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) – a worthwhile read. It emphasises the importance of older adults learning and of intergenerational learning. It says: “Europe needs citizens that stay healthy and active as long as possible. EAEA is committed to active ageing and encourages a common vision on the active participation of older people. Learning provides many of these opportunities and active ageing will only be guaranteed if learning in later life is provided for.”

The Manifesto does more than make high-level statements; it relates its arguments and demands to the findings of research, urging that “research shows that learning seniors are more active, have more social contacts, volunteer more, work longer and are healthier”. Wisely it also notes that “high quality learning opportunities for all older people ...need the necessary framework of policies, funding, structures and access”.

The Manifesto turns to the importance of intergenerational learning which, it observes, “enables both older, experienced people and the young to profit from each other’s knowledge” and this, it claims, (significantly given the present disengagement from Europe of the UK) will strengthen intergenerational solidarity within the European societies”.

<https://eaea.org/our-work/influencing-policy/manifesto-for-adult-learning-in-the-21st-century/>

In my Notes in the last issue of this Digest I reported that AEA had submitted an application to the National Lottery Awards for All scheme (formerly called the “Big Lottery”) for a modest grant to support a variety of new development work. The application for a project entitled Learning, well-being and older people has been successful. The work will carry on throughout 2020.

The funding will allow AEA to revise and extend its website in a new format and to incorporate new user-friendly pages based on the development work. The project will also focus on producing and evaluating a guide aimed to help older people to learn effectively on-line. The third strand of the project will be to plan, promote and deliver two pilot national learning workshops. A key element will be the evaluation of the whole process of delivering these workshops from initial ideas to the post-delivery period.

AEA needs to understand not only how to target and structure such workshops to attract a wider range of older people (so that we have a format which we can use successfully in the years ahead) but also to work out how to ensure that such workshops make a lasting substantive contribution to older people’s motivation and ability to continue learning throughout their lives.

It is much to be regretted that from June 2020 the concession to 3.7 million older people in the UK over 75 years so that they can watch BBC television channels, without having to bear the significant cost of an annual licence to do so, will be withdrawn. The UK government has ceased to fund this concession and the

BBC has announced that it is unable to cover the consequent funding gap, if free licences for all but the poorest 75 year olds are continued. It is a severe blow to the potential for learning in later life. Many older people spend much of their lives in their homes; many television programmes are informative, stimulating

and educational for them. Such a policy revision certainly contradicts the sentiments from the EAEA Manifesto quoted at the beginning of these Notes. It is a retrograde step and AEA should seek to monitor and comment on its effects.

AEA CONFERENCE – THURSDAY 10th OCTOBER 2019



First event of the day – see below

L to R: Ed Link (U3A Scotland), Prof. Keith Percy (AEA Chair), Prof Marvin Formosa (University of Malta), Dr John Miles (AEA), Dr Alan Potter (AEA), Rebecca Wagstaff (PhD student), Dr Jo Walker (AEA), Janet Holland (U3A, Bearsden)

Our Annual Conference in October turned out to be a bit of a bumper occasion. Located north of the Border in Strathclyde University's Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL) it was not difficult to recruit an eager audience of local older students, who attend daytime classes at the CLL. Val Bissland gives this report.

The workshop on *Emotions in Later Life* and the Glendenning lecture by Prof. Marvin Formosa on *Five Decades of Older Adult Learning* attracted an optimum afternoon audience.

However, the day started in the morning with a one-hour round table discussion for early arrival AEA members, local U3A representatives and University academics with an interest in learning in later life. Jo Walker, Allan Potter and Ed Link each gave brief presentations on their specialism – spiritual learning, social prescribing and the Scottish U3A respectively, followed by questions.

Emotions in Later Life – Celebrating Ourselves

After the AGM the afternoon programme began with a workshop run

by CLL psychology tutor Dr Val Bissland. Val had prepared a questionnaire to direct people's thoughts to aspects of their individual wellbeing that tapped into scoring their emotional states in different circumstances. Then people shared their responses with a partner.



An animated discussion followed with the emergence of the idea that really everyone can change from being sealed into a way of thinking that diminishes zest for life, increases stress and closes down opportunities. It all depends on the stories we tell ourselves, some of which are linked to personal beliefs and others that are imposed by society. Prof Ellen Langer who has spent a lifetime researching attitudes and ageing was quoted: "With only subtle shifts in our thinking, and in our expectations, we can begin to change ingrained behaviours that sap health, optimism and vitality from our lives."

To read more and view the Power point and video clips go to
<https://lifelongscotland.co.uk/celebrating-ourselves/>

Five Decades of Older Adult Learning – Successes, Challenges and Promises

The highlight of the afternoon was the Frank Glendenning memorial lecture given this year by Prof Marvin Formosa from the Department of Gerontology, University of Malta.



Marvin's career has been steeped in the business of how to make learning a higher priority on the educational and political agenda because of its impact on the health and wellbeing of the older population. He began his lecture by describing the early days when the growing numbers of healthy active older people in retirement began to take the initiative and form groups to facilitate classes and courses for themselves. In the 1970s there were a number of privately sponsored organisations in the USA, but it was the establishment of the University of the Third Age (U3A) that made it a universal phenomenon which is thriving to this day in different guises.

Marvin also unpicked the concepts of the 'Third Age' and the 'Fourth Age', what a minefield it is, and how people of different ages and experience cannot be lumped together. There is also the growing issue of dementia and how it affects people's quality of life. In addition, there is the challenge to older adults of becoming competent using technology in this digital age or losing out on participation in society.

Marvin then outlined the achievements to date of the U3A, including increased social and psychological wellbeing, a more positive culture in long-term care settings and more people taking advantage of online booking, shopping and banking. However, all is not equal. Firstly, he pointed out that better educated, middle class people are reaping the benefits disproportionately; secondly there are gender and ethnic biases in the sorts of programmes on offer; thirdly the 4th age often misses out entirely on learning opportunities; and fourthly teaching methods (geragogy) often omit tapping into the resources that older adults bring to a learning situation, treating them as passive recipients of knowledge, rather than active meaning-making people.

Finally, Marvin drew attention to the promises of longer healthier lifespans in terms of part-time work, new portfolio careers, and opportunities for enjoying the freedom to cultivate new

(hedonistic?) pursuits. He also touched on the mission of the “Grey Panther” Maggie Kuhn as a force for changing society and using this extended lifespan for the greater good –called rather loftily ‘Gerotranscendence’. He concluded that learning was living and there needs to be a wider doorway in later life, accessibility for less physically able people and people with illnesses, relevance to older adults’ lives and digital inclusivity.



(This lecture was filmed. An edited version can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/381161237> (dur: 20mins.)

NEWS AND FEATURES

*Even though AEA enjoyed such a highly successful conference packed with enthusiastic older learners, in 2020 that appears to be the exception rather than the rule. **John Miles**, co-convenor of the BSG Special Interest Group for Educational Gerontology, discusses the latest and arguably shocking survey of adult learning from the Learning and Work Institute and the recently published recommendations from the Centenary Commission on Adult Education and comments: **Too old for education? It would seem so.***

Released on New Year’s Day the findings of the *Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2019* from Learning and Work has raised some eyebrows – Hornsey and Wood Green MP Catherine West has already asked the chancellor to do something about the 47% decline in government investment since 2009/2010. Participation is now at its lowest rate in the 23 years since the survey began. 2001 was the peak year with 46% of adults engaged in some sort of learning: in 2019 the proportion had fallen to 33% (having been as high as 41% even as late as 2015). Only 17% of those who have done no education since leaving school

stated they had a future intention to learn. And, disconcertingly, the steepest drop in participation has been amongst older people, whether classified as retired (from 17% to 12% between 2018 and 2019) or by age – the rate for people aged 65-74 now stands at 15% and for over-75s it's a mere 6%.

Given the collapse in government investment and the poor performance across most employers in the UK this dismal trend might be seen as unsurprising, even inevitable. But what is particularly unsettling is that the survey addresses the question of participation using a broad categorisation, one that goes out of its way to include informal learning and which you might expect to boost the numbers of older learners. Here's the definition:

'Learning can mean practising, studying or reading about something. It can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something. Learning can also be called education or training. You can do it regularly (each day or month) or you can do it for a short period of time. It can be full time, or part time, done at home, at work or in another place like a college. Learning does not have to lead to a qualification. We are interested in any learning you have done, whether or not it was finished.'

A representative sample of just over 5000 people are surveyed each time the survey is carried out with a face to face interview using an extensive questionnaire. The likelihood that people are failing to identify learning experiences is therefore not that great.

And the results capture the substantial contrast in choosing to learn between 'working-age' and 'older' adults. Table 4 (p 23) shows that up to the age of 54 more than 80% of participants make their main learning choices for work or career development. Whereas, of those over 65 69% do so for leisure or personal interest - a figure rising to 81% for those over 75. Across all age-groups around 18% identify the main benefit as social. It's interesting to note that since 2018 there had been a significant increase overall in the proportion of learners participating through higher education establishments.

Responses to questions about barriers to learning are also revealing, not least because the impact of factors categorised as 'dispositional barriers' (i.e. those relating to the 'attitudes, perceptions and expectations of adults') had increased so dramatically (from 42% of responses in 2018 to 59% in 2019). Taken barrier by barrier the most significant obstacles were identified as: 'not interested/don't want to' (18%), 'work/other time pressures' (15%), 'I feel I am too old' (14%), 'childcare/caring responsibilities' (11%), and 'I feel no need to learn any more' (10%). Cost was a deterrent identified by only 8% of respondents while 28% said 'nothing is preventing me'. As the authors of the survey put it these results 'point to the importance of not only removing barriers to learning, but actively promoting the benefits of learning and encouraging participation' (p 33).

The Learning and Work survey can be accessed here:

<https://tinyurl.com/tr5abyb>

Promoting the benefits of learning is a key message of *A Permanent National Necessity*, the report of the Centenary Commission on Adult Education launched last year on November 18th. Their eighteen recommendations are grouped around six key themes, the first of which (Focus 1) refers to 'Framing and delivering a national ambition'.

To this end there should be a National Learning Strategy, a minister with specific responsibility for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, the establishment of regional Adult Learning Partnerships, a restoration of funding to Local Authorities (backed by a statutory responsibility), a substantial increase in funding for Adult Community education and Further Education colleges, additional funding for bodies like the WEA, a requirement for all Universities to engage radically in this field and a national motivational campaign. There should be additional funds to develop informal learning, increased democratisation of learning institutions and an upgrading of lifelong learning at work – including those involved in the gig economy.

There is a rich variety of case studies so that although Focus 3 ('Fostering community democracy and dialogue') lacks a strong, distinctive recommendation it features good illustrations and a commitment to an inclusive community development approach. Overall, the report is strongly inflected towards a creative, humanistic restoration of liberal, radical and collectivist traditions in the field. It seems reasonable to speculate that the authors anticipated or hoped for a different outcome to the general election that followed.

It has to be said that older learners barely feature as a category in the AE100 report. The only written submissions to the Commission readily identifiable with later life came from the three partners in the British Society of Gerontology's Specialist Interest Group - i.e. AEA, Ransackers and the BSG - and one of its affiliates, Rob Hunter, the chair of Leicester Ageing Together. (The big lobbyists - Age UK, ILC, Centre for Ageing Better, National Pensioners Convention and so-on - appear not to have contributed.) However, we have had some useful direct contact with the programme.



Adult Education 100 Commissioner Sharon Clancy briefing the Joint SIG event Adult Education in a Digital World on November 22nd

Sharon Clancy, one of the commissioners, took part in a recent BSG-supported event at the Institute for Mental Health in Nottingham where AEA members were involved. A couple of weeks later I attended a dissemination event at the Department for Continuing Education with Sharon and John Holford. And ideas are starting to emerge – even without additional funding the idea of Adult Learning Partnerships at local level suggests ways forward whether these focus on later life or build on the needs of adults of all ages.

But what should still give us pause for thought is the findings of the Adult Learning Participation Survey. If we break it down people over 65 make up something like 30% of the adult population in the UK. More than 1500 such individuals (the unweighted base) were interviewed by the Learning and Work team – a large enough number to pick up a pretty wide range of characteristics and circumstances. But despite the expansion of U3A membership (often thought of - not least by me - as offsetting a decline in formal participation) and the widely promoted claims of activity providers and arts practitioners to be making informal learning more accessible, take up of adult education in later life continues to decline. The Commission is right: it will take more than enlightened community practice to make a difference. Structural reform and major investment is going to be essential if such a morbid trend is to be reversed.

The Commission report can be accessed here;

<https://tinyurl.com/ql4n3tk>

*The above does not make very heartening reading for those of us who value lifelong learning. Neither does the latest report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization **UNESCO**, which claims that in almost one third of countries fewer than 5% of adults aged 15 and above benefit from adult learning opportunities. Further detail here on the **Global Report on Adult Learning and Education***

Adults with disabilities, older adults, refugees and migrants, minority groups

and other disadvantaged segments of society are particularly under-represented in adult education programmes and find themselves deprived of crucial access to lifelong learning opportunities.

Published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, the report monitors the extent to which UNESCO Member States put their international commitments regarding adult learning and education into practice and reflects data submitted by 159 countries. It calls for a major change in the approach to adult learning and education (ALE) backed by adequate investment to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and benefit from adult learning and education and that its full contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is realized.



**UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay
by G20 Argentina**

“We urge governments and the international community to join our efforts and take action to ensure that no one – no matter who they are, where

they live or what challenges they face – is left behind where the universal right to education is concerned,” says UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, endorsing the report’s recommendations. “By ensuring that donor countries respect their aid obligations to developing countries, we can make adult learning and education a key lever in empowering and enabling adults, as learners, workers, parents, and active citizens.”

The publication stresses the need to increase national investment in ALE, reduce participation costs, raise awareness of benefits, and improve data collection and monitoring, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

Progress in participation in adult learning and education is insufficient

Despite low participation overall, many more than half of responding countries (57% of 152) reported an increase in the overall participation rate in adult learning and education between 2015 and 2018. Low-income countries reported the largest increase in ALE participation (73%), trailed by lower middle income and upper middle income countries (61% and 62%).

Most increases in adult learning and education participation were in sub-Saharan Africa (72% of respondents), followed by the Arab region (67%), Latin America and the Caribbean (60%) and Asia and the Pacific (49%). North America and Western Europe reported fewest increases (38%) though starting from higher levels.

The data shows persistent and deep inequalities in participation and that key target groups such as adults with

disabilities, older adults, minority groups as well as adults living in conflict-affected countries are not being reached.

Women’s participation must improve further

While the global report shows that women’s participation in ALE has increased in 59 per cent of the reporting countries since 2015, in some parts of the world, girls and women still do not have sufficient access to education, notably to vocational training, leaving them with few skills and poor chances of finding employment and contributing to the societies they live in, which also represents an economic loss for their countries.

Quality is improving but not fast enough

Quality ALE can also provide invaluable support to sustainable development and GRALE 4 shows that three-quarters of countries reported progress in the quality of education since 2015. Qualitative progress is observed in curricula, assessment, teaching methods and employment conditions of adult educators. However, progress in citizenship education, which is essential in promoting and protecting freedom, equality, democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity, remained negligible. No more than 3% of countries reported qualitative progress in this area.

Increase in funding for adult learning and education is needed

GRALE 4 shows that over the last ten years, spending on adult learning and education has not reached sufficient levels, not only in low-income countries but also in lower middle income and high-income countries. Nearly 20% of Member States reported spending less

than 0.5 per cent of their education budgets on ALE and a further 14% reported spending less than 1 per cent. This information demonstrates that many countries have failed to implement the intended increase in ALE financing proposed in GRALE 3 and that ALE remains underfunded. Moreover, under-investment hits socially disadvantaged adults the hardest. Lack of funding also hampers the implementation of new policies and efficient governance practices.

Full report

<https://tinyurl.com/uuuscee>

Summary of report

<https://tinyurl.com/shhf728>

*Nearer home however the picture is somewhat brighter if you live in the London Borough of Camden. **The Third Age Project** is a popular grassroots self-help charity with over 400 registered users over 60 years of age, which was set up 22 years ago to provide facilities and support for isolated older residents living on a large council housing estate in Camden. As **Tony Bloor**, Manager of the project, points out the project's clients come from often challenging backgrounds.*

Our typical service user is around 77 years of age, lives on their own on a basic pension after a life-time of low pay, is in poor general health and has a ten year shorter lifespan than those in richer parts of the borough. They originate from four corners of the earth and speak 22 home languages with a majority from highly diverse BAME ethnic origins.

Our mission is a challenging one - to tackle the entrenched social, economic and health inequalities faced by residents in old age. Never has old age been experienced so differently in the UK as it is today with 60 year olds with chronic disease contrasting with 100 year olds who are fit and active.



Regents Park estate – our community

Our vision is to build an age friendly neighbourhood, turning on its head the generally held view that the Third Age is a burden on society and to promote one that old people should be regarded as a valuable and important resource placed at the very heart of a community. Retirement from a life-time of work ought to be a period of liberation and learning as much for those marginalised and disadvantaged by poverty, poor health, gender, culture and language as it for better off and more fortunate pensioners.

Our approach has been to draw upon and harness the incredible range of life-time skills and knowledge of our service users as our biggest single resource, recruiting them as stakeholders through setting up a membership scheme and empowering them to become co-producers of our services. Our role has been to nurture and facilitate this process and provide an inclusive, supportive, creative learning activity hub, where older people can come together to discover dormant skills and talents and achieve personal goals and aspirations for themselves, their

families and their community. Many have found this an empowering experience that has improved social status and self-esteem, reduced feelings of social isolation and increased their sense of belonging. As a result, older residents have taken on important new volunteering and leadership roles within the community and helped to seek new solutions in tackling some major local issues, such as lack of social cohesion and community safety.

Older people learn new skills and knowledge differently. Learning has to be fun, social and enjoyable and be able to draw upon the rich life experience as it has been lived with plenty of practical, hands on examples provided. We have found that classes with mixed abilities can work well and even act as a catalyst with students encouraged to help each other (putting the teacher in more of a facilitating role) and to share and exchange their ideas and knowledge. The charity gives an emphasis to collaborative and group project work to promote cooperation and often a final product may be a public exhibition or installation within a public space.

Looking east: Middle East for example was an installation inspired by an exhibition at the British Museum with a community partnership led by the Mary Ward Centre. It involved several groups working with artists in exploring objects from the Middle East with very impressive results.



Looking East – installation project

We also have a volunteer buddying scheme enabling students not usually enrolled on such courses to take part, such as those with dementia or poor mental health who are supported by another member.

We have been enabled to have a much greater beneficial impact upon older people's lives and our community through an extensive local network of delivery partners that include the Mary Ward Centre and the Workers Education Association. They state that with our help they have engaged with those generally regarded as hard to reach and through our partnership working and projects obtained wider outcomes and powerful evidence of the huge impact that adult community learning has upon the lives of older people from disadvantaged communities.

Another of our projects, *Tate Exchange Weekend*, provided an opportunity to showcase the remarkable creativity and diverse talents of older people from our centre in roles as co-producers and co-facilitators. The overall theme was to challenge the public's attitude towards

ageing, older people and their lives and to promote positive ageing and older people's rich lived experience. 61 older people delivered 18 hours of performances and workshop activities, engaging directly with 350 members of the public and with 2,800 having attending events over the three days. Over several months we worked with teachers and artists from the Mary Ward Centre and the Workers Education Association in motivating and skilling up older people, so that they themselves could deliver the performances and workshops.



One of the Tate Exchange workshops

“The experience has been a very positive one that has lifted my horizons and what I feel. I can now achieve in life.” - Andy aged 67 years

“The project gave us the confidence and skills to pass on to others. We had a few men join us at our table and non-English speakers also. A very friendly atmosphere!” - Sylvia 70 years old.

“I was a bit nervous beforehand about what was expected of me at the workshops but in the end it exceeded my expectations and I feel proud of having taken part.” - Pam age 84 years.

Further information about the Third Age Project can be found here:

<https://thirdageproject.org.uk/>

*So if you're a member of the Third Age Project, Camden could well now be one of the best places in London to live in if you are getting old. But what is **The Best Country to Live in for Older People**? You may or may not be surprised to learn it is not the UK. That was one of the conclusions of a study conducted in January this year by **AgeUK Mobility**. And this was their list of the top five.*



This study combined the following factors across 105 countries around the world, in order to determine which is the best country for older people to live in.

- The country's average life expectancy
- The country's Health Care Index score
- The country's safety
- The country's happiness
- The country's cost of living
- The country's property prices
- The country's pension start age

Finland was determined as the best country in the world for older people to live in, thanks to consistently high scores across almost all categories, including topping the list for the happiest country in the world.

Four of the five top-ranking countries also happen to be European, with Denmark in second place, the Netherlands in third and Austria in fourth. While in fifth place is Australia. As for the UK, we finished right down in 17th place. Not a bad result but certainly room for improvement, the survey concludes. What let us down was our high cost of living and a mediocre performance in other categories including safety and property prices. Though we're certainly not alone among developed nations in terms of high prices.

Kathy Lawrence, the editor of *When They Get Older* – a site dedicated to helping families support ageing loved ones – describes the survey as: “a fascinating report. It's not really surprising that the UK isn't at the top of the league of good places for older people to live. If we want to move up those rankings, we need to look at a huge range of factors, including the

funding and structure of health and social care, and society's attitudes to older people. As our population ages, we have to do more than talk about it.”

Perhaps surprisingly the United States of America finished right down in 28th place with its cost of living and safety playing a factor in its less than stellar ranking. And at the bottom of the list came Ukraine, Kenya and Iraq respectively.

The analysis, rankings and a wealth of comparative detail can be seen in full here:

<https://tinyurl.com/soh7nm5>

*In October Ransackers Annual Conference drew on links with our British Society of Gerontology SIG, which was founded jointly two years ago by AEA and Ransackers Association with the object of looking at later life learning and educational gerontology. On this occasion our subject was Wellbeing and Ageing Well, much of which comes down to **Changing Old Habits**. Is that possible? asks Hilary Farnsworth.*



Dr Jitka Vseteckova of the Open University.

The session was ably facilitated by Dr Jitka Vseteckova of the Open University.

We learned about the five pillars of ageing well: nutrition, hydration, physical, social and cognitive stimulation - familiar in part to nearly all of the audience, but here we were being challenged on whether we actually practice these things. We were asked to stand up, stand in a better, straighter way, then sit in a better way. As part of a lively discussion, I explained the difficulty of breaking a lifetime habit and learning a new one to replace it. Motivation has to be very strong. Giving up smoking is tough. Changing one's diet permanently is very hard & usually needs a major health scare for sufficient motivation as an older person. Breaking any long held habit and starting a new one is a learning challenge for us older learners.

Other Ransackers event attendees have made changes to diet and to exercise: we discussed how to change habits in later life. It is hard, very hard. Jitka told us to drink more water, yet we all seem to know a very old person who refuses to drink water because it makes them go to the loo. But we agree that these 5 pillars of ageing well are useful, we sort of knew about them and now we know a lot more, including some of the scientific background.

Is it harder to learn a new habit as an older person? Is anyone researching that? Or how much motivation it takes to help keep an older person on a healthy diet? Exercise regime? Intellectual stimulation? Getting out and meeting people? How many of these can be done on a low pension with a high heating bill and maybe scarce public transport?

Well, Jitka's session inspired me to make some changes to my reading habits (see page 22 in our Arts section). A big

change for which I had to learn a few more digital bits and pieces to get started.

Jitka has been giving a series of free public lectures on *Ageing Well* at the OU Campus since January. At the last one I could see the group having lightbulb moments. And I've managed an average 40 lengths backstroke a week too

Dr Vseteckova's next lecture takes place on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 - 11:30 to 13:00 under the title Move it and breathe. Details and useful links here <http://wels.open.ac.uk/events/move-it-and-breathe-jitka-vseteckova-ageing-well-lecture-series> ..

This is a picture of me, Carol Allen, your digest editor.



*A bit flattering, I will admit! It was taken just before Christmas on my friend Steve's phone and it is **Our Copyright**. I can use it for whatever purpose I wish. Do you however sometimes download photographs from the internet to use in*

*the course of your work? And do you ever have occasion to post those photographs on a website - your own or your employer's? Or maybe you use them to illustrate the regular blog you write? In which case you may find this information useful. Because most of those photographs will be someone's **COPYRIGHT** and you need permission to use them. Without that permission, you could have a problem.*

One of the reasons your Winter Digest is later than it should be is because AEA ran into just that problem. Back in the Winter 2016 issue I used an image of writer and presenter Sandy Toksvig to illustrate a piece publicising a play she had written about a resourceful group of elderly woman. I assumed the photograph was a free to use publicity shot. But it turns out I was wrong - something I discovered when AEA received a communication just before Christmas from PicRights, a company claiming that they represented PA Images, who owned the copyright of the image and that we had infringed said copyright on which a certain fee was due for usage.

Now ever since the internet was invented people have been merrily downloading images for use in everything from the parish magazine to their latest power point presentation. If you were a commercial website, you might well pay a photographer to take an appealing photograph of your wares. Or you might take care that your website designer had cleared the copyright on any images he or she was using. But apart from that, the web is so vast, it was an impossible task to check those millions of websites to see if anyone had accidentally or on purpose used a copyright image without

paying. So in the main nobody bothered and nobody worried. In the case of our digest for example in order to see the image in question, you would have had to first access our website, which is a bit specialist and therefore unlikely to get a huge number of visitors; then click on a link to a four year old e-mag and finally find the photograph, which was on one of the last pages of that issue. That would have taken great determination from someone who was looking for something specific.

Not any more however. Software design has now advanced to where there is a programme, which can be shown an image and it then send its "spies" out into the virtual world to burrow through billions of websites looking for that specific picture. Rather like a police dog following a scent.



"Bindy - the sniffer dog"
Photo UK Home Office

And when it finds it, bingo! As a result, I deduce, enterprising companies have spotted the gap in the market, bought the software and are offering their services to various large agencies and photo libraries, who are happy to pay someone

to do the sleuthing they have neither the time nor inclination to do themselves.

To return to AEA's experience, once we received the claim, Hon Sec Sasha Anderson and I did a bit of sleuthing ourselves. First we had to establish that this was a genuine company representing PA in this instance and not some spotty teenager working a scam from his bedroom. A series of checks online and with the PA itself revealed that it was indeed a genuine company. Then we looked into cases of other individuals and small organisations who had been affected. This appears to be a comparatively new development in the UK, though probably longer established in America. The response of individuals and other small organisations like ours, who'd been caught by the sleuthing worm, varied. The threat of legal action frightened some into paying up whereas others argued that as the sums involved were so small, it wasn't worth the companies while to go to court. Keep them occupied with queries and such and eventually they'll give up, some advised. However, despite engaging PicRights and the PA itself in a most arcane correspondence, which at least knocked a bit of money off the bill on the grounds that we are a charity, I finally recommended that it was safer for us to pay up and see this as – yes – a learning experience!

So the lesson we all need to learn from this is not to use any image unless you've paid for it, created it yourself or have the permission of the copyright owner to use freely. Strictly speaking this applies to print usage as well as the internet but I doubt if the snoopy worm is going to find the school magazine – unless it's online of course, when it

might. On the plus side our enterprising Sasha discovered something called Creative Commons (CC) licensing, which is a non-profit organisation that provides free licensing for creators of images to grant copyright permissions, and it essentially means that you can access their images without worrying about the copyright (or almost - some CC licenses have certain restrictions). You can access them here: <https://search.creativecommons.org>

That's where the pic of the Bindy on the previous page came from. Sasha also found an extremely helpful blog by a librarian at University of York which gives links to websites that offer CC0 images for academic use, including for presentations and websites <https://tinyurl.com/w6ff6b9> Thank you Sasha

Here's another pic to liven up the page – cos I like cats! Note the credit however.



Business cat – by Ryan McGuire

This does mean however that the wealth of images available on the world wide web is no longer ours for plundering willy nilly. With the digest for example, apart from using the websites indicated

above, if it's not an image created by me or another AEA member, like if it comes in a press release or I want an image to illustrate a point, I am going to have to scrupulously enquire about its provenance before using it. If you're creating a power point presentation, you are probably safe if it's just for internal use, as in a lecture. But if it's going onto a university or company website, that's when you have to be careful. Concern has been expressed about the use of images on social media. If

you're posting a link to a piece in a newspaper for example that should be safe, as they, not you, are the publisher and the website's picture desk will have sorted the permissions here. Otherwise the message is, **be very, very careful.**

I do hope it doesn't get to the point though when Auntie Clara demands payment, if you post on your Facebook page the family photograph she took the last time she came to dinner!

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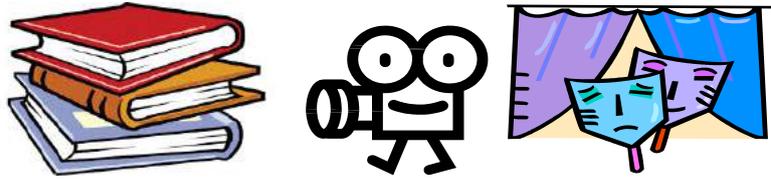


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AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION

*I doubt if anyone reading this is in doubt that taking part in artistic and cultural activities is good for your health. But confirmation of this fact is coming from all quarters now. Carol Allen rounds up the latest news on **How the Arts Can Improve your Health.***

Older people who engage with the arts live longer than those who do not, according to research by University College London. We're talking here about consumers as opposed to being active participants. The study, which was published in December in the British Medical Journal, found that adults over 50 who went to the theatre, opera, museums and attended concerts and exhibitions had a 31% lower risk of dying during the study's 14 year follow-up period, while the risk of dying younger was 14% lower among people who engaged with the arts infrequently, compared with those who never did.

A group of 6,710 men and women aged 50 and over from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing were analysed, and then followed up 14 years later. Their engagement with the arts was categorised in three ways: 1) never, 2) infrequent, which was classified as once or twice a year, and 3) frequent, which was "every few months, monthly or more".



Globe Theatre
photo Michael R. Shaughnessy

Lead author of the study, Dr Daisy Fancourt said: "We have seen increasing evidence to show the health benefit of the arts and while 'leisure' has been broadly linked to a lower risk of premature death, few studies have focused specifically on arts engagement in the UK. In this study, we found that arts engagement could have a protective associative with longevity in older adults, which could partly be explained by differences in cognitions, mental health and physical activity."

Co-author Andrew Steptoe, who is Professor of Epidemiology and Health Care at UCL, added: "One might think that people who go to museums, attend concerts and so on are healthier than those who don't. Or are wealthier, more mobile, and less depressed, and that these factors explain why attendance is

related to survival. But the interesting thing about this research is that even when we take these and many other factors into account, we still see a strong association between cultural engagement and survival.”

The study was funded by the National Institute of Ageing’s grant and a consortium of UK government departments, co-ordinated by the Economic and Social Research Council.

So there you have it. If you want to live a long life, support your local theatre, orchestra and museums. Turning to participation as opposed to consuming, we have clear albeit non statistical evidence from our own membership about the benefits of participating in activities such as music, dance, drama, creative writing and painting and we have carried many such stories in these columns.



Tottenham elders dance group celebrating after a performance – photo Jo Alexander

At the start of the new year, City Academy in London, who specialize in arts courses for students of all ages, came up with their own suggestion for a health and wellbeing resolution. “Along with or instead of the usual physical health resolutions, such as dry January, trying veganism or joining a gym, give you emotional health a boost with a

performing or creative arts course”. To paraphrase Mandy Rice-Davis’s best known quote: “Well, they would (suggest that), wouldn’t they”!

However City Academy does claim to have observed first hand how their students’ wellbeing has sky rocketed thanks to its classes. Susan Young, co-MD of City Academy, says: “From the camaraderie that a class brings – battling loneliness with the regularity of a weekly class and joining like minded people - to the thrill of learning a new skill, as well as the endorphin rush of song or dance, there’s so much more in a resolution that involves active creativity. A creative or performing arts course is an opportunity to meet new people and boost confidence as well as learning amazing skills.”

“Students tell us that our classes have changed their lives and had a positive impact on their mental health. They feel more positive, they feel energised, and they make new friends. When it comes to wellbeing there are plenty of trends that come and go, but joining a group of like-minded people to explore your latent talents and learn a new skill can be something which gives you a shift in your mental health, confidence and wellbeing for life, moving you forward into the new year and decade with pride and new-found energy.”

Details of classes at City Academy can be found here: <https://www.city-academy.com/news/>

*What about however those who want to enter the creative world professionally at a later age? Writing in The Stage newspaper, journalist **Lynn Gardner** put forward the argument that theatre*

*glorifies the young when what it really needs is **More Late Starters**.*

“Theatre often talks about the new and the young as if they are the same thing, which they are not”, she writes. “You can be an emerging writer or director in your 40s and 50s. I know somebody who has only recently dipped a toe into directing after raising a family.

Fetishising the young plays to the idea that theatre is a race, a sprint rather than a marathon, and that you have a sell-by date, because there are always younger theatremakers snapping at your heels.

But with this emphasis on youth, are we missing a trick about who does and doesn’t have access to the profession and who can make theatre?”

As a follow up to Ms Gardner’s piece, the stage solicited the views of those who had come late to the theatrical profession. One correspondent wrote: “When I returned to acting in 2016 after raising my family, I was advised that there was no point in trying, as the casting directors already had the lists of mature females they like – and that those women would always have the edge on me as they were the ones who chose a career over family (or managed to balance both).

Three years on I can say I have worked solidly in fringe and touring theatre, but so far I haven’t been seen for any TV or film work apart from shorts. Except for commercials, that side of acting seems to be a closed book: I can’t get in the room – and even in touring theatre and the West End, the cut-off age generally seems to be about 35.”

Another commented: I’m a third-year drama undergraduate at the age of 58, having had a 35-year career in the NHS.

I have never had any illusions about the focus on youth in the creative industries and am pursuing research into how the older body functions and is represented within contemporary theatre. Theatre reflects a society that not only privileges the younger body but places it in conflict with the old. ...I have sat through too many performances in which older people are harangued and vilified, perpetuating rather than challenging the old/young binary narrative that our social discourse is infected with.”

A third correspondent points out an issue affecting older actors who might like to pass on their skills to the young. “Most university jobs for teaching theatre or media-related courses require their candidates to have a PhD. The consequence is that not only do courses mainly cater for the young but are taught by the young, who have had no industry experience.



Tom Stoppard at a reception in Russia – photo Kondrashkin B. E

One of our greatest living playwrights, Tom Stoppard, never went to university so today would not be selected as a candidate for a scriptwriting post.

Actors Naomie Harris and Thandie Newton have Cambridge degrees in subjects unrelated to the industry they have succeeded in, but would find it

difficult to teach in a recognised drama school (other than as a guest) without a PhD in a related subject.”

The correspondent then goes on to point out that “Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* at the age of 50. So, with evolutionary biology in mind, perhaps the entertainment industry could blaze a trail for an oldie generation of novice film-makers, theatre-makers, actors, broadcasters and creatives in all areas.”

*When it comes to writing, one example of a late flowering novelist is Mary Wesley, best known for *The Camomile Lawn*. Her first adult novel was published in 1983, when she was 71.*

While not wishing to put myself in Ms Wesley’s class, I was rather tickled pink when back in the summer I was accepted as one of only eight writers out of over a hundred applicants for a new play writing course at the Bush Theatre in West London. My fellow students are a diverse bunch in terms of ethnicity – I and one young man are the only people of no colour – but I am the only person of considerable age. The others are in their twenties and thirties.

We have been introduced to various techniques for creating the different aspects of a play – structure, characterization etc – and most importantly we all had to produce the first draft of a play by the end of January. In our final session we will have an opportunity to read and learn from each other’s plays. I have no idea whether mine will ever be performed but I have finished it. Set towards the end of this century, it deals with a world altered by catastrophic climate change, politics,

power and how you might deal with the challenge of living forever. And it has been a great experience writing it and exchanging ideas with the young writers.

*One very enjoyable arts experience though is usually between you and yourself – the solitary and luxurious experience of curling up with a good book. But it turns out, **Reading Can Be Bad for Your Health** - particularly if you like to read in bed **Hilary Farnworth** however has found a way round the problem.*

“Stop reading in bed” decreed Norman my osteopath in September. I protested; I’ve been reading in bed since about the age of seven when I was up the Faraway tree, or running from the dog with eyes as big as millstones in my Hans Andersen. Apparently the book reading posture was crinkling up my upper spine and affecting my lower back weakness, and was contributing to my six summer weeks of sciatica. Norman has been right before, so I decide to try switching to audio books for my bedtime reading.



**Audio book shelves Chelmsford public library
Enough to keep Hilary busy!**

I’ve already got over 100 books on my Kindle. I use the library, pick up bargains in the charity shop while waiting for buses and I’ve ordered the 3rd Thomas Cromwell book by Hilary Mantel already. I don’t fancy getting out of my warm bed to occupy the one comfortable bedroom armchair, which is

nowhere near the radiator. I think about changing the furniture round but decide against it. So that is when, encouraged by both Jitka's and Norman's advice, I decide to turn to audio books for my book at bedtime.

I discover the public library has a selection but I have to visit and download the correct software as their website is telling me to use an out of date App. I skip quickly through two Bill Bryson's, an Alan Bennett, and have a good scare with armoured bears in the first volume of *His Dark Materials* by Phillip Pullman. But the library doesn't have a massive selection.

I then try a library book on CD but my laptop sound isn't up to it. I find I have to use my smartphone with Apps. One audio book works on my Kindle, but it's a very old Paperwhite Kindle, and doesn't oblige next time. So back to the phone. One morning I find that I am very deaf. Turns out I have got the plastic thingy from the earphones half stuck in my ear. I remove it and resolve to buy the cans type of earphones. I haven't however. I just check my ear for the plastic thing every morning now.

I find I have fallen asleep over a whole chapter of *The Life of the Mountbattens*. Which means I have to laboriously rewind my way back. (There may be some controls on my Audible app I haven't yet explored). I find if I search for a new audio book at bedtime and set it up, this process tends to wake me up, so I decide to put two or three books ready in advance on my wish list. Pleased to report I don't get another bout of sciatica, which is good. And I am still reading my Kindle on the bus and train.

*Sounds like Hilary has been on a bit of a learning curve in the interests of healthy reading. And as we were saying earlier, if you want to live a long and healthy life, going to the theatre will help you achieve that goal. So here's **Carlie Newman** with some **Theatre Tips**.*

Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House* is well known as being one of the first plays to be acknowledged by women as a feminist piece. In *Nora: A Doll's House*, Stef Smith's version of the 1879 play, she has written Nora as three people – each one from a different era. There is the Nora of 1918 (Amaka Okafor), Nora of 1968 (Natalie Klamar) and Nora of the present time, 2018 (Anna Russell-Martin). All dressed in clothes of their period (but with the same colour scheme), all looking very different with different accents.



**Anna Russell-Martin, Amaka Okafor and Natalie Klamar in *Nora: A Doll's House*
Photo: Marc Brenner**

Along with them, we have Nora's old friend Christine (played by the three 'Nora' actresses), Nora's husband Thomas (played in all three eras by Luke Norris), their friend Daniel (Zephryn Taitte in all versions) and Nathan an employee of the husband about to be fired (again in all eras: Mark Arends). Nora is treated as a pretty little ornament by her husband Thomas. However, a disgruntled employee, Nathan, attempts to blackmail her by revealing a secret from her past and threatening to expose

her. She is terribly scared of harm coming to herself and her family. During the course of this new version of Ibsen's play she comes to realise that everything she does has been for other people and she has never found or acknowledged her true self.

The actresses are well-delineated and even when they play Christine, we can tell who each one is. It is necessary to follow the action carefully, but well worth the effort involved and, as this interpretation is well structured and immaculately directed by Elizabeth Freestone, an evening with the three Noras is most rewarding.

Nora is at the Young Vic, London until 21 March 2020, Box office: 020 7922 2922)

For something completely different, try ***The Dog Walker*** at the delightful little Jermyn Street Theatre. Any play at this gem of a playhouse is well-worth seeing and this one is no exception.



The Dogwalker. Photo: Robert Workman

Victoria Yeates (*Call the Midwife*) plays Keri in director Harry Burton's production. She nurses a dead dog and tells the dog walker who comes to fetch her pet that she can see the ghost of a dead child, for whom she feels responsible.

Keri has many problems as does the official dog walker, Jamaican Herbert Doakes (Andrew Dennis), who speaks

romantically of his wife, but, as we later learn, all is far from good with the marriage.

This is an interesting little play, beautifully acted with a set which would not be out of place in a rich Shaftesbury Avenue venue!

(The Dog Walker is at the Jermyn Street Theatre until 7 March. Box office: 020 287 2875)

Fancy a trip to the movies? Carol Allen has news of what's on offer on the Cinema Screen.

Before getting on to the film reviews as such, news just came in that UK film director, Sally Potter has been awarded an Honorary Palm Dog at the Berlin Film Festival for her film ***The Roads Not Taken***.



Dogs are central and significant in what is described as a "harrowing and heartfelt story of dementia" in which Javier Bardem plays Leo, a dementia sufferer, who doesn't realise that his beloved dog Nestor is dead. "The film recognises the deep love and attachment people feel for their dog" says Potter.

The Palm Dog Award is held annually in Cannes on the last Friday of the film festival and celebrates canine

performances in all of the films screened at that event. There's another one held annually in London - the FIDOS (For Incredible Dogs on Screen) and even though Nestor never appears in this particular film, Dog awards founder Toby Rose spotted another opportunity to celebrate the canine contribution to cinema. *The Roads Not Taken*, which also features Elle Fanning and recent Oscar winner Laura Linney, is currently scheduled to open here in May.

Talking of the Oscars and other awards, because things move so quickly, most of the winners and nominees have now disappeared from the cinemas. Multi winner *Parasite* however, which examines the class divide in Korea, is still around on the big screen. It's a good film though I'm not sure if I were giving out awards I would have been quite so generous.



1917 – Photo Francois Duhamel/AP

My awards preference was for Sam Mendes' *1917* for its subject, it's amazing photography by Roger Deakins and the moving central performances by young actors George Mackay and Dean-Charles Chapman, supported by strong cameos from more senior actors such as Andrew Scott and Colin Firth.

Renee Zellweger well deserved her Oscar for *Judy*, though by now that's pretty much disappeared from the cinemas. But it is now available on DVD

and download. One of my favourite sequences is the one where Judy meets two of her gay fans, which is both funny and moving. Also gone from the cinema but worth catching on other media is Oscar nominee Cynthia Erivo as heroine of the abolitionist movement *Harriet* (Tubman).



Cynthia Erivo as Harriet.
Photo Glen Wilson/AP

Another of my favourite films of the awards season was writer/director Noah Baumbach's *Marriage Story*, which had lots of nominations but didn't get that many prizes. An even handed examination of a marriage falling apart it has moving performances from Adam Driver and Scarlett Johansson with Laura Linney in her Oscar winning role as the wife's tough lawyer.

One of the underlying themes of *Marriage Story* is a woman's rights in today's world and my recommendation for this spring is a forthcoming film set back in the Britain of 1970. That's the year that the newly born Women's Liberation Movement decided to disrupt the Miss World competition.



In *Misbehaviour* Keira Knightley and Jessie Buckley star as Sally Alexander and Jo Robinson, who mastermind the

plan – or should that be “mistressmind”? On the other side, as it were, we have Rhys Ifans, very funny as Eric Morley and Keeley Hawes as his wife Julia, the brains of their Miss World partnership, while Gugu Mbatha-Raw plays Miss Grenada, one of the Miss World contestants. The film is exuberant and often funny, in the tradition of *Pride* and *The Full Monty*, and like them it’s also a tribute to those who took part. At the end we get a brief glimpse of the real life and now elderly Jo Robinson and Sally Alexander- heroines of the feminist revolution.

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