Welcome to the 10th TechNet e-newsletter

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About TechNet:

TechNet was established in 2014 at the University of Sheffield. It is a new way for technicians to discuss, collaborate and improve the way they work.

- Meet up with other technicians to share ideas and solve problems
- Draw on the skills of technicians who can help make your job easier
- Join an online community to find new ideas and better ways of working

Call for two new co-chairs of TechNet

TechNet is now looking for two new co-chairs to replace current co-chairs Natalie Kennerley and Kevin Oxley. Natalie has moved on to her new position at Manchester Metropolitan University as Technical Services Development Manager and Kevin will be taking up his new position as Head of Technical Services at the University of Hull. We would like to thank Natalie and Kevin for all the work they have put in to making sure the TechNet network has been a success over the past 4 years.

This does mean that TechNet is now looking for two new co-chairs, to help the TechNet Steering group to continue to bring successful TechNet events to Sheffield staff. This is an excellent opportunity to bring in two enthusiastic and motivational co-chairs to lead TechNet into the future. This provides an excellent opportunity to develop your networking and profile in the University, in tandem with the Technician Commitment that the University signed in October, the University is providing support for TechNet going forward.
If you think you would be interested in taking up one of the co-chair positions, please get in touch with Terry Croft at t.croft@sheffield.ac.uk by the 6th of April.

To find out more about TechNet please visit our website: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/technet

Review: TechNet Event - 30th January

Over 50 people attending this TechNet event in January which celebrated the diversity of technicians through presentations from technicians in areas not often heard from. This included technicians from the drama studio, creative media and a talk on professional registration by the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET).

Adam, the representative from the IET, spoke about the benefits of joining the IET as a member – including access to resources, offices and networks, both in the UK and Internationally. Adam also talked about the benefits of becoming professionally registered and the different levels offered by the IET, including:
- Chartered Engineer (CEng)
- Incorporated Engineer (IEng)
- Engineering Technician (EngTech)
- ICT Technician (ICTTech)
- Also via Partnership agreements:
  - Chartered IT Professional (CITP)
  - Chartered Manager (CMgr)

Next up, Robert from the Creative Media team took us through equipment and training that is now available to all staff as well as students. This includes film and audio recording equipment as well as access to new editing suites in the Diamond building – which includes a podcast studio and TV studio.
Lord Sainsbury opened the National Technician Development Centre

The National Technician Development Centre for Higher Education, based at the University of Sheffield, was officially opened by Lord Sainsbury on the 13th of February.

The National Centre was set up following an investment of £1.125 million, including £546,000 from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and funding from the University of Sheffield and other partners of more than £580,000.

Welcoming Lord Sainsbury at the ceremony were the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield, Professor Sir Keith Burnett, and the Director of the National Centre and Chairman of the Institute of Science and Technology (IST), Terry Croft.

The centre will provide higher education institutions with access to information, expertise and tools that will enable them to create a sustainable future for their technical staff and services.

It will work with partners in higher education and related institutions to provide a national framework for standardised job titles, grading and career pathways across the technical workforce, including plans to increase the number of apprentices working in the sector, ensuring the workforce of the future is fully equipped to meet the needs of higher education institutions.

On opening the centre, Lord Sainsbury spoke of the importance of developing the technical workforce:
"I believe the work that the National Technician Development Centre is doing is of national importance due to the tireless efforts of Terry Croft and his colleagues and the inspirational leadership of Sir Keith Burnett.

“It is also a real breakthrough that HEFCE has committed serious funding, alongside the University of Sheffield and other partners, to enable the National Technician Development Centre to expand the support it offers to higher education institutions around the country”.

Lord Sainsbury met with University of Sheffield technicians and apprentices (pictured below).

Read more about the National Centre here

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**PROUD SUPPORTER OF THE**

**Technician Commitment**

**Technician Commitment at the University of Sheffield**

The technical role in HE in 21st Century has traditionally been neglected and misunderstood by the wider sector. This is unfortunate as technicians are experts in their own rights; highly experienced with skills and talents, and in some cases highly qualified. Technicians also directly contribute to research, teaching and business. The lack of understanding makes technicians in some way invisible.

The [Technician Commitment Initiative](#) (TCI) takes the first steps into addressing **visibility, recognition, career development** and **sustainability** for technicians. Institutions are signing up all over the UK to provide these 4 themes to benefit technical staff in HE.

The University of Sheffield is a signatory of the Technician Commitment and as a part of the commitment, will be working with the Technicians Network to meet the pledges.

The [TechNet website](#) will now be the main point of information for anything related to the Technician Commitment and the site will be widely acknowledged as the area for TUoS Technicians for events, awards, professional registration and resources.

We will shortly be updating the TechNet website with more information on the Technician Commitment and what is being done to support and implement this at the University of Sheffield. Please check back
regularly for news and updates on the Technician Commitment at Sheffield and if you have any questions about this please contact John-Paul Ashton on j.p.ashton@sheffield.ac.uk.

**A Technical Support career at The University of Sheffield**

**Frank Fletcher RSci MIScT**  
Technical Engineering Team Leader  
Technical Support Services  
The Department of Materials Science & Engineering

My career began at the University of Sheffield on the 9th of July 1973 as Junior Laboratory Technician in the Department of Glass Technology at Elmfield, Northumberland Road. The role of a Junior Technician in 1973 was to set up and test equipment for practical classes, assist students with the experiments, build new equipment, clean, maintain and repair equipment, wax polish the wooden lab benches and strangest of all, to stand on VW car windows and demonstrating glass blowing using (carefully) melted Fox’s Glacier Mints at Open Days!
My career was tending towards Chemistry and in 1976 I completed my College course and was promoted to Laboratory Technician. In 1978, due to Departmental need, my career path diverted to Electronics Technician. Under the inspired supervision and training of Mr. Alan Gregory I grew quickly into the role and when Alan left the University I was put in charge of the electronics section.

I gained a (self-funded) Diploma in Audio, Radio and TV servicing to confirm my skills. University funded training was limited in those days. In 1992, I was promoted to Senior Technician and in 2005, I was promoted to Chief Technician, now renamed Technical Engineering Team Leader.

During my 45 years here, I have worked in the same department in three different Buildings (one twice!), in ten different work areas and, incredibly, there are plans to make this eleven before I take early retirement in September!

I have watched the Department grow and develop in teaching and research themes too:

- 1975 - The Department of Glass Technology merged with the Department of Ceramics to become the Department of Ceramics, Glasses and Polymers (CGP)
- 1984 - CGP was renamed to The School of Materials
- 1992 - The Department of Materials Science and Engineering (MSE) was born.

During my early career I helped to develop a special coloured glass for the drinks industry and have been involved in an investigation into the durability of Lead crystal decanters. In electronics; I have contributed to many interesting research projects but one of the most amusing was being tasked with making a controllable motorised platform to shake fruit jellies for a School Outreach Project.

In 2011 I became leader of the Technical Support Team and my team and I provide our services to all members of the the Department of Materials Science & Engineering. We offer IT, AV and
communications solutions, electronic and electrical services, EFM liaison and provision of small scale infrastructure projects and vacuum system services.

I was awarded Registered Scientist status in February 2017 and I was asked to create and deliver a short presentation about my career and why I applied for registration so late in my career. I delivered the presentation at the TechNet event at Firth Hall where I formally received my award and, much to my surprise, I was invited to speak at a Technician’s Event at the University of Hull (December 2017). I enjoyed meeting the technicians at Hull University and touring their department, the friendly one to one chats during lunch and the informal discussion after the event were a delight. I have also been invited to talk at a forthcoming event at Manchester Metropolitan University in April 2018.

I was honoured to be invited to meet Lord Sainsbury at the opening of the National Technician Development Centre. He showed great interest in my mission to promote the value of Professional Registration regardless of age. It is clear that Lord Sainsbury values technicians and he spoke of how important technicians are to the British economy. To have such an influential ally is a great asset to our cause and will benefit the next generation of technicians.

I have also been asked to talk about Professional Registration at the 2018 IST Conference – the surprises just keep on coming. I am astonished that so late in my career that my thoughts are regarded as inspirational! I intend to continue 'spreading the word' after I retire, should the opportunity arise.

Thanks to Natalie Kennerley and Kevin Oxley for their support, advice and encouragement and for making my latest adventure possible.

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CryoUsers Conference 2017 review

CryoUsers 2017 was the first CryoUsers event that was planned by an organising committee from afar. The arrival of delegates and sponsors started with a return to basics reminder of shared facility student accommodation; a light finger buffet with refreshments was enjoyed around our sponsors display areas with plenty of networking going on late into the evening.

The opening address on Tuesday morning was made by the CryoUsers committee and was followed by some very interesting presentations throughout the day. Stelios Flessas of Sauer Compressors talked about Helium tight compressors, Penda Gu from the Diamond Light Source gave an overview of the facilities cryogenics and Richard Frost from Sumitomo Cryogenics discussed a CCR based system that maintains NMR systems during shipping. Rob Done from the ISIS facility talked about Cryogenic Safety and Chesterfield tag team Stephen Butler and Danny Millard looked at High pressure cylinder testing and some extreme examples of what not to do to pressure vessels. We were taken to the
Extremes of Cryogenic Sample Environments by Dr Oleg Kirichek from the ISIS facility. Charles Monroe gave a very interesting talk about an affordable Helium purity measurement device, Ian Taylor gave a Boiswood overview and the last talk of the day was delivered by Dr Graham Rodgers from Leybold who took us all through closed cycle based cryo pumps.

An optional free visit to the transport museum was offered to the conference and those that went were exposed not only to some very old cars that bought back memories, but some very well kept Jaguar heritage vehicles. The jewel in the crown was the Thrust displays with both record holding cars there in the form of Thrust 2 and Thrust SSC displayed for public pleasure. The first day ended with a conference banquet which proved very tasty; lovely food and quality wines. The Coventry Techno centre did a very good job and the Techno centre staff looked after us all excellently; it was good to see discussions going on late into the evening.

The second and last day of the conference, like the first, started with a very good full English breakfast with coffee along with time to talk with each other and to look at the displays of our sponsors. We then moved onto our mornings program with presentations by Andreas Rueegge from Linde Kryotechnik who covered Linde liquefaction systems and also the interesting topic of ionic fluid lubricated compressors that are removing oil from the Helium recovery process. Stelios Flessas from Sauer delivered his second talk on the ITER nuclear fusion project, Richard Down presented the ISIS Helium recovery system and some of its automated highlights. Then we broke for a CryoUsers group photograph and finally Dr Chris Lawson talked about Physics at extremely low temperatures with his time spent at Lancaster University and Leiden Cryogenics.

The meeting was closed by the organising committee with the excellent news that our next meeting will be held at St Andrews in 2019, details of CryoUsers and the program itinerary with links to the talks can be found on the British Cryogenics Council website http://bcryo.org.uk/news_events for your reference, we will update with news of the next event as we get it.

Thanks to all those that attended, our delegates and sponsors have made this meeting very successful; the discussions on Helium Recovery techniques, systems and devices continued until departure and have carried on since...

Thank you for your support and see you in 2019...

Dave, Richard, John, Martin, Bob and Adam.

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**Technician Events 2018**

**Technical Managers in Universities Conference**  
11th - 13th April 2018  
University of Nottingham  
More info: [http://www.tmu.uk.net/](http://www.tmu.uk.net/)

**UBMA 35th Annual Conference**  
18th - 20th April 2018  
Imperial College London  
HEaTED Event: Generating income with technical facilities and services
9th May 2018
National STEM Learning Centre, York
More info: https://www.stem.org.uk/cpd/423971/generating-income-technical-facilities-and-services

Scientific Laboratory Show and Conference
Wednesday 23rd May 2018
East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham
More info: https://www.scientificlaboratoryshow.co.uk/home#

Exeter Technical Services Conference
28th June 2018
Streatham Campus, The Forum, University of Exeter
More info: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/technicalservices/events/technicalservicesconference2018/

IST One Day Technical Conference
Thursday 20th September 2018
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Newcastle

Science World 2018
Thursday 27th September
Emirates Old Trafford – Lancashire County Cricket Club
TechYork was originally started ~five years ago as a way of showcasing the University’s various (science) departments and research. It was also intended as a way of encouraging technicians to reach for and achieve their goals, through personal development, CPD and professional registration.

It started as a one-day annual conference, hosted by a different department each time, and included research talks and facility tours. These later branched out to include more frequent, shorter events, usually combining an invited speaker with a chance to meet and network.

Until recently, organisation of these events was carried out by the technical managers, however this year, responsibility was handed to a committee of technicians from a variety of departments. We were aiming to continue the tradition of an annual conference, combined with shorter networking events, but increase the “membership” to include those non-science departments who employ, and have a
large reliance on technicians (e.g. Theatre, Film and Television Studies and Archaeology).

We recently held our first technician-organised event: hosted by the Chemistry department, we welcomed ~90 colleagues from eight University departments, who were treated to an audience-pleasing, interactive “Chemistry@Xmas” lecture by Professor Sir John Holman, current chairman of the Royal Society of Chemistry, and Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at York. We also heard from Professor Brian Fulton, Dean of the Faculty of Science at York, about the Technicians Commitment and technical development and modernisation initiatives planned by the University. This was followed by tea and coffee, (as well as plenty of mulled wine and mince pies!), and a chance to network with our colleagues.

Looking to the future, we are planning on a larger one-day event in the summer, with the aim of getting more technicians from around the University involved.

Finally, please feel free to follow us on Twitter @UofYTechs

- The TechYork team

Nominations for 'Recognition Corner'

We would like to make 'Recognition Corner' a regular feature in the newsletter. This is a place where you can nominate your colleagues for something they have achieved or you think they deserve recognition for. This can be anything from success in a particular project to always having a positive attitude. Maybe your colleague went out of their way to help you work a bit of equipment? Or you’ve noticed they are passionate about teaching their students? Then you could make sure their contributions are acknowledged publicly in the TechNet Newsletter!

To nominate a colleague, just send in their name, email address, department and a short paragraph on why they deserve recognition. Please send these to Kevin Oxley at k.m.oxley@sheffield.ac.uk

Have you joined the TechNet forum yet?

Sign up to the TechNet forum, introduce yourself and help build a community of mutual support for
our Technical staff. For help getting started, use our Forum guide

TechNet is your network, your newsletter and your forum - tell us what you want!

Please email us your ideas for future events or for features for the newsletter, we would love to hear from you! Contact us at technet-steering-group@sheffield.ac.uk

Our mailing address is:
technet-steering-group@sheffield.ac.uk

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