



OPC's Cillian Burke (Cave Leader), Caitlin Lipscomb and Thomas Bach (Photographer) underground during the OPC Yorkshire vertical training trip Easter 2012. See Page 25.

New Student Centre, Campus Developments Will Cost €40M

Darragh Roche
Editor

THE estimated cost of the new student centre and other campus developments will be €40m, according to the latest report from the Students' Union. The plans include an entirely new building to house the Students' Union's offices, an extension to the University Arena and the development of Maguire's pitches.

The new student centre would be built onto the current CSIS (Computer Science) Building, which would be converted into part of the new centre. All SU offices, including An Focal

and ULFM, as well as administration and sabbatical officers, would be housed in the new building. However, the SU would only take up part of the building. Much of the proposed centre would be taken up with UL administration. Offices like Student Academic Administration, the Co-op Office, the Medical Centre and the International Office would sit cheek by jowl with students. In the prospective plans, images of which are published on pages 3 and 4 of today's newspaper, the SU offices would be based on several different floors.

Clubs and Societies and Class Reps would be based on the first floor, along

with a common room, while sabbatical officers and "media workspaces", presumably for An Focal and ULFM, would be on the second floor. The third floor would contain a games room, while the proposal includes a roof garden and balcony sitting areas on the second floor. The plans also show a three storey nightclub, bar, restaurant and live music venue. It is important to note that the plans are provisional at this stage and subject to change.

In order to pay for this project, the SU will attempt to extend the student levy, currently €72 and payable by every student each academic year regardless of fees status. This will go part way

to paying for the projects, which the University will also fund. The SU has not yet announced the finer details of the proposed levy, which has to be approved by the student body. A general meeting in Week 4 will focus on the issue, with a referendum scheduled in Week 8.

If the levy extension passes, a committee will be established to finalised the plans and the projects will begin in earnest. The amount of the proposed student levy has not been revealed, nor has the length of time the SU wishes to levy it for. However, the new student centre has been billed as providing for the needs of students

for the next 20 years, so it is not inconceivable that the levy will have to last that long.

Students' opinions on the new student centre, Arena and pitches developments are already being sought by SU officers. The campaign is expected to begin soon and be vigorous, as nothing short of all out victory will ensure the new student centre is constructed. As of yet, there appears to be no formal voice of opposition to the plans, though some prominent students have privately expressed reservations about embarking on capital projects in the middle of a recession.

See Pages 3 & 4 for more.



The Student Centre Of The Future
Pages 3 & 4



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What US Republicans See
Page 5

UL Affected By Limerick City Bus Route Changes

Colm Fitzgerald
Comment Editor

BUS Eireann city bus services to the University have been affected following sweeping changes to the bus network.

The amendments, which were implemented on Sunday, 16 September, see many routes across Limerick being either removed or amalgamated.

The route number 308/308A, which was often referred to affectionately as "The 308", has been removed. UL has now become part of route 304, which will now operate from Ballycummin and Raheen to the city, with buses continuing to UL via William Street and the regular route via Childers Road.

This is positive for those who may wish to commute to UL from Raheen/Ballycummin, though it is unclear if passengers will be able to travel to UL on one fare, or if it will cost more than €1.70.

The twice daily UL-Raheen services which operated at 4.30pm and 5.30pm during the college semester have been discontinued.

There will still be a bus every 15 minutes, though it remains to be seen if this will be reliable. After 7pm the frequency is reduced to a bus every 30 minutes, with the last bus from UL to the city at 11.30pm. On Sundays there is a service every 30 minutes.

Thirty minutes are now allowed for the journey from UL to town, which



is appropriate given the often large number of passengers waiting at stops inbound to the city which previously compounded delays.

Clare Street and the Dublin Road, which were previously served by the 308A, will now be served by route 306. Most curiously though, this shall not operate to the campus, but will instead operate to Groody Road,

adjacent to Brookfield Hall and Troy Student Village.

This change is not good for students who reside in Parkview Hall on the Dublin Road, who shall now have to either walk half the distance or change to the 304 at the Parkway and subsequently pay two fares.

The 306 shall operate from Brookfield hourly from 7.15am, with

the last service at 11.15pm. There is no Sunday service. It will operate via Clare Street to Henry Street in the City Centre. This route then continues to Ballynanty on Limerick's Northside.

It is hoped these changes may address the unreliability of the buses, the timekeeping of which is regularly heavily criticised by UL students.

The changes will do little however to address the rampant overcrowding which features at peak times. It is clear double decker buses would be more appropriate at these times, though they are not forthcoming.

Bus Eireann recently introduced new vehicles to its fleet which offer free wifi. These often operate to UL.

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1. Contributors please note:
All submissions to An Focal are greatly valued. If you have submitted an article which has not been published in this issue, it is very likely that your piece has been retained for publication in future issues. If you are concerned that your article has not been published, please say so.

2. Editing:
If you are unhappy with how your article appeared in An Focal, please discuss this with the Editor. A number of strict guidelines are followed in the production of An Focal, which means some articles may be altered to allow them to fit on the page and to improve readability.

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Library Cracks Down On Noisy Readers

Fintan Walsh
News Editor

A NEW noise management system has been put into place in the University's library. This implementation came about as a result of the library's third LibQual survey, where over 2,000 students issued concerns about the level of noise.

As a result of the survey, certain areas of the Glucksman Library have been zoned, by colours, to distinguish the different levels of sound that is and is not permitted. As well as this additional change, the UL Library will trial a student noise monitor, who will patrol the building's busy hours; between 4pm and 7pm. As before, the library's security will inspect the area when the student noise monitor is not patrolling.

The four zones are: silent (pink), quiet (blue), group study (green) and phone (purple). In the silent zone, which can be found on the first and second floor, will consist of no talking, absolute silence, phones and laptops to be on silent, no loud headphones, no eating and no group work. The quiet zones are situated on all floors. This will permit

the studier to have short-quieted conversations. Other than that, the quiet zones bear the same conditions as the silent zone. The group study zones are found on the ground floor, where only quiet conversations are permitted. The phone zones are situated in the bathrooms, photocopy rooms and the back stairwells.

The library stated that the glazing in the atria effectively decreased the sound levels, last year, and that this year they have been focusing on internationally innovative ways to assist in noise management. Similar universities with this system are University of Manchester, Durham University, University of Glasgow, London School of Economics and numerous institutes around Australia. In the University of Manchester, students who break the rules of the library's zones are punished and suspended from the building for a certain period of time.

Other notable alterations to the UL Library consist of stronger wifi on the first and second floor, a new postgraduate reading room, a new library catalogue with extra features, all-day access to short loans, and an extension of the number of books a



student can borrow.

Students who have been notified are supportive of these changes. A first year student who wishes to be unnamed said, "It's a great idea, I think. You have PhD and Masters students who need silence when trying to study and get

the best out of their degree."

Students and staff, who are interested in giving feedback regarding the newest updates, can send an e-mail to the library, at libinfo@ul.ie.

Landslide Needed To Ensure Levy Referendum Victory



“
66% of
voters must
approve
”

THE Students' Union will hold a referendum to extend the €72 levy this semester. The levy extension is intended to pay for the construction of a new student centre, an extension to the Arena and improvements to the pitches, known as Maguire's. The referendum is scheduled for Week 8 and will be crucial in deciding the future of the SU.

In order for the referendum to pass, 15% of the student body has to vote and a further 66% of voters must approve the measure. This means that only 1,800 out of some 12,000 students need to vote, but 1,188 of those need to vote yes in order for the referendum to pass. This means that a landslide victory is required to ensure the levy extension passes.

The total cost of the projects is expected to reach €40m, according to an estimate released by the Students' Union. This will be paid through the joint efforts of the SU and the University. The new student centre is expected to “meet the needs of every student for the next 20 years or more.”

SU President Adam Moursy issued his first 'state of the Union' statement in Week 1, in which he briefly outlined the plans for the new student centre and the levy. Calling the plans, “the most exciting development that could happen this year”, Mr Moursy said that the new student centre would include “space and facilities for the Union, every club and society, improved retail and chilling spaces, and a state of the art nightclub/venue.”

“It will not be possible without a contribution from students,” Mr Moursy's statement said, “We will

make sure that every student has all the information that they need to make up their minds about these projects,” it added. The statement pledged members of the SU Executive to make the case in council meetings and to answer any questions students have.

Two previous referenda of this nature were passed. In 1995, a vote on the construction of the current students' centre passed with a turnout of 1,800 while in 2003 a vote on the boathouse passed with a turnout of 3,000. The turnout at last year's sabbatical elections was remarkably low, despite the relative ease of online voting. Current sabbatical officers faced close races, with more than one candidate beaten by a nose. If such a turnout were repeated, a referendum would be unlikely to pass.

SU officials, led by President Adam Moursy and Clubs and Societies' Development Officer Paul Lee, will be pushing hard to have the levy extension approved. The plans are extensive and ambitious, involving the construction of a brand new student centre, the conversion of the CSIS Building into part of that centre, an extension to the Sports Arena and the long overdue improvements to Maguire's playing pitches.

Clubs and Societies' Administration is keen to stress the long-term advantages of a new student centre. The centre would have vastly improved facilities for clubs, greater space and resources for societies and some much needed installations not currently available to clubs and societies.

The extensive artist's concept drawings were unveiled in the

Clubs and Societies' Newsletter, which included a long article on the background of the current project and the controversy surrounding Maguire's pitches. CSDO Paul Lee has worked in the SU longer than anyone else and has a keen interest in the new developments. Mr Lee is convinced the long-term benefits to UL's many clubs and societies will far outweigh the cost of the levy. Many clubs have had longstanding complaints about on campus facilities, with pitches a particular concern. The proposed facilities in the new student centre would go a long way to resolving many clubs' issues. Along with this, proposals to have a debate chamber/council chamber-type room should appeal both to Class Reps Council and societies which require auditorium-style space.

The plans also entail an on campus nightclub, contained within the student centre. This would be a unique undertaking. An on campus nightclub would be expected to generate revenue for the Students' Union.

The levy extension will also pay for development of Maguire's pitches, which have been the subject of heated criticism for several years. Dubbed by some “Maguire's Mud Bath”, the playing pitches are substandard, poorly lit and typically waterlogged. The proposed improvements would make Maguire's useful to clubs, which have lobbied for many years to improve the pitches.

The plans for a new students' centre have been in process for many years, with an artist's conception of the new centre revealed last year. The plans were poorly received, however, and

have since been completely redrawn. The new plan envisions building a large, new building between the Foundation Building/UCH and the Schumann-Kemmy area. The current computer science building (CSIS) would be incorporated into the new student centre, along with student administrative services currently in various parts of the Main Building, such as Student Academic Administration.

The plans are part of the University's attempt to move the centre of campus away from the Stables area and into the Plaza outside the Main Building. It is hoped that students will congregate in and around the new student centre, moving the campus's hub to that area.

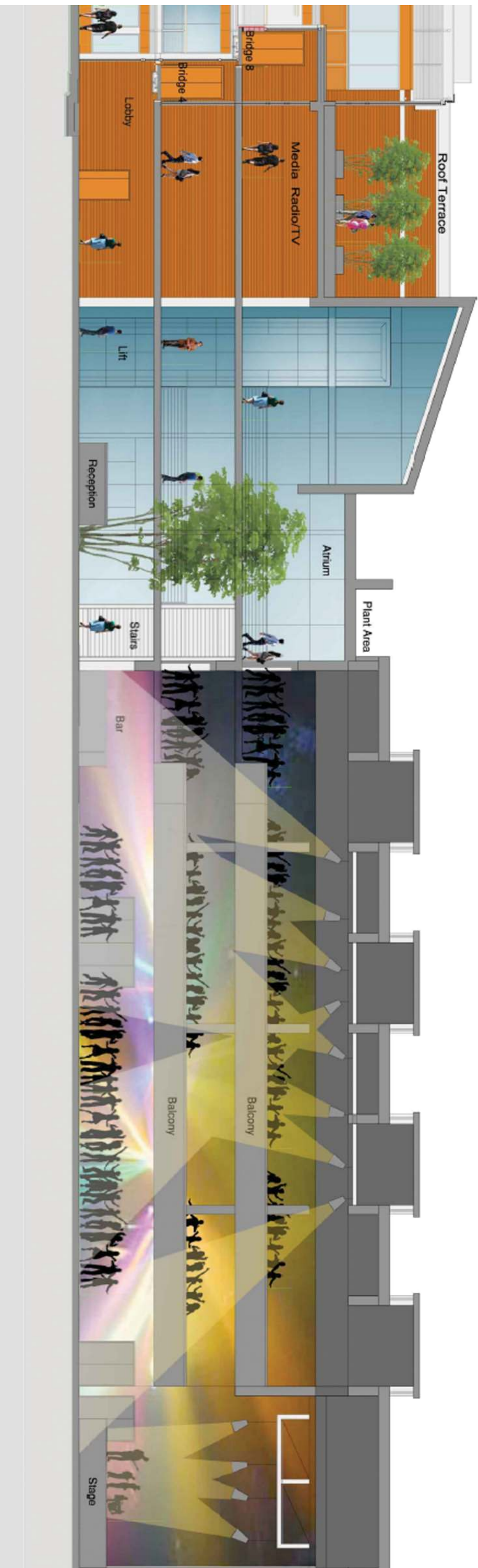
The development is happening alongside new projects on the North Campus, notably the Graduate Medical School. The University hopes to bridge the divide between North and South campuses by moving the centre of campus closer to the geographical centre and away from the old Stables area, which has been the de facto centre of campus for decades.

The Students' Union will strongly encourage Class Reps, Clubs and Societies' heads and all interested parties to campaign vigorously for a “yes” vote in Week 8.

Representations will be made to both Class Reps and Clubs and Societies' Councils in the coming weeks, while a general meeting in Week 4 will be seen as a warm-up for the referendum and a chance to discuss and debate the ideas.



An artist's conception of the exterior of the new student centre, including the current CSIS building.



The proposal for the interior of the new student centre includes offices, a nightclub and study rooms.

We Did Build That



The Elephant's View by
Michael Shea

In 1992, James Carville coined the famous catchphrase “it’s the economy, stupid” that helped carry Bill Clinton into the White House. That phrase has become more than a catchphrase from a single election; it has now come to symbolise an entire campaign boiled down to a single, approachable phrase.

Twenty years later, the shoe is on the other foot. Today, Republicans are rallying to a similar call to arms that has come to epitomize what they feel is wrong with Washington. It all started at a campaign stop in Roanoke where President Obama stopped to talk to the locals about millionaires “paying their fair share”. He began talking about how successful people didn’t get there on their own. “Lots of people are hard workers...lots of people are smart” he said as the crowd answered back with church-like yeas. He then added “If you own a business, you didn’t build

that.” Then the normally adoring crowd, drooling at the president’s feet like stray dogs at a butcher’s shop, become noticeably quiet, giving Obama a very under enthused response.

This was the calm before the storm. No sooner had the words left the president’s mouth that a backlash mightier than a public sector union strike exploded across the blogosphere and national media. Small business owners were enraged. The CEO of the National Federation of Independent Businesses (a lobbying group for small businesses) released a statement saying the comment was a “punch in the gut to small businesses” and across the country business owners were placing signs in their window saying “We Did Build It!” It wasn’t long before Mitt Romney was standing before banners saying the same thing.

And bingo, a slogan is born.

But what’s to it? Why are Americans so outraged by Obama’s comment? This is where things get interesting. Does Obama believe that the government is greater than the individual? If the

speeches at the Democratic Convention are anything to go by, he certainly does. Simply put, the individual has much more influence over society than the government. Though the president correctly pointed out that the government builds roads, runs schools (terribly, but I’ll leave that point for the time being) and puts out our fires, that is a far cry from the government building your business.

Let me explain, infrastructure is one thing, enterprise in another. Infrastructure is a constant, in that everybody uses it. The variable is the individual; the work ethic, enterprising spirit, capital he/she brings to the table, his/her product and, indeed, a bit of luck. Yes, successful people often have help but that’s just it; help.

I can give plenty of examples of this but I’ll borrow Mitt Romney’s;

“If your child gets on the honour roll...don’t thank the bus driver.”

Of course, infrastructure is not the centre of this election or the left/right divide of America. Infrastructure is understood to be one of the key

functions of modern government. It’s the role government plays aside from infrastructure and the real role it plays in business that that has people pumped up. If the president genuinely believes that governments building businesses is a recipe for success, then he clearly has learned nothing from the Solyndra and Fisker scandals. They don’t want to see their tax payer dollars paying for someone else’s pipe dream because A) the government fails repeatedly at picking winners and B) it means the government would be responsible for all of America’s successes. And just like the old saying “the Lord giveth and Lord taketh away”, so too will the government be able to pick and choose winners and losers based on its view on how it sees the world. In short, if the government has to allocate resources to build businesses, it will have to ration it.

So that is why you’re going to see the president absolutely railroaded for his comments.

It’s not a gaffe. A gaffe is a mistake that people apologise for or attempt

to “rephrase”. The Democrats have doubled down on this line of rhetoric, tapping the very Harvard professor that inspired the president’s remarks and candidate for US Senate from Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren, to speak at the Democratic National Convention. I doubt this will do the president any favours other than to excite the Democratic Party faithful who see central planning as a good thing; the folks that rely on government grants to stay solvent such as “green” companies like Solyndra and union run companies like GM.

And this is what Americans identify with.

So, just like “it’s the economy, stupid” summed up how a Republican President was seen to be out of touch with the troubles of ordinary Americans in 1992, “we did build that” is our generation’s phrase that captures how the current president is out of touch of how the American economy works and how the American people wish to do business.

Gay Community’s Tolerance Can Only Go So Far

Over the past few years I have become increasingly aware of the growing problem of Bi-Phobia in Ireland. As a Bisexual male, I have in the past come into contact with a level of intolerance that I cannot understand. Some may think that it has come from the straight community, but it has come more and more from the Gay community. It is not widespread but it is certainly growing and my fear is that it is becoming normalised behaviour.

When I came out as Bisexual, I faced a lot of questions about how it worked. Some questions were humorous and good natured, but some verged on intrusive and insulting. I am at a stage where I am comfortable with myself and yet I still have the nagging feeling that all is not well. There is a misconception that Bisexuals are greedy and untrustworthy. It’s sad that these lazy stereotypes are being given credence by some within the Gay

community. It is shocking considering that they have been on the receiving end of similar barbs about their sexual orientation. And yet we have arrived at the present situation.

I feel bad when I think about a 15 or 16 year old trying to come to terms with their sexuality. This is a crucial period where we learn a lot about ourselves and those close to us. I have often been on the end of insults from friends and foes alike about my sexuality. Most are easy to ignore, especially when placed in the proper context. Some stick with me. They tend to be the ones that I am not expecting such, like being confronted about my sexuality in what someone thought was a humorous way in a pub. One recent occurrence spurred me to write about my experiences as I feel this sort of behaviour is unacceptable in a community which often prides itself on tolerance. We need to step back and think of how this has happened. It

has sadly become the norm to rag on Bisexuals in a group setting. It should not matter to people who I choose to become romantically involved with, especially the ones who barely know me. I am perfectly fine with someone assuming I am Gay or Straight, yet I become insulted when they do not accept that I am neither. Why should we have to pick a side? First of all it is not possible, regardless of what some people will tell you. In the past I have been very open with partners about my orientation, which has led to minimal problems.

I am not a huge fan of labelling things, probably because of my past. I do not want to be packed away in a box so other people feel comfortable about their own issues. I would never tell anyone that they were confused or simply going through a phase. They may well be going through a phase, but that is for them to figure out. I have to confess to sometimes smoothing

myself out publicly in an attempt not to bother anyone. Then I realised that this is adding to the problem. People can choose their own path. I am going to dedicate myself to tackling the Bi-Phobia I have encountered in the past. I am not exactly sure how to do it, but I guess I will probably start with challenging it where possible in the Gay community.

The LGBT community is not a homogeneous group. Some may give that impression, but the issues at stake are a lot more complex. It would be nice to live in a world where I do not have to deal with random attacks from within the Gay community over an issue that is frankly none of their business. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions. The trouble arises when you are trying to influence the opinions of others. It is an awful feeling to be closeted and have to listen to some of the crude jokes at the expense of the LGBT community. The minority in the

Gay community I am talking about are harming those trying to come to terms with themselves.

You should never have to feel like you should just say you are Gay when in the company of people who stereotype the Bisexual community. I would wager that we are quite a large group, and I hope one day that we are a more visible group. That will not happen unless we stamp out Bi-Phobia in the straight and particularly in the Gay community. I believe there will be a day when the Bisexual community does not have to hide. It is just shocking that they feel more pressure to hide from those who should know better. I sincerely hope that these people will take heed. They should not have to be dragged kicking and screaming into accepting us. They just need to practice some of the tolerance they claim.

The author of this piece has chosen to remain anonymous.

Fifty Shades Of Shock: The Mommy Porn Phenomenon



Kate Stewart

Since its publication in June 2011, the now infamous Fifty Shades trilogy has sold over 20 million copies. In the age of Harry Potter, Hunger Games and The Da Vinci Code, how has what has been dubbed “mommy porn” become one of the bestselling books of all time?

Before there was Fifty Shades, there was Twilight. The extensive popularity of the vampire franchise sparked a plethora of copycat novels and internet fan fiction and, subsequently, Fifty Shades of Grey, which began life as the erotic slash fiction of 49 year old mum, EL James. Building on the foundation of Edward’s dangerous appeal and Bella’s unrelenting devotion, James added what Twilight had been lacking: sex.

Erotic fiction has been around for years in the form of Mills and Boon so

why is this one book special? Why is Fifty Shades heaving from the shelves of every book depository in the western world? The subject matter is nothing new. Between its vampire based origins and its worrying similarity to the 2002 movie, Secretary, discussing the trilogy’s originality is a slippery slope.

But the literary stars and wonders of e-book publishing aligned and through hushed word of mouth, the series became a phenomenon. In the blink of an eye, erotica had become fashionable and with popularity comes acceptance. Literotica seems here to stay.

Although we live in far more progressive times than our grandparents, the recent success of erotic fiction can’t just be a generational thing. Even my nana has romance novels. But the public discussion of sex, the acknowledgement of its purpose beyond reproduction, the

rise in kink, these things are far more prominent than the parents and priests of yesteryear would have probably liked.

The Fifty Shades series benefits from this more open culture and thrives on the budding curiosity of people newly exposed to the genre. This is due in part to its essentially soft nature which allows the reader to dip their toe into the waters of pornography without the shame they may feel around more exotic tendencies.

The inclusion of BDSM in the trilogy is also significant as traditionally these acts have been considered secretive and shameful. Even though I take issue with some of the ambiguity regarding consent, protection and other factors, it cannot be said that Fifty Shades hasn’t made sadomasochism and similar practices more accessible and acceptable than ever before.

Sex shops nationwide are reporting increases in sales of ropes, handcuffs

and other kinky additions to the bedroom. The days of the seedy sex shop seem to be disappearing. With the ever growing popularity of stores such as Ann Summers, female sexuality has found its voice and is asking to be explored. Just last month, a Fifty Shades themed party in Limerick City (organised by adult store Thelma and Louise) sold out completely.

So what happens now? Will the series have its moment in the sun and fade away or is this the beginning of the true celebration of sexual exploration? In terms of publishing at least, I would say the latter. Titles such as Bared To You and Eighty Days Yellow are springing up on bookshelves all around the country and the market shows no signs of slowing down.

On top of that, it has recently been confirmed that the team behind The Social Network will be producing a film adaptation of Fifty Shades of Grey. Although I’m not personally a

fan of the franchise (as a healthcare worker, the term “inner goddess” irks me), I’m curious to see a studio version that claims to be a deep and complex interpretation of what is essentially soft core porn laced with a loose storyline. Moreover, a movie only begs the question “Why is this porn okay and that porn not?” But that’s a discussion for another day.

The book is no Lady Chatterley’s Lover. It won’t push the boundaries in terms of character development or literary prowess. It doesn’t even really push the boundaries of S&M. But for whatever reason, be it hype, curiosity or just a good old desire to be turned on, Fifty Shades of Grey has started something.

And it’s not going anywhere.

Paint That Damn Placard!

Lorna Bogue
Assistant Editor

Over this year’s Orientation Week thousands of students have passed through the doors of our Students’ Union building and those students have all been given relatively the same message from our sabbatical officers and Orientation guides. A message of pro-activism, a message that this is your Students’ Union, that the Students’ Union is here for your voice to be heard. All of these statements can be said to be true, but to what extent? For many, and let’s be honest here, Orientation Week will be the last time that they will step through the doors of the Students’ Union in any significant way.

Why is this problematic? We as a student body are given this slogan of proactivity time and time again, we are constantly told ‘this is your Students’ Union’ but why don’t we commit to

this idea of putting effort into ensuring that our voices are heard. We need to start thinking of the Students’ Union as what it is; a union of students. That’s important. It’s not an executive that hands down rulings to the student body, it’s something that you should control, don’t let the SU be a joke, don’t stand idly by and allow it to be used by university authorities as a means of placating the masses. After all, what is a university without its students?

It may be easier to just ‘keep your head down’ and simply get through the next four years, but everyone is affected when there is a lame duck SU. It’s so much easier to cut services without a dissenting voice. Even one dissenting voice can affect change, maybe it will be you who has to stand out alone in the rain holding a homemade (and rather hilarious) placard. Absolutely nothing is set in stone. The most important thing you can know when it comes to questioning authority is that most things are transient; people

change, times change, systems and administrations change. If we as a student body want this progressive change then the push needs to come from us, it’s not something that can be manufactured or created. No matter how often you hear the slogan ‘this is your union’ it won’t truly be yours until you, yourself seize control of it. This is a critical time in which we can affect change.

Cuts are being made to student services all the time. You may be new to university, you may even be new to this country, so here’s a bit of context: the financial crisis we are in means that our government is making cuts to vital services all of the time. These cuts are affecting the budgets that our educational institutions have access to. Not only that, but the Recession has also affected people before they even get through the gates of our university. Obvious statement is obvious right? But this means that people are affected even more by cuts to student services.

Take the Medical Centre charges that were introduced only last year.

The Medical Centre now costs €25 for a doctor or psychiatrists consultation, €30 for a physiotherapist or STI clinic, €10 for a nurse’s consultation and referrals and other various charges. Why do we need to know or be reminded about the introduction of these charges? It may not even affect you, or it might seem like a reasonable price, there are certainly very valid arguments for paying medical fees, but the fact of the matter is that this is a vital service that was provided for free last year. This particular budget cut is something that really affects those who are least able to deal with these charges. Firstly it affects the sick and other vulnerable sectors of society such as poorer people, but dig a little deeper and it claims victims from less obvious places. If you have a chronic or progressive illness that requires you to have a regular blood test, then this charge is adversely affecting you. If you

are from a middle income background and are too ‘well off’ according to our government to avail of benefits such as the medical card, then you too are adversely affected, because often people are just above that arbitrary income bracket and so are members of that new class that is so peculiar to our times: the working poor. People who are working and paying taxes and yet are just above the point where they qualify for state assistance.

The information is all readily available, everyone has been handed the tools with which they can make their voices heard, use them, be a class rep, attend those meetings, paint that damn placard saying ‘Down with this sort of thing’ that has appeared at every single student protest in the history of forever. Go to the protest and stand out in the rain with everyone else. Affect change, right now. We’re here, we’re clear. Get used to it.

AN FOCAL

A Declaration Of Principles?

It is not lightly that a person takes up the job of being editor of a newspaper, even a student one. An Focal has been part of campus life since 1991. Its original editors placed a declaration of principles in their first edition, a fact that has long been forgotten. There was nothing particularly innovative about such a move; Orson Welles has been inspiring similar gestures since 1941. But this year, as An Focal becomes the responsibility of full time students, it is perhaps suitable to re-state those basic principles which make us do what we do. For many years, the editor of this newspaper was a sabbatical officer, elected by the student body and salaried by the Students' Union. That is no longer the case. As a student leading a team of students, I have the responsibility of remaining impartial, while acting in the interests of our readers.

An Focal's editorial aims should be based on simple, self-evident facts. A newspaper should report the news, as it happens and without praising or criticising any person or group unfairly. A newspaper should also publish opinions; in the

case of An Focal, we have always tried to print a variety of opinions, from across the political spectrum. This edition contains statements and beliefs that I do not agree with as an individual, but as an editor I include them because I believe in debate and balanced argument. We don't try to controversial or alarmist, nor do we run away from controversy. Some readers may be incensed by certain opinions, angered by certain pieces of news, or shocked at what is revealed. Our job is to inform, no matter how controversial the information.

But no newspaper can be serious all the time. That's why we have extensive sections on fashion, celebrity, music, the arts and events on campus that have a positive effect on students' lives. This means we give clubs and societies room to express themselves, whether or not what they have done is "newsworthy" in the traditional sense. As one of the best aspects of UL life, C&S has always received special treatment. And as a longstanding participant, I trust that that relationship will be respected by both sides.

And then there's the Students' Union. Those who claim it is impossible to maintain accuracy while being within the confines

of the SU are more disparaging than cynical. The SU is a large part of many students' college experience; ignoring it would be foolish. If any random student can find publishing space for his/her opinion, so too can your run of the mill sabbatical officer. Balance is our watchword.

With balance in mind, we submit to the judgement of our readers, accept the attacks of our critics, and hope to live up to our own high standards. The news looks good this year, stay with us and give it a read.

1972 And All That

The celebrations to mark UL's 40 years as an institute of higher education will be ubiquitous this year. The University is deploying every publicity tool at its disposal to mark the occasion. Forty years ago, the National Institute of Higher Education was founded in Limerick on this site, contained within today's Main Building. It's very easy to speed through UL's history, remarking on its university status in 1989. But as we focus so closely on celebrating an anniversary, it is instructive to look back on the year we were founded.

1972 was a year of international instability and serious economic problems at home. Ireland had a flagging economy and as today, many young people were emigrating in order to find work, often without any prospect of returning. Europe was on the top of the political agenda too; the Irish voted overwhelmingly to join the European Economic Community, little knowing the masses of European money that would be needed to save Ireland nearly 40 years later.

In the United States, a divisive presidential election pitted incumbent Republican Richard Nixon against hopeful but doomed Democrat George McGovern, while the long drawn out conflict in Vietnam trundled into its final years. This year we see if President Obama can pull off a similar coup, hopeful of finally leaving Iraq and Afghanistan. And in Northern Ireland, the Troubles were only beginning, rather than sectarian riots representing a grim past, as they recently have.

So the students who came to the NIHE in 1972 faced a world that was not so dissimilar from our own. Some historians have actively compared the 2010s to the 1970s – the same economic

gloom, international crises and unpredictability prevail. The intervening years have been tumultuous. The Ireland of the poor mouth became the Ireland of boom and bust; the NIHE became the University.

Many of UL's most beloved institutions have their origins in those early days, including our clubs and societies, which form such an integral part of the student experience. We are connected to those days not only because we occupy the same physical space, but because we belong to something larger than ourselves. One thing UL students have proved they do well is weather the storm, and this college has seen plenty of them since the days when students wore bell bottoms and loved disco.

There'll be plenty of talk about the future, too. UL's Strategic Plan is in full swing and the PR men will be trying to sell the University as if it were water in a desert. But while we're looking forward and backward at the same time, let's not forget about today. The very real problems we face can't be shrugged off nostalgically or kicked down the road into some distant future. Remember the hard times our university has faced, and remember those times are now.

Class Of 2016 Now Among Us

Colm Fitzgerald Comment Editor

It is amusing to observe the novelty with which they progress about their business; notebooks in hand, keen to find the Jonathan Swift before it disappears.

Then you have the undulating precision in which every syllable their lecturer utters is noted, creating notes which will later be reviewed in the fine surrounds of our warm and brightly lit library.

For many, this is all but prolonged.

The rigors of Freshers' Week instil a set of expectations among the minds of many - downing a cheap naggin before going to the Lodge to shift all around with gay abandon. After all, college is about having the craic.

Many students realise that college is nothing but a false perception, and a few naggins really won't be grand. To leave UL with a degree requires self-discipline, patience, hard work, and above all, a course that suits you and what you want to do.

A considerable number shall drop out of UL within weeks of starting, generally because they accepted a course other than the one they wanted, perhaps because of a shortfall in CAO points.

It would fall foul of tradition for the CAO system to be left unscathed, and indeed, every year there are calls to dump the faulty and unfair system for one and for all.

This year extra points have been

awarded for those who pass the Higher Level Maths exam. The real aim of this has been nothing but to doctor the ailing statistics in leaving cert maths, in turn hugely inflating points for maths related courses.

What's worrying is the continuing lack of correlation between Secondary School and Third Level. A student may excel at languages and derive most his/her CAO points from these subjects, yet choose to study medicine or taxation. I personally got most my points from Economics and Business, yet I'm studying English at UL.

After all, 600 points does not necessarily make a good dentist, doctor or accountant.

Rote learning and its associated evils are only the tip of the iceberg. It should not come as a surprise that many students drop out early on because the academic differences are so vast.

An effort should be made to introduce critical thinking to the second level classroom. It is a concept so apt that one could easily spend a four year degree working out.

UL should be commended for its efforts to provide a less alien environment, with the First 7 Weeks programme now in its third year. The problem though, is in engaging all new students with this initiative.

Many may well see this programme for those who struggle immensely, but because they themselves got 500 points in the Leaving Cert, they should not be concerned with it. My experience has taught me that this is unfortunately the



opinion of many.

Aftermath of Library Survey serves as good example

You may be aware that the Glucksman Library conducted a user survey toward the end of last semester.

It is encouraging to observe that the findings of this survey have already been acted upon. Many parts of the library have been rearranged to provide a more logical location and flow to book arrangements.

The chronic problem of noise is also being addressed, with plans for quiet,

and silent zones to be introduced. Hopefully these can actually be enforced. The next logical step would be to finally introduce a barrier where entry would be gained by scanning one's ID card.

Leaving Cert students are a regular fixture towards the end of the second semester, and that is a big problem many would be grateful to see stopped.

Other University departments should use this as an example. We are often reminded of the ivory tower where nobody but them are in the right. Here

we have a University department which features in no small way in the daily lives of students willing to promptly and appropriately act on feedback.

Hopefully this is the start of many services moving towards a feedback driven system, and goodness knows it would be no harm.

With registration fees increasing year on year, students would be right to look for value for their money, or a better service than is currently provided.

Hordes Of Young People Create Havoc For Ordinary Students

The Crow's Nest

UL students' lives have been thrown into disarray by crowds of young people wandering around campus. The fresh faced young people appeared in the University during Week 1 and despite repeated attempts by long-time students to get rid of them, they have stubbornly refused to leave.

"It started off as a bit of a nuisance," said 3rd year student, Sean Fleming. "But after four days they were just starting to get in the way. Now three of them are living in my house in Cappa! I mean, they have their own milk and food, but still!"

The problem of random young people taking over campus locations is apparently endemic. Reports from the library, student villages and even cherished student venues like Java's and the Lodge indicate they have been overrun by suspiciously young people, many of whom cannot even remember the Lewinsky Affair.

ULSU President, Adam "Oaxaca" Moursy said, "I am already drawing up plans for a civilian militia to defend our cherished privileges from these long-haired, Celtic Tiger cub scum!"

While the SU has asked students not to approach the young people, some sociology students have investigated the habits of UL's strange new residents. "It's amazing," said sociology MA student David O'Gorman, "These people actually think they have some reason, some right, to be here. Several of them even claimed to be students. This is particularly shocking when you consider so many of them were born in 1995."

The University described the idea that these newcomers could be students as "completely absurd". However, An Focal has discovered that a little-known arm of the University administration, known as the "Admissions Office" may be behind the chaos.

"This so-called 'Admissions Office' seems like a very shady operation indeed," ULSU Academic Officer, Patrick "Honest Paddy" Rockett said. "I intend to immediately form a blue ribbon committee in order to suss out whether this office exists, who's behind it and exactly what its intentions are with regard to our cherished students!" He then put on his wizard's cloak, spun around three times, sang the first two verses of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and asked why we were in his office.

Meanwhile, ULSU Welfare Officer Cathal Ronan said he did not have any intention of raising any kind of group, be it committee or militia, and went back to sleep. Mr Ronan's approval ratings have since jumped to 6% - a record high for a sabbatical officer.

When contacted by this columnist, a reported employee of the Admissions Office remarked "I am not now nor have I ever been an employee of the Admissions Office. You are a liar, sir! A damn liar!" and proceeded to run off in tears. We consider this somewhat suspect.

Shortly after our encounter with the hysterical woman who certainly was not from the Admissions Office, we were approached by a confidential source who revealed that the Admissions Office does exist and that it is part of a fiendish plan to slowly replace current students with younger people.



"They've done this before," the undisclosed individual said, "They bring in a big crowd of new people, put them into accommodation and classes - and then get rid of UL students!"

Having left the dark car park where we met the nameless informant, we proceeded to investigate his claim that students were being "got rid of". What we found was shocking. Unknown to anyone, whole classes of fourth years had simply disappeared from campus. Those stalwart students who had been part of UL's fabric for years were nowhere on campus; they had been forced to leave.

But the horror doesn't end there. Students who are finishing their ominously named "final year" are forcibly paraded around campus,

dressed in ceremonial robes, designed to indicate their impending departure from UL. This "graduation ceremony" also involves listening to lengthy diatribes from University officials, no doubt berating students for overstaying their welcome. And finally, students are presenting with written statements that their time in UL is over and they ought to leave. The University refers to these documents as "degrees".

"They forced me to leave once I'd been here for four years," student John Dunne told us, "just like that, no more exams, no more classes ... four years of my life, and they just kicked me out on my year! What am I supposed to do with a Computer Science degree?"

Mr Dunne's story is not unique. This newspaper contacted dozens of fourth

years who had had similar experiences. "It was like an evil ritual," Jack Burke recalled, "They made us march around campus, on public display, while they repeatedly told us we were on longer UL students. It was inhuman. It was like something that'd happen in a horror film."

An Focal has discovered the conspiracy goes deeper. Several students we spoke to are now being forced to attend courses in universities Dublin and, in some wretched cases, UCC.

Whatever the truth behind these mass disappearances, it appears these young people are here to stay, for good or ill. We only hope that they can be successfully incorporated into the existing student body.

Dear Angie...

Dear Angie,

I've just started college but I'm feeling unsure about the course that I'm doing, basically my story is that my parents didn't approve of the course that I took on, they said that I would never get a job out of my degree so we ended up having this huge row which ended with me slamming the door and shouting, BUT THE WORLD NEEDS MORE SINGER- SONGWRITERS AND BLOGGERS MOM AND DAD. Now I don't know what to do, some of their words really hit home, maybe I will end up destitute on the streets like they said I would, with nothing to my name but a cardboard box and an arts degree. Am I taking the right course? Will my parents ever accept me for who I am? Is it too late to change to Business?

Confused, Elm Park

Dear Confused,

Do not despair of your parents' disapproval; every great leader must go through disapproval in order to achieve their aims. Why, when I myself was receiving the plummeting approval ratings back at the start of my premiership did I allow this to discourage me? No, I did not. I simply

continued with my course of action and showed that 33% of the German public who continued to approve of me that they were correct in their assessment of my tenure as good (as opposed to poor). If you stick to what you believe you will eventually win "the haters" over to your side, and now I have an all-time high approval rating of 77%, quite the drastic turn around would you not agree? Some would say that I should have those who originally disapproved of me hunted down like the dogs they are but I am content to simply hold my head up high and punish them in more subtle ways, like maybe I'll lend all their pension money to a basket case republic of the bananas, Ireland seems like a good candidate. Then one shall allow oneself to have the designated laughter time. Ha. Ha. Take that haters

As for changing course, if you really aren't happy doing an arts course then perhaps you should consider doing a science course instead. A business degree is all well and good and many of my predecessors had business and law degrees, but the course for today's thinking leader is the course of science. It really is the most valuable course that you can take, I always thought this and devoted all of my energies to studying chemistry, sometimes to the detriment of my other exams, The looks of shame

on my parent's faces when I returned home with only a passing grade in my compulsory Marxism-Leninism course was something that still haunts me today and only contributes to my fear of the left.

In short, my advice to you is to stay true to yourself and do not allow yourself to be swayed by the opinions of others.

Grosse Küsse,
Angie x

~

Dear Angie,

I arranged to go out next week with one of my girlfriends and a guy I really like (as in like like). To make a long story short I really want to impress him, any ideas or tips?

Bebostunnah 2k12

Dear Bebo stunner 2012,

Thank you for your efficient letter stating clearly what your problem is. However, I believe that the best way to help you is to ask you some questions, and then send you a bailout package of flirty tips at a later date, when you have



satisfied me that you really know what you are doing.

When you state that you 'like like' him what does that mean? I would advise you to think long and hard about the answer to that question before engaging with him in any way. What are your intentions towards this mystery man? What are his intentions towards you? A fun activity might be to hold a conference including him and all of your friends and family in which you write up a white paper on your roadplan to the future with this beau before going out with him. It is vitally important to know how you will gain and benefit before joining any union.

One of the criteria on which a good relationship is based is fiscal

solvency. Has he got enough money to support himself? This reminds me of an anecdote that I have based on a somewhat similar situation, my story goes thusly: Greece joined the Euro currency in 2001. The End.

Be sure that this doesn't happen to you. Put some conditions on the relationship before it starts to avoid future heartbreak. If he satisfies all of the conditions then this advice columnist sincerely hopes that you two hit it off and that the attractive force between you is more than the universal gravitational constant G! (My little joke, laugh? I almost started).

Grosse Küsse,
Angie x

AN FOCAL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor, UL Students' Union, Castletroy, Limerick. T: 0860435304 E: darragh.roche@ul.ie W: www.anfocal.ie
An Focal endeavours to accommodate all letters as far as legally possible. All parties have the right of reply to letters printed herein.

Dear Sir,

I would like to make a query about the ULSU logo.

A few years ago, the ULSU invested in a brand new logo. After an exhaustive process of consultation, a brand was created. This brand was to be used on all Union signage, publications and publicity. This logo was universally well received and became very recognisable as a symbol of our collective Students' Union.

In recent times, this logo has been subsumed by the "Wolves" logo adopted by Clubs and Societies. We all recognise the necessity of Clubs and Societies to have a recognisable brand, but it was many peoples' understanding that the "Wolf" would be used for Clubs and Socs branding while the Union brand would remain

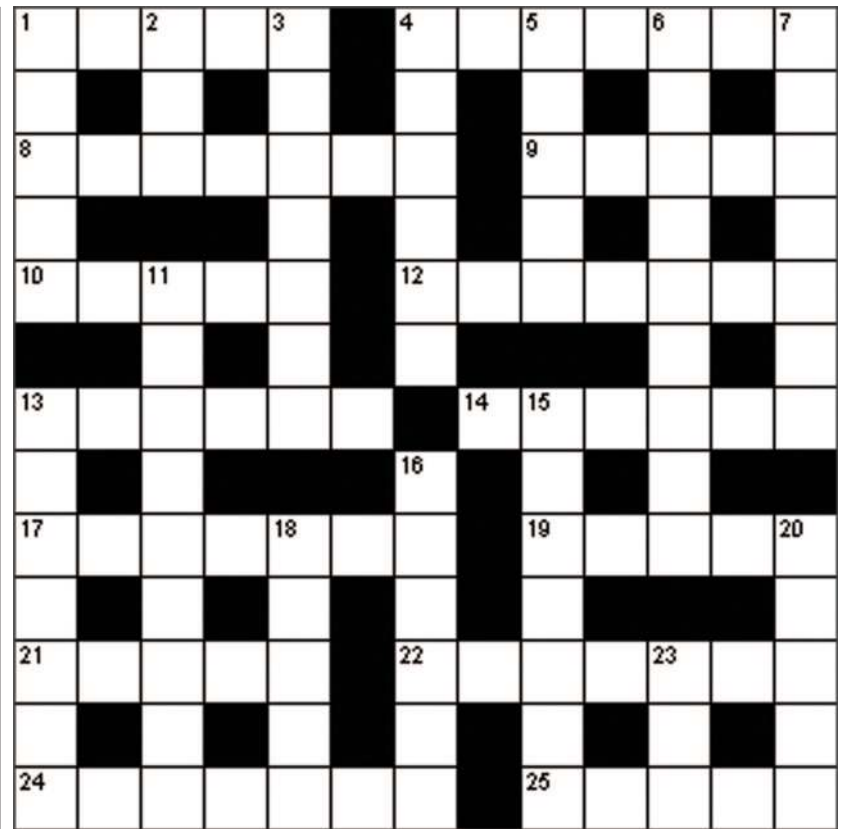
intact.

Given the Unions continued exhortations for us to "Join the Wolf Pack" and the ubiquity of the UL Wolf, I wonder if the Union has officially adopted the UL Wolf as its primary logo.

I would find this surprising, given that the Wolves logo clearly lacks the letters "SU" (or, indeed, anything that denotes its affiliation with the Students' Union) and, despite having UL written on it, certainly is not a University brand.

I wonder if the SU could clarify its branding position and what meetings, if any, were held regarding a stealth rebranding.

Yours etc.
Kelly O'Brien



CLUES

Across

1. Deceive (5)
4. Not quite a town (7)
8. Without end (7)
9. Give a prize (5)
10. Wear away (5)
12. One who casts a ballot (7)
13. Alter or regulate (6)
14. Feature of a bank (6)
17. Take back (7)
19. Claridge's is one (5)
21. Mound of stones used as a marker (5)
22. Sincere man, possibly (7)
24. Latticework (7)
25. Took the automobile (5)

Down

1. Leitmotif (5)
2. To murder (slang) (3)
3. Leave your pet here (7)
4. Blue ____, David Lynch film (6)
5. Letting contract (5)
6. Flat, American (9)
7. Superannuated (7)
11. A rational view (9)
13. Fruit exported by Turkey (7)
15. Glued (7)
16. Fire that remains (6)
18. Dissolve a marriage (5)
20. Supple (5)
23. A Freudian creation (3)

A newspaper can be many things



UL's student newspaper is recruiting

Be part of it

Email the Editor: darragh.roche@ul.ie

AN FOCAL

This Year's Hottest New Celebrity Style Icons

Sarah O' Dwyer

DO YOU find yourself looking to celebrities for fashion advice? Well, say hello to the newest style icons of 2012.

Soft blonde curls and red lips make Rita Ora the envy of ladies everywhere, making her the go-to-girl for style inspiration this summer. Self-confessed hairspray addict Ora names 'Lady Danger' by MAC as her favourite shade of red lippy. The blonde bombshell can not only carry off grunge chic, but elegant Hollywood glamour to boot. Her trademark over-sized jumpers and tees, matched with leggings, shorts or sometimes bare legs, make her style accessible and keeps her looking chic during the day. This look changes dramatically at night with beautiful designer gowns, transforming Rita into a refined beauty. She has fun with her fashion, and with her trademark quirky sunglasses and hi-top trainers she makes it so easy to look cool.

Another emerging style icon is Carly Rae Jepsen, the 'Call Me Maybe' songstress. Contrasting with Miss Ora, Jepsen's trademark hair is dark brown and sleek with bangs, and she opts for a darker lip colour, often purple. Her pale skin contrasts both her hair and lips, making them pop all the more. She is best known for her love of prints, ranging from animal to heart print, making her style individual. She is also known for reinforcing the lace trend which has been so influential this summer, with all the major celebrities donning

the exquisite fabric. However, Jepsen is also spreading her wings in terms of fashion, branching out into sophisticated glamour, shown in the latest issue of Canada's 'Fashion Magazine', with the 26-year-old looking very elegant and sexy.

Not to forget about the male celebrities who burst onto the scene this year, two of the most influential being Rizzle Kicks members Jordan and Harley. Rizzle Kicks are often spotted in the reliable chinos and Vans combination, making them both sophisticated and stylish, but also making their style easy to emulate. The pair, particularly Jordan, also love Fred Perry, and he is known for teaming a Fred Perry jumper with jeans and stylish suede lace-ups. These boys know their style and what works for them, and this confidence makes them the most stylish hip-hop duo of 2012.

One man whose style has changed dramatically is rapper Wiz Khalifa. In 2012 Wiz changed from street-wear brands to designer style, swapping his runners for Alexander McQueen loafers. He often sports ripped jeans, loosely tied boots and printed t-shirts, making his style relaxed and rocker-esque.

This summer, fashion was all about fun and individuality. Trends were made and marketed, but these fashionable celebrities took those trends to a whole new level and worked them in a wholly unique and stylish way.



British performing artist Rita Ora.

The Beauty Trends To Watch Out For This Semester

Sarah O' Dwyer

FOR THE Autumn/Winter seasonal trends, bold lips and eyes are the order of the day. Bold lips are kept with neutral eyes and bold eyes are paired with neutral lips in keeping with the most prominent looks on the catwalk for this year.

Nothing beats a well-defined lip and this season sees the return of boldly toned lips, featuring in shows like Marc by Marc Jacobs, Roland Mouret and Gucci who all opted for daring tones, ranging from deep burgundy to ruby-red. Celebrities rocking the bold lips trend this season are, of course, the beautiful Rita Ora and Megan Fox choosing reds and Katy Perry and Emma Stone taking on the deeper purples.

However, bold lipstick isn't just a look for red carpet celebrities. "It's a timeless classic and suits everyone," says Jamie Coombes, Dior's National Make-Up Artist. To re-create an elegant look as was seen on the Rick

Owens and Gucci catwalks, try a more subtle colour on the eye, leaving the attention to be drawn towards your lips.

The trends were simple for the eyes this season: either black winged eyes, created by using liquid eyeliner, or bright, fun eye-shadows of which blue was featured frequently. Anna Sui combined both looks on her catwalk, opting for the winged look, but instead of keeping to the monochrome black, she opted for an electric blue colour teamed with a nude lip. The Roberto Cavalli show this season, selected to go with a multi-toned eye, choosing to go for a mix of bronze, green and purple metallic shadows.

While the catwalk make-up artists use the high-end products, these trends can be achieved on a student budget. For bold lips try Rimmel's 'Kate Lasting Finish Lipstick' or Collection 2000's 'Colour Pout Lip-stain', both available at Superdrug for less than €10. For those of you wanting to splash out on a good, long-lasting lippy, Urban Decay cosmetics

at Debenhams do a huge range of colours, slightly pricier than the usual high-street brands at €18.50, but well worth the money.

To re-create the winged-eye look on a budget, try L'Oreal Super-liner Gel or Rimmel Glam Eyes Liquid Liner. For the bright eye-shadows try Barry M's Dazzle Dust Eye-Shadow available in a wide selection of colours or Maybelline's Colour Tattoo 24 Hour eye-shadow, all eye products being available for under €10 in Superdrug. For an investment product, try the Benefit Magic Ink eyeliner at €21.50 or the Urban Decay Deluxe Shadow Box, pricey at €35.50 if you're on a budget but it contains nine shades and eye-shadow primer also.

The beauty trends are all about elegance, fun and individuality this season and these two main trends for Autumn/Winter can be re-created easily and on a student-friendly budget.



Star of the recent 'The Amazing Spider-Man', Emma Stone.

The Who's Who Of STIs

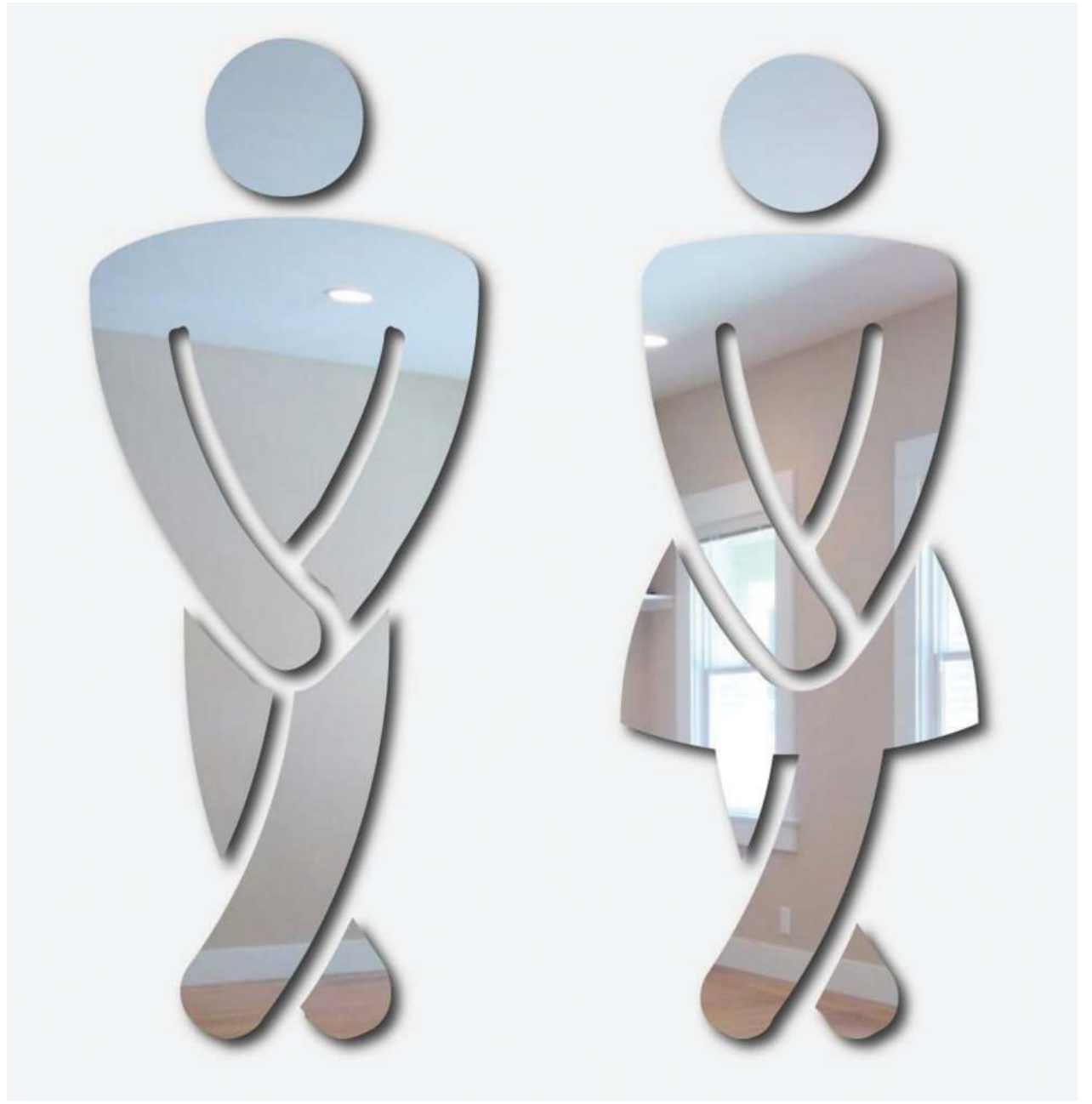
Barbara Ross

SEXUALLY transmitted infections (STIs) are caught and spread during unprotected sex. STIs are caused by specific bacteria and viruses. With every sexual encounter there is not only an emotional risk but also a physical one. STIs can be passed on by contact with body fluids such as semen, vaginal fluids and blood. Some infections can be passed on by unprotected genital contact and oral sex. Here is an outline of some of the most common STIs, how to recognise the symptoms, treat them and more importantly, how to avoid getting them in the first place.

Syphilis is a bacterial infection with symptoms that include a painless ulcer in the genital, anal or mouth area and a red spotty rash on the palms of your hands and soles of your feet. There is also a possibility of long-term heart and brain damage. Antibiotics are available to treat this STI but follow-up blood tests must also be taken. Chlamydia is a bacterial infection and 80% of women and 50% of men show no symptoms. However abnormal vaginal or penis discharge, stinging or burning sensation when peeing, bleeding between periods and pain or bleeding after or during sex can all point to chlamydia. It can be treated with antibiotics. Herpes is a virus that again, most people who carry the virus have no symptoms. During an outbreak you may have flu-like symptoms, painful blisters or ulcers

on your external genitals and rectum and a burning sensation when you pass urine. Prescribed medication can reduce discomfort but the virus will stay in your system, leading to further outbreaks. Genital warts are a virus that can be in your system for 3 weeks to 8 months before you show symptoms. Warts usually appear in the genital area but there may be invisible warts that can still pass the virus on to your sexual partner(s). There are a few treatments available, such as freezing the warts and prescribed creams. The virus will stay in your system, so the warts may come back. Gonorrhoea is a bacterial infection that can be treated by antibiotics but it can cause effects such as pre-term labour, low birth weight, pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. About 70% of women and 10% of men will have no symptoms. Vaginal, anal or penile discharge, burning or stinging sensation when peeing, pain during or after sex and bleeding between periods may be a sign that gonorrhoea has been contracted. There are steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of contracting STIs such as always using a condom or other forms of contraception and limiting the number of partners you have.

If you think you have contracted an STI immediately contact your doctor and get checked.



Studying Smart In Your First Year

Sophie McDermott

BEING a first year in college is a lot different to being in secondary school. For one, no older students make fun of your height. It gives you your first taste of independence but this can be bittersweet.

Balancing your social life and study is one of the most important things you must figure out. While being out partying until 5 in the morning may seem like a good idea at the time, at a 9am lecture, or when you're skipping it, it will feel like the death of you.

The following is a list of tips that will help you get the best out of your exams and your degree.

1) Try to go to everything! Obviously as the year goes on you will find yourself missing a lecture here and there but the most important thing about college is attending all the labs and tutorials. Attendance is generally marked towards your overall grade in the module.... do you really want to find out that it does when you've lost 10% because Steve Wilkos was on at the same time as your lab?

2) Notes! As well as attendance, note taking is pivotal to getting through college. Attend the lectures to take down your own notes, get a hand-out from your lecturer and if you really can't go, ask a friend to borrow theirs. Come May, these notes are going to be your lifeline to not spending your summer swotting up

for a repeat in August.

3) No cramming. Don't kid yourself that you can take it easy until the night before an exam or an assignment is due. Pulling an all-nighter will affect your overall performance even if you buy enough energy drinks to fill a tank. Do a little bit most nights in the couple of weeks before it's due and then have a good night's rest the night before...you'll thank me later!

4) Speak up! Don't be afraid to talk to someone if the stress of college is getting you down. Lecturers and tutors are there to help when it comes to pulling your hair out over the referencing system or a seemingly impossible assignment. Take a deep breath and email your lecturer to ask them for a meeting so that you can ask what it is exactly you need to do. A problem shared is a problem halved!

5) Check your student emails regularly! Always make sure to check into your email account at least once every two days...there's nothing worse than missing a deadline or a changed tutorial time

Most importantly, have fun in college and don't freak out over impending assignments or exams. By being organised, you can achieve the best results possible!

The Drink Safe Guide

Emily Maree
Fashion Editor

Have you ever woken up with your head pounding, stomach trying to escape your body and an impending sense of shame radiating from you? I think most of us have at one stage or another: it's called a hangover.

Some coming into university have learnt to drink in moderation, most, however, have not. It's a strange but well-known tradition in our first year to drink until we can't feel feelings any more, but will inevitably lead to consequences too dire and numerous to mention. So before you start hitting the off-license to purchase that litre bottle of vodka and six cans, just follow these little tips to ease your pain for the year ahead!

- Eat before you drink. This may sound pretty standard but so many of us are too busy beautifying ourselves for the night ahead or pre-drinking, that we completely forget to eat and it can have disastrous consequences in the not-so-distant future.
- For every alcoholic drink, have some water. Alcohol is proven to dehydrate our bodies with a vengeance and drinking some water between every drink will re-hydrate your body as well as slowing you down, stopping you drinking as much and maybe saving your money.
- It's a marathon, not a sprint. Honestly lads, ignore that one moron in the group who thinks it will be hilarious to chug every drink in a three-mile radius, it's not smart and it certainly won't be fun when that



alcohol returns to haunt you.

• Never try to operate a vehicle under the influence. You've all seen the ads, it's kind of hard to miss them. No matter how good you think you are at driving and that heightened motoring knowledge that you think you get when you're drunk, just don't do it. One second could mean the end of someone's life, even yours and those special offer drinks you got in the nightclub just isn't worth that.

• If you can't be the sensible one, try and have a friend there that is happy to look out for you so you don't go wandering off, or god forbid, think it's a great idea to go home with that random person you just met in the smoking room. Waking up next to

someone that resembles Marilyn Manson is never good.

• Hide that phone. Texting your ex-boyfriend to tell him how much you miss him, or just to tell him his new girlfriend looks like a potato won't be well appreciated and you'll feel like an absolute idiot.

• Last but certainly not least, THE CURE DOESN'T WORK. You may think drinking to avoid a hangover may work, but it doesn't. It will catch up with you at some stage and you may turn into Shane McGowan in the process.

Enjoy your first weeks of college but remember to drink sensibly!

Autumn / Winter Trends For The College Student

Marie Enright

IT'S THAT time of year again where the fashion panic sets in as we return to college and long for a new wardrobe to start that new school year. The question is though, how do we financially-challenged students keep up with the Autumn/Winter fashions that we have seen grace the catwalk recently? Taking inspiration from the most popular trends and statements it is actually quite easy to implement these fashions into the average student's wardrobe.

This A/W season is the season of the jewel tones. In terms of colour and contrasting patterns, this gem orientated colour scheme was featured in almost every collection. These shades included mustard yellows, forest greens, inky blues and plum varieties and were seen in collections such as Prada, DVF, Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent. These colours are the perfect way to keep a hint of summer colour in our wardrobes this season.

One of the most dominant trends that featured in many collections such as Chanel and Céline is oversized coats and jumpers. The message seemed to be 'the bigger the better'. These were used in a variety of interesting ways such as a baggy jumper over a pleated skirt or even an oversized jacket teamed with cigarette style trousers. This oversized theme also transcends into the trouser department as harem and billowing trousers and these were also heavily featured throughout different collections. Topshop is currently following this trend in a

much more budget friendly manner which is perfect for the fashion-forward student.

The peplum cut is also a major trend this season and was featured in collections such as Lanvin and Carven. These cuts are the perfect detail to take an outfit from daytime to night time which makes it the fashion essential for the average student. They are seen on fitted tops, dresses and also fitted skirts. A cheaper alternative of this style can be found at high-street chain Zara where a wide variety of apparel can be found suitable for the student lifestyle.

Embellishments were a reoccurring trend this season and were heavily present in the form of beading, brocade and lace appliqué. This variety of embellishment gives space to experiment this season and incorporate different versions of the trend into your outfits on a daily basis. Simple appliqué or bolder embellishments on jumpers or even accessories can take an outfit from 'drab to fab' in seconds and will certainly give you that extra sparkle in class each day. This trend was a staple in the Dolce & Gabbana collection this season but can be found at H&M with a much more student friendly price tag.

Mens fashion this season saw the introduction of the new 'it' colour, blue-black. This incorporation of the spring colour blue, makes the transition from seasons much more fluid and effortless. The use of this colour kept in line with the jewel tones trend as it was that inky, almost-black that was the most prominent shade in most men's



Jewel tones being sported on the Yves Saint Laurent catwalk for A/W 2012.

collections. It was used in both Paul Smith's and Corneliani's collections and set the tone for this season's night-vision trend. This colour

scheme was applied to all apparel which makes incorporating this trend quite accessible for the male student. Variations of this can be

seen in the menswear sections online at ASOS and also in high street stores such as River Island.

UL Style Spotter

“

Brigitte Bardot and Chloe Sevigny

”

Name: Sinead O'Grady

Year: Fourth

Course: Journalism and New Media

Favourite Stores to Shop In:

I usually shop in Penneys, Topshop, H&M but go to vintage shops like Public Romance in Galway or second-hand shops for those stand-out pieces!

What's your favourite piece/fail-safe outfit in your wardrobe?

I have an Alexander McQueen skirt that I found bundled in a corner in TK Maxx, it was €45 euro reduced from €498 because the zip was broken! Easily fixed but now I'm scared to wear it, I feel I'm not worthy!

Style Icon: A mixture between Brigitte Bardot and Chloe Sevigny and shamefully enough, Rihanna!



After London Olympics, Now Is The Time For Sport

Robert McNamara
Sports Editor

With the feel-good factor of Team Ireland doing so well in Team GB land, there is no better time to get involved in sport than now. Sure, grants are being cut for elite athletes and Ireland's sporting infrastructure is still underdeveloped. The climate here is not exactly a motivating factor and balancing social and family life is a juggling act that many people fail to handle.

It doesn't have to be that way. You don't need to give up all your free time to be an athlete and you don't have to be a world-beater to get enjoyment out of sport.

You don't have to be the best player on the camogie team or the captain of the rugby squad. You don't have to feel guilty when you are overtaken on the running track. You are out there doing it and lapping the person sat at home on the sofa over and over and over again.

The London Olympics showcased the talents of elite athletes. The ethos of the games remains an amateur one but in reality, all the athletes in London would have to pursue excellence in their disciplines on a full-time, daily basis to get anywhere

near qualification status - never mind a medal.

Sponsors wouldn't go next or near the games if they didn't feature the best of the best and that is why world records are constantly being broken. In order to do that, elite athletes need to be professional. Competitive sport is healthy - but it can be off putting to the regular person who will never make it to the top.

Just get out there and do something simple to get started. Jog for a half-hour five days a week, cycle down the canal bank in Plassey, book a game of five-a-side in the arena, go for a swim and do a few laps of the pool. It's easy, it's healthy and it's fun.

There has been a huge resurgence in marathon running in Ireland in the last few years and it's easy to find the reason why. Gym memberships were popular during the boom but people can no longer afford them. With running, all you have to do is buy a pair of trainers and get out there. Distance doesn't really matter that much. The more you run, the faster you get and you are only competing against yourself - the hardest opponent to beat, but victory is inevitable. With London 2012 behind us, getting into that mind-set is a great starting point.



Jones' Decision Shows Naivety Of Mixed Martial Arts Fans

Finnbarr Thompson

A CHAMPION must fight all comers, they said. Fighting is a business, they never said. Over the past few weeks the fall out of Jon Jones' decision to pull out of UFC 151, leading to the event to be cancelled in entirety, has been nothing short of devastating to millionaire Dana White.

The original event had been scheduled to take place on September 1st with Jon 'Bones' Jones set to defend his Light-Heavyweight title against veteran of the Octagon Dan Henderson in the main event of what many considered to be an otherwise weak card. Henderson looked set to offer one of the stiffest test to the mercurial Jones, who has seen a meteoric rise to fame over the past three years, however with just two weeks until the super-fight Henderson suffered a tear in that ever pesky MCL. UFC President White moved quickly to provide an alternate in the shape of Chael Sonnen, a man who would have to move up a weight class, following his demise at the hands to Middleweight champion Anderson Silva, in order take this fight on a mere 8 days notice. It seemed like the obvious replacement to many MMA fans, one that Jones could easily transition to and save the card from mediocrity. The tale of the tape would suggest that between either of these two opponents, Jones would be faced with the same strengths and

weaknesses. This is due to the notable wrestling and powerful punching skills that both Sonnen and Henderson can boast.

Why then, has the UFC Nation been left bemused at the first ever "lost-show" as it has come to be known? The answer is quite simple but has certainly been overlooked by the majority of fans in the MMA genre. Upon releasing his decision to refuse to take any replacement fight, Jones immediately became the scapegoat that the UFC so often craves. Seemingly turning from hero to villain in one decision. What boggles the mind is the sheer close mindedness and naivety of the fans of this sport. It seems that people have been quick to blame Jones for the first ever cancellation of an event in the company's history, but what can so easily be forgotten is that those who are pointing fingers are not the ones who must climb into the Cage and fight tooth and nail for the title that they have trained all their life to get their hands on, as is Jones' case.

Consider this, Jones is the ultimate professional. Having been locked away in a training camp for the past 11 weeks preparing to go to war with Henderson, spending over 3000 Dollars on training facilities and sparring partners and dedicating probably days of his life studying the style of one man, it makes sense to assume that Jones would feel confident in defending his title in a



The UFC Nation has been left bemused at the first ever "lost-show".

situation he is totally ready for. Cue a serious of unfortunate injuries and rash match making by White and we are left with a fight that suddenly promises a venture into the unknown for Jones. With so much at stake could he really take this fight? After speaking with his coach Jones had this to say on taking the replacement fight with Sonnen; "If I would have taken this fight, which would have been letting my ego get in the way and not using my intellect. This is war, and you have to go in there prepared."

Jones' coach Greg Jackson summed it all up quite nicely by stating that by

taking this fight the team would be committing career suicide. While this maybe a slight exaggeration, his point is clear. The Jones camp remained content to become the "Bad Guys" in this situation, so long as it meant preserving what they had worked so hard for in the first place. Jones is now scheduled to match Vitor Belfort at the end of September, a fight which should promise to be an easy victory for the Champ.

The lesson to be taken from this entire debacle is that while MMA fans remain some of the most informed and intelligent sports fans, they quite

often show their naivety as regards their understanding of the idea of being a 'professional' fighter. That term does not mean you will fight anybody, anytime. Rather it means that this is what puts bread and butter on the table and is not a caveman's sport. The adept attitude of the Jones camp does, however, show hope and will, with any luck, pave the way forward for a more understanding fanbase.

NFL Season Preview

Gary Irwin

This September sees the start of the American Football season.

Thirty two teams set out on the long road to Super Bowl XLVII, which is being held in New Orleans at the renamed Mercedes-Benz Superdome. This will be the tenth time the city has hosted a Super Bowl, the most of any city. The Saints who play their home games in the dome will hope to get to the playoffs, but maybe the bounty scandal from the offseason will take its toll on the team, who will have to ring the changes. One change they won't have to make is at quarterback, Drew Brees has signed on for another five years in the city, so there is hope for some stability.

The season gets underway at the MetLife Stadium, where the New York Giants entertain the Dallas Cowboys. The winner of this tie will be well placed to take top spot in the NFC East division. Eli Manning and the Giants will be itching to get another shot at a Super Bowl, and should have too much over the course of the season for their main rivals, the Cowboys and the Eagles. They know how to grind out wins against all types of teams, whereas Philadelphia and Dallas sometimes flatter to deceive, raising the hopes of their fans before inconsistency wrecks their playoff hopes.

Eli's older brother Payton finds himself at the Denver Broncos. The Broncos won the AFC West last season thanks mainly to the arm of Tim Tebow. Payton Manning has been injured pretty much since 2010, and it would be asking a lot of him to get the Broncos to go one better and win the AFC. They have added a lot of depth



Eli Manning and the Giants will be itching to get another shot at a Super Bowl.

to the roster, but the schedule has not been kind to them, if they post a season over .500 they will have done very well indeed.

Tebow now plays ball for the New York Jets. The Jets still don't know if it will be him or Mark Sanchez who will be starting quarterback. Tebow could have been brought in to kick Sanchez

into gear (something Jets fans have been waiting to happen for a while) or kick him to the curb. Either way, it's hard to see this team win more games than they lose, much less make the playoffs.

Looking around the league, if the Packers can sort out their defensive problems, they gave up a lot of points

at times last season, they could pose a threat. The Steelers and the 49ers both have a pretty solid passing game that could take them to the playoffs. Other playoff contenders should be the Patriots and the Texans, if they can find some consistency. Or maybe this year we will see the Atlanta Falcons fulfil their much talked about promise.

Whatever twelve teams make those playoff spots, it's sure to have been an exciting seventeen weeks before hand. No division winner is truly nailed on, and there is always some breakout rookies looking to make a name for themselves. That's why everyone loves the return of football in the autumn.

Baseball's Longest Game

Gary Irwin

Unfortunately this season has been tainted in Major League Baseball by the 50 game suspension handed down to San Francisco Giants outfielder Melky Cabrera. Cabrera tested positive for performance enhancing drugs and admitted to taking banned substances. To go with his All-Star MVP award this year, his first, it looks like he will take the batting award for the season with the best batting average also. That is unless someone can put up an excellent run of hits between now and the end of the season, leaving an ugly stain on the record books of baseball.

If you want to get back to the good side of the game, you could do worse than pick up a book released in the last year by NY Times columnist Dan Barry. The book, *Bottom of the 33rd*, tells the story of a minor league ball game, played over thirty years ago, that ended up being the longest game in professional history. It was contested between the Pawtucket Red Sox and the Rochester Red Wings of the Triple-A International League North division.

On 18 April 1981 at McCoy Stadium, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the first inning of the game got underway a half hour late because of fading light. But this was of no initial concern to

the near two thousand fans who had come to the game that day, little did they know that play would not be suspended again until it was after four o'clock in the morning. By this ungodly hour only 19 diehard spectators remained, each were rewarded by being given season tickets by the Red Sox owner. But no game between now and the end of the season would serve up what they had just been witness to. It was a moment of baseball history.

Due to an oversight in that years rule book, the officials were not sure about the ruling that stipulated that a game should be halted no later than 12.50 am. So they played on, top and bottom of innings came and went, but they still played on. After the initial nine innings the score was tied at one run apiece, a typical pitcher's duel. Little did the players, coaches, staff and spectators know that no further run would be scored until the twenty first inning. Rochester had taken the lead, the first run scored in twenty three at bats for each team. But miraculously, Pawtucket hit back, tying the game once again, and they played on. Another eleven scoreless innings were pitched before finally play was suspended at around half four in the morning.

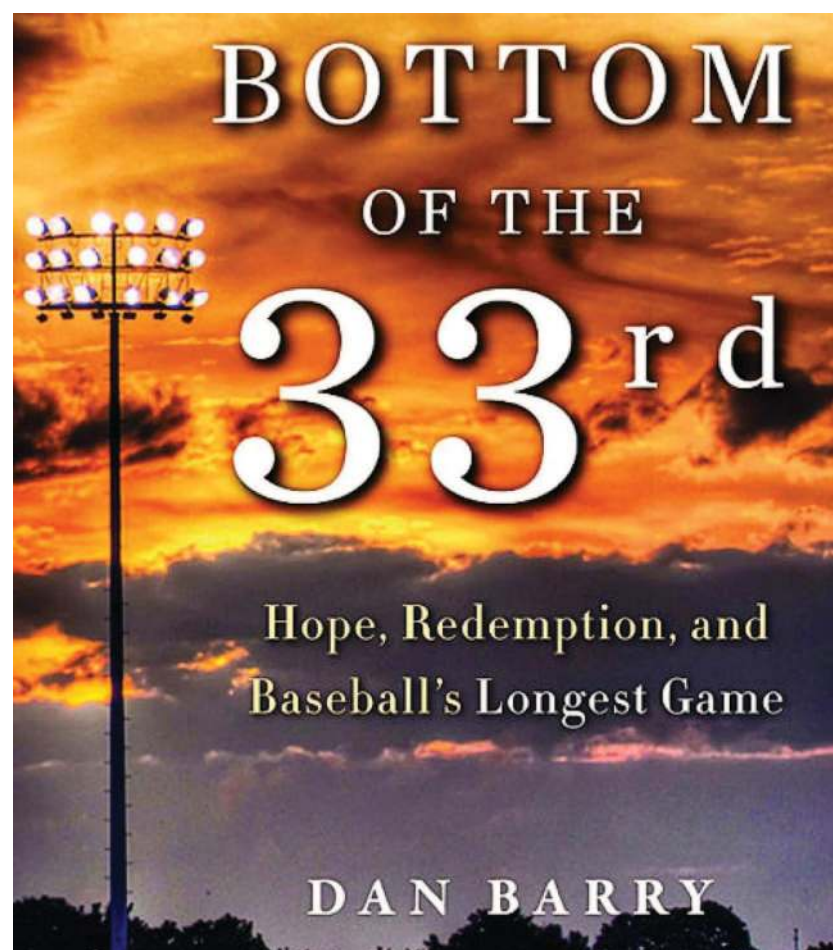
2-2 after 32 innings. Over eight hours of play. The game broke a number of records that night. Some players were

called to bat fourteen times, when under a normal game you would be lucky to get more than four. Family and friends were concerned when people failed to turn up, police were informed, wives were unbelieving that their husbands were out playing baseball until all hours of the morning! Further compounded by the game ending too late to be included in the following days papers, meaning people would have to wait another day until they could show that they were at the longest game ever.

Pawtucket had to play another game the next afternoon. It wasn't until the Red Wings were in town again, over two months later, that the game could be finished. Nearly six thousand people turned up to watch its conclusion. A game that could not be settled in the first thirty two innings, only took a further two to complete. Dave Koza hit the game winning run for the Red Sox in the bottom of the 33rd inning.

This minor league game included two future hall of famers, Wade Boggs and Cal Ripken Jr. as well as 23 players who would go on to play major league ball. Koza never made it to the big leagues, but his bat that hit the game winning run sits proudly in the Cooperstown Baseball Museum, in an exhibit simply titled 'The Game'.

Dan Barry's book *Bottom of the 33rd: Hope, Redemption, and Baseball's*



A welcome distraction from the seedier side of professional sport.

Longest Game is now available in paperback and is a must read for anyone interested in baseball, or just anyone interested in the magic that

sport can sometimes provide. It will also serve as a welcome distraction from the seedier side of professional sport that has come to light lately.

Two Leagues, Two Soap Operas

Andrew Cunneen

IN a campaign where two favourites seemed nailed on to lift their respective league trophies upon season's end, two very different stories have emerged from the somewhat soap-opera like showcase that is the League of Ireland.

Beginning in the Premier Division; last year played host to perhaps the single biggest achievement in Irish footballing history, when Shamrock Rovers qualified for the Europa League, after a strenuous night in Belgrade. Despite losing their manager Michael O'Neill to the Northern Irish post, the Hoops were expected to dominate the domestic game once more, given the extra revenue available to them in light of their continental success. This was certainly not the case for the champions.

Despite bringing in players like Killian Brennan and Conor Powell, former Derry City and Longford Town boss Stephen Kenny has not managed to recreate the ruthless nature of last season's Rovers side. While their league position and title challenge credentials are worsening by the week, Rovers suffered an even more humiliating fate during the summer. Losing four-nil to a Bohemians side made up of youngsters. Kenny has been given his marching orders at Tallaght Stadium and will miss the chance to lead his team out at the EA Sports Cup final.

Rovers currently lie fourth; way behind leaders Sligo who have been firing on all cylinders this year thanks to a great mix of young talent and experience under their manager, Ian Baraclough. With just eight games to go, and Sligo's form only improving by the week, the league title seems out of reach for the Hoops this year, despite all the early season hype that had them crowned champions before a ball was even kicked.

Thankfully for Limerick, their title charge is very much on track and the First Division trophy is edging ever closer up the M20 from Cork. The only real dent in the Blues' form this season has been their Munster derby with clashes with Waterford United; claiming no points from a possible nine. Despite this woeful stat going against them, they currently sit four points clear at the top of the second tier with a vastly superior goal difference – a massive contrast to their fellow pre-season title favourites, Shamrock Rovers.

As Limerick manager Pat Scully will tell you, every game is worth three points, regardless the opposition. That certainly applies to Limerick's form this season as games against Longford Town and Waterford United aside, the Blues have only dropped two points in their other sixteen games. That's 46 points out of a possible forty eight. The well oiled machine that is Limerick Football Club has torn through the



smaller clubs this season and in doing so, earned themselves top spot.

With the promise of Premier Division

football returning to Limerick next year, soccer could once more claim its

rightful place at the top of the Limerick

Fantasy Football Tips For A Mid-Table Maverick

Carlo Sartori

Did you get caught out on day one by your mate who did his research and had Swansea's new signing Michu up-front and captain? Did you think that Fabio would put in a good shift for QPR against Swansea? Did you think Pepe Reina would keep a clean sheet against West Brom?

Fantasy Football is never straightforward and that's the reason we all love it. The official Premier League (PL) game remains the most popular this year as it plays FIFA to Yahoo's slightly less realistic, yet connoisseur's choice Pro Evo.

In the PL version you are limited in the amount of transfers you can make before you are deducted points. This is not the case in the Yahoo version, where you can transfer to your heart's content as long as you have funds in the pot. Yahoo also allows you to have as many players from the same side as you like, whereas PL dictates that only three players from any one club can be used at a time – making for a more level playing field.

In both games you can take advantage of game weeks where one particular club may have two fixtures – allowing you the opportunity to maximize your scores by including as many of those clubs players as possible.

The secret in both is research. Knowing the form players is essential, as is their versatility. For example, Clint Dempsey is listed as

a midfielder but he can also play as a striker, he chips in with a lot of goals and should pick up a lot of points this season.

Don't fall into the trap of picking players because they are superstar names though. Luis Suarez is a big name player at Liverpool but his goals to shots ratio is poor when compared with the likes of Danny Graham at Swansea - who scored more goals last season.

Don't play with a static formation all season. There is no secret formation formula that will get you more points. Three up front is not necessarily a better option than two. Instead, build your formation around your research and you will get better results.

Always keep a little bit of money in the bank. Because of fluctuating values based on form, you may need a little extra to purchase a player who was relatively cheap at the start of the season. Spending your whole pot might seem like fun but it will come back to bite you during the season. One more thing; change your team weekly as injuries and suspensions will always leave you with players who will need to be left out. Enjoy the season.

Scouse Sensationalism Or Justified Jubilation?

Andrew Cunneen

We're all used to the pre-season buzz that surrounds Liverpool Football Club every year. That hype does seem to be deteriorating in terms of its credibility as season after season, the Merseysiders fail to light up the Premier League as their fans so prematurely expect, but something tells me that this year, the colour of the nets isn't the only thing changing at Anfield.

First season syndrome is such a common occurrence in the Premier League that owners have to be extremely careful in making any sudden swoops for standout performers; both managerially and in terms of playing personnel. The assessment on Brendan Rodgers, however, did not just weigh up his side's overachievement in the league table, but also looked at the style of football he encouraged his side to play. Being many people's pre-season favourites for the immediate drop, Swansea quietly worked away on the training ground by fine tuning a style of play not familiar to the Premier League. Judging by the end result, Rodgers' trips to meet his comrade Pep Guardiola paid off in the long term.

The acquisition of Joe Allen, albeit, for a hefty fee, could still well prove to be up there with the gulf of talent that Shinji Kagawa and Eden Hazard have to offer for their price tag. The young midfielder is almost Scholes-esque in his approach. His passing ability and vision was well publicised last year, and in his side's 2-2 draw with Manchester City, Allen spread



the play as well as keeping possession and in turn, controlled the tempo of the game.

The term "project" is overused in modern football. It tends to be an excuse for managers who want that extra bit of leverage in the board room should their first season not go as well as planned. Brendan Rodgers never once spoke of such long term goals; acknowledging the need for immediate success given the size of the football club he was now in control of. Rodgers certainly ticks all the boxes with the fans.

Having Daniel Agger and Martin Skrtel at the heart of the defence gives Liverpool the option to play out from the back; a tactic that is central to Rodgers' style of play. While "total football" was the common trend for such a long period of time in England, the ex-Swansea boss refuses to apply his teams to the norm for the sake of it. "Tiki-Taka" football

seems to be the way forward for Liverpool. For those not familiar with the tactical side of football, tiki-taka style involves short passing, constant movement and keeping possession – a style made famous by FC Barcelona in recent years. Given the step-up in quality that Rodgers has at his disposal, it's probably not out of the question to have a top-four finish on Liverpool fans' Christmas wish lists this year.

While the opening day saw the 'Pool fall to a hefty three-nil defeat at the hands of West Bromwich Albion, the transition between Kenny Dalglish's total football and the tiki-taka approach issued by Rodgers may take some time. While I can't personally ensure success on Merseyside this year, I can be sure of one thing, and that is attractive football – exciting times may just lie ahead for those faithful to the Reds.

FOCAL Sport

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Usain Bolt: The King

Eoghan Wallace

Prior to this summer's Olympic Games the big question on everyone's lips was could Usain Bolt retain the title of the world's fastest man in the 100 metres final? Doubts started to creep in after last year's World Championships in Daegu. A false start in the 100m, under the new rules, meant Bolt was disqualified without a second chance. The way was then open for his compatriot and training partner Yohan Blake to win. While Bolt did go on to win the 200m, the seeds of doubt were already planted in our minds as to whether or not Bolt was as untouchable as previously thought.

The Jamaican trials earlier in the summer did not help to ease these worries. Blake won both the 100m and the 200m and also, earlier in the season, posted a time only 0.7 seconds behind Bolt's world record in the 200m. The air of superiority around Bolt seemed to be quickly evaporating and the gap between him and his rivals narrowing. Upon his arrival in London Bolt announced to the media he was "95 per cent fit" but "ready to go". As he said himself "this is the moment that is going to define my entire life."

Trying to compare Bolt and Blake is a bit like the Messi vs. Ronaldo argument in football; both are incredible sprinters and Blake will be regarded as one of best ever in years to come but Bolt is on a totally different level. Both cruised through their heats with relative ease and the frenzied excitement that surrounded the 100m final was palpable. Bolt silenced the critics breaking his Olympic record of 9.69 seconds by 0.05s. With any uncertainties over Bolt's invincibility dispelled the 200m, a few days later, seemed like a mere formality. Running a time of 19.32s Bolt completed the first ever double-double; retaining both the 100m and 200m at the Olympic Games.

As part of the Jamaican relay team, smashing their world record yet again, Bolt made even more history becoming the only man to win an Olympic triple-double. He may have come into the Games with question marks over his fitness, and his desire, but Bolt dispelled the illusion that Beijing was just a one-off. It is likely that London 2012 may have been Bolt's last appearance at the Olympics and should he never grace the Games again it will be a long time before anyone else leaves a mark on sprinting as indelible as Usain St. Leo Bolt.



The Golden Age Of Irish Golf

Eoghan Wallace

It could only happen during an Olympic summer that a significant Irish sporting success elsewhere could practically go unnoticed. While we basked in the summer haze of post-Olympic optimism Rory McIlroy won his second major, the 2012 PGA Championship, with a massive score of 13 under par. Finishing eight strokes ahead of David Lynn in second place McIlroy broke the record for the largest margin of victory, previously seven strokes, set by the great Jack Nicklaus in 1980. Rory's win is just another incredible victory in a period of unprecedented success for Irish golf.

Since 2007 there have been 24 golfing majors contested, seven of which have been won by Irishmen. Only the United States can boast more winners than Ireland, with nine. In that time South Korea and Germany has had one winner each, Ángel Cabrera won twice and South Africa have had four different winners. Who is the man that has won the most majors since 2007? No, not Tiger Woods but our very own Pádraig Harrington, who has won three. The success of Irish golf in the last five years is staggering when one

considers the last man to win a major before Harrington was Fred Daly way back in 1947. Until 2007 Daly had the distinction of being the only Irishman to win one of golf's majors. In the last five years 2009 remains the only year that hasn't seen an Irish major victory.

Pádraig Harrington's annus mirabilis in 2008 culminated with him winning the PGA Player of the Year award, an honour bestowed upon Tiger Woods nine times between 1997 and 2007. However since then the rest of our major winners have come from north of the border. Darren Clarke's remarkable victory at the 2011 Open prompted Rory McIlroy to proclaim Northern Ireland the "golf capital of the world" on Twitter. He also joked that Clarke was aiming to become "the first Northern Irish golfer to win a major in four weeks". His jests came one month after his gargantuan victory at the 2011 U.S. Open with a colossal score of 16 under par, and a year after his friend Graeme McDowell won the same trophy.

Irish golf is experiencing what can only be described as a golden age and seeing as Tiger Wood's heir apparent already has two majors under his belt it is likely there will be many more Irish golfing successes in the future.



AN **FOCAL** *Extra*

28th September 2012

Volume XXI
Issue 1 FREE



**Welcome
Freshers!**

This edition of *Extra* is
dedicated to you!

UNIVERSITY
of
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Fifty Shades Of Shite

Rachel Dargan

In keeping with the subject of numbers, here's what you need to know before buying 50 Shades of Grey. The number of times the protagonist, Anastasia Steele, says "Crap" or "Holy Crap": 86. The number of times Anastasia refers to her lover Christian Grey and his moves as "hot" or "freaking hot": 37. And finally, the number of times the vagina is referred to as "down there": 6.

As if this information wasn't enough to make you run away from the oversized displays of the trilogy of books, including 50 Shades of Grey, 50 Shades Darker and 50 Shades Freed that have been dominating bookshops all around the world, there is also the problem that the Twilight trilogy was much, much better written than the series that is prompting even the lightest of readers to make a purchase.

While I imagine many only read the book to see what all of the hype was about, it would appear that EL James put more thought into the number of sexual positions that her characters carried out rather than focusing on the actual plot, or making believable characters.

I don't think it was a crazy idea to expect a little bit of a plot with all of the gratuitous sex, but good on EL James for creating a multi-million dollar empire out of three books and the same 150 words repeated over and over, ad nauseum.

I say that the characters are unbelievable, not because the main character, Ana, is 21, graduating college and still a virgin, but because she has never been kissed, somehow manages to fall in love with Christian 'Creepy' Grey in a matter of days, and won't eat when she is separated from him. This is not the sign of a healthy relationship, and is far from a believable character, or indeed, of a believable relationship.

Meanwhile, Mr Grey himself is a self-made billionaire, employs over 40,000 people in Seattle, and is only 27 years old (and the characters continue to be completely unbelievable. He likes his women like his employees, to be submissive and do what he says, when he says it, rather than his equals.

Christian has a penchant for young, dark-haired women, which he likes to bring to his 'Red Room of Pain'. This stems from some deep seated Freudian 'mommy issues' that he has been harbouring since childhood, and also explains why nobody can touch him, including Ana, whom he apparently loves.

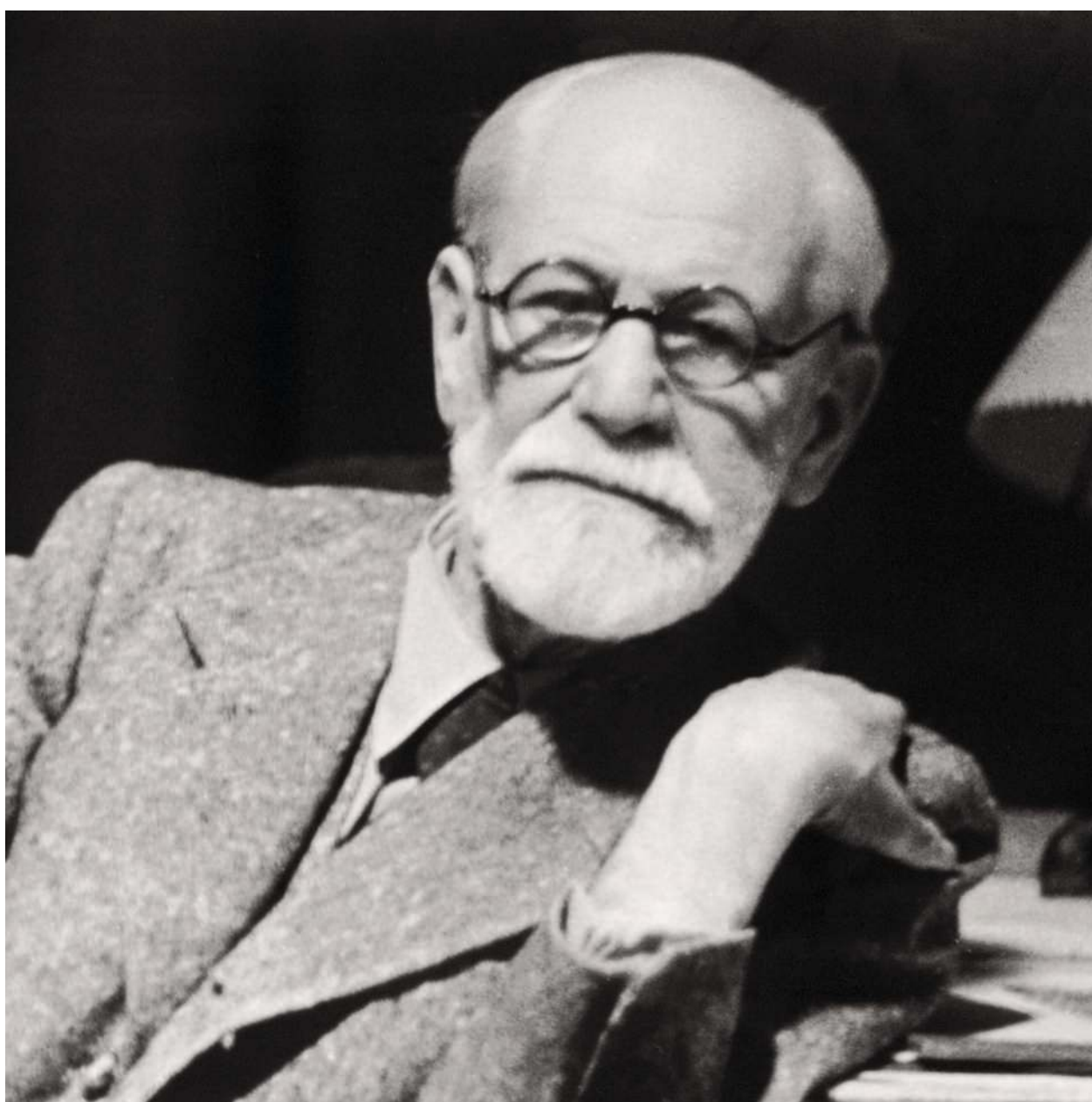
The 'Red Room of Pain' could be likened to a sweet shop for BDSM addicts, boasting candles, whips, riding crops (there was a particular moment when I expected the next words to read 'TAKE MESHARGAR!', but then I remembered that this was an erotic novel, not a book about horse-riding) and all of the other potentially odd things that you would expect to be present in such a room.

The first book ended with Ana running from Christian and the room, despite having professed her undying love and telling him that she would never leave him after roughly one week of being in a relationship, and a particularly bad experience in 'the room' which, unusually, involved the use of the safe words.

Unfortunately for readers, and women everywhere, Christian won Ana back with the promise of switching to 'vanilla sex' rather than their usual 'kinky fuckery'. This turn of events in the books annoyed women everywhere, because Ana was willing to re-enter a relationship that was, albeit consensual, physically abusive, with a man obviously suffering from the Oedipus complex and wanted her to "surrender yourself to me willingly, in all things... to please me".

One woman to speak out against 50 Shades, Dr Gina Barreca Professor of English and Feminist Theory University at the University of Connecticut, sees the novel as perpetuating "absurd, outdated, and impossible psychosexual rituals making an already culturally mangled set of hideously distorted sexual power plays even more difficult."

She also said in a recent article "the thought of a guy watching you do things in various outfits only after you ask his permission and regarding that as an act of "love" is not something helping us embrace earned trust, shared experiences, and happy, equally-balanced romantic partnerships".



Sigmund Freud, who would have a field day with Anastasia Steele.

It has to be said that if Christian Grey were not a billionaire, his actions to woo and seduce Ana, such as buying her a car, a MacBook and an iPad would probably be something akin to filling her car with diesel and following her everywhere, would have her running to the Guards to try and get this strange man to stop stalking her! Christian Grey in this book takes the over-protective boyfriend/husband to the extreme, with him even buying the publishing company where Ana works, just to exert some more power over her, in the last place that she can be her own person, her workplace, considering that he practically force feeds the woman at home, as well as ruling her

in the bedroom.

This is not a book about BDSM.

This is a book about one sick, abusive man and his obsession with a young, naive invertebrate. It's a book about a girl who has absolutely no sense of self, who sacrifices any pretence of individuality in order to hold onto a man who doesn't even show her the faintest glimmer of respect.

It's about two attention-starved individuals with the emotional maturity of toilet paper convincing themselves that their relationship is unfaultable.

But it's trite, insulting, and dangerous.

As Katrina Lumsden says in her review of the series, "It is this kind

of ignorant trash that sets feminism back decades. Women who defend this book are, however unwittingly, participating in some of the most blatant misogyny I've ever witnessed, giving the impression that some women enjoy being debased, abused, and controlled (outside of a consensual dom/sub relationship). I fear for any impressionable young women who read this and think that this is how an ideal relationship should operate. If nothing else, it should be issued as a guidebook to mothers around the world to show their daughters the kind of man to avoid at all costs", and being honest, I couldn't agree more.

DJ Kormac At The Blind Pig

Fresh off the stages of The Electric Picnic, Body & Soul and Liss Ard Festival, Ireland's own DJ Kormac is coming to Limerick for an exclusive and intimate one-off show in The Blind Pig.

Kormac has been releasing as a solo artist since 2007 releasing The Scratch Marchin', Good Lord and Showtime EPs worldwide. He released his debut album, Word Play, on Scribble Records in 2010. It features DJ Yoda, Koaste (Black Grass,) DJ Cheeba (Solid Steel/Ninja Tunes,) Messiah J & The Expert and MC Little Tree, and has just released a new single (featuring author Irvine Welsh) and his second album will be released during 2012 showing a new musical direction.

Whether solo or with his Big Band,

Kormac's sets have become the stuff of legend both home and abroad. In an age dominated by bass and techno, Kormac keeps the sun shinin' and punters smilin' with his unique brand of swing-infused, goodtime sets. His work takes all the best of classic soul, golden hip-hop and modern house, filtering them through 30's swing to produce what has become one of the most unique, not to mention downright fun, sounds to have come out of Ireland in a long while.

DJ Kormac plays downstairs in The Blind Pig on Saturday 22nd Sept. Doors at 10, €10/€12 after 12.



DJ Kormac.

Misfit Mercenaries Return

Tighearnan Noonan

The Expendables 2 is a sequel to 2010s action packed The Expendables. Director Simon West (Con Air, Lara Croft: Tomb Raider) has taken over control of directing from Sylvester Stallone who starred in and directed the first. This comes as a good move as although the first was enjoyable, the sequel is more than just gunfights. Alongside this screenwriter Richard Wenk came on board to co write the script with Stallone leading to a clever script. Although Stallone has given over a lot of control to others for this one, he still shines through as the action star we all love and enjoy from the days of Demolition Man and Rambo.

The Expendables 2 continues what its predecessor started in bringing back the glory days of over the top cheesy action of the '80s and '90s that will hopefully stay.

The movie starts as it means to go on, throwing you straight into the action from the word go. Barney Ross (Sylvester Stallone) and his misfit gang of mercenaries all return including a new addition to the team in the form of Billy the Kid (Liam Hemsworth) to perform a rescue mission in Nepal.

Similar to the first film, the intention is to introduce us to the squad members and their specialties, the leader Barney Rose, knives specialist Lee Christmas (Jason Statham), hand to hand specialist Yin Yang (Jet Li), heavy weapon specialist Hale Caesar (Terry Crews(my personal favourite)), demolitions expert Toll Road (Randy Couture), the not so stable Gunner



Jensen (Dolph Lundgren) and a new addition to the team, the sniper Billy the Kid (Liam Hemsworth).

There is also an excellent cameo from one of the last action heroes at this point. The plot of the movie truly kicks off when Mr Church (Bruce Willis) gives the squad a new mission leading us into an hour and a half of pure testosterone.

Church puts the pressure on Barney to get his group into their next suicide mission. But what bugs Barney isn't the life threatening mission, as what else would he be doing on a relaxing Sunday, is that he has to bring a along a computer geek in the form of Maggie (Yu Nan). With Maggie tagging along, the group heads of to

Albania to secure something secret for the CIA. Along the way the group becomes reluctant heroes as we all know how story goes with these action B-movies but it is how it goes that keeps you coming back for more.

The location has gone from Latin America to Eastern Europe, bringing back the days of Stallone fighting the Russians. With the Cold War over its not as acceptable to make the Russian army the enemies anymore like the cast are used to, so we are introduced to a terrorist group led by a familiar face that we haven't seen in a big budget film for some time, and I for one am glad they brought him back as were else would he get work.

Guns galore returns with a

vengeance drawing you to the edge of the seat with glee as gunfights are choreographed magnificently. My one problem with some of the scenes is, a problem I've had with Stallone for a few years now, that he insists on special effects blood splatters. A minor thing but I expect more from someone who was making action before special effects were the norm. Some of the scenes are so over the top you can't help but wet yourself laughing.

The dialogue between the characters is great fun especially between Stallone and Jason Statham, who really come of as two best friends. My personal favourite lines were from Terry Crews.

As much as the action scenes will satisfy any adrenaline junkie, the main audience of this film will be those who loved the cheesy one-liners of the 80s/90s. Its main charms is the films unrelenting nostalgia factor for histories great B- Movies as said by Jason Statham in the movie "Never count out the classics".

Over all what I have to say about this film is that it is just fun. It knows what it is and it doesn't try to be anything different. If you want to enjoy your time at the cinema id recommend it highly and I'd give 8/10.

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Internet On The TV

Evan O'Grady

The relationship between myself and television has always been a strange one. A once avid viewer during my pre-teens we have had a major falling out in recent years. Back in secondary school the only draw of television for me was maybe MTV Rocks, Top Gear and Film4 (all dealing with loud noises as it happens!) and even these have petered out for me. One channel was not worth paying for the whole MTV package on Sky, I had seen all the good Film4 movies to that point, and Top Gear... actually I'd still watch Top Gear but that is still only one show. Television at this moment does not necessarily have a problem but it is in a very turbulent state of change. I won't ring the "television is dumbing down" bell because I know plenty of well rounded, sane people who enjoy watching stuff like Jersey Shore, Come Dine with me and endless repeats of Friends. I don't know exactly why they continue to watch these shows but I won't begrudge them for being content. One proviso though is, ironically enough, that documentary channels are most certainly dumbing down but this is still tied with the state of change in television.

The internet and the ever expanding potency of modern technology (especially mobile technology such as phones, laptops and pads) has been the catalyst of this major change in television and shows. It's not hard to figure why. Channels broadcast shows on their own websites and the benefits of being able to watch a show at any time in any place far outweigh the need to adhere to a schedule in a fixed area of a home. The choice available online is just so much more available and appealing. On the other hand, the strict schedule still draws some audiences because it adds a sense of structure. Many people who work may still use the internet to watch shows they have missed during the day, but still it is comforting to have a weekly viewing schedule memorized and for the television to bring order to a stressful days. But life



is never so simple.

Lately internet services have caught the advertising bug. Most of the content of the entire World Wide Web is actually spam, ads and marketing. No site running today was able to expand without the use of advertising in some shape or form. Facebook, YouTube, Google, Outlook, and every other site out there is dedicated to a product or at least selling it with ads. Advertising is such a large economic and market force that going into its intricacies would take much more than a guy typing for a student paper can explain. While the internet is more convenient time-wise, it is far more intrusive, as ads can interrupt and video right in the middle, which can really sap the enjoyment out of the experience. When you are given something so quickly you accept it, but then later you are told that you must be interrupted every half hour so they can advertise something with which you don't necessarily have

a stake in. The internet is getting addicted to advertising and the old hand television has a chance yet. Television adverts may be longer, but they are always well paced. Shows within an hour bracket are broken up consistently into half or quarter hour packets, films maybe 3/4 hours. It may seem to be in the same annoying vein as internet advertising, but TV advertisers, while no less money hungry, are at least more sensible. Their adverts are consciously chosen for different time slots, not assigned to accounts via a computer program over the internet. Until such a program advances the advertising sent to individual people is much less relevant than the advertising sent to thousands at a particular time slot during a particular show. It's here where TV vs. Internet shows gets complicated but ultimately there is always one factor left: quality and personal choice.

Let's be blunt, if you are watching

a show on the internet that was not made for TV first, chances are it won't be of as high a quality as the TV choice. Internet shows are smaller and cheaper, although not necessarily worse. TV shows are both empowered and limited by their format. They generate massive amounts of income but are usually required to be unimaginative in their premise. Talent shows, reality television, comedy reruns etc. bring in massive amounts of money, but can't stray too far from the established format. This is one of the reasons that niche and specialist channels are dying off or amalgamating with more general interest channels. Discovery, National Geographic, History, MTV, Sci-Fi: all these channels are shadows of their former selves, their shows relegated to spin off channels or cancelled altogether.

TV is surviving in an internet world, but whether the how justifies the why is up to the audience. While

niche groups are left in the lurch by television, they flock to the internet to vent their frustration but also to bring their beloved shows with them. Small scale niche programming has been exiled from the TV kingdom if you'll pardon the analogy but it has found its promised land in a largely unrestricted cyberspace. The internet proves popular to mostly (not exclusively) a middling, more tech savvy audience that only grows as time goes on, while "D'Telly" keeps its hold on the extremes of the very young who can't use the internet yet, and the people who never caught on to the growth of the technological age.

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Brave's Refreshing Portrayal Of Women



Grainne Coughlan

Brave is Pixar's newest production. Distributed by Disney, it offers something different from what target audiences have been used to over the last few years. What I mean by this is it has forsaken the presence of its usual grown up comedic humour and gags instead it opts for a story more centered on the child that is its main viewing audience.

Brave is set in the days when clans ruled Scotland. The film focuses on the story of Merida, voiced by Kelly McDonald, the spirited daughter of the King Fergus, (Billy Connelly) and Queen Elinor (Emma Thompson) Merida is a tomboy, proficient at archery and horse riding, with a mind of her own. The problem arises when the

time comes for her to become betroth to, she naturally rebels at this notion. This in turn leads to the story's main relationship focus between Merida and her mother Elinor, their conflicting ideas, and ideals. Confrontation leads to rebellion, magic and trickery as Merida's attempts to change her mother's views with the help of an old witch go completely awry. In order to right wrongs and repair damaged relationships Merida and her mother must face demon bears, three clans and their own feelings.

Brave seems to have two main focuses of attention throughout the story. The first is that of enforcing the importance to be true to oneself and accepted for who you are, and secondly the relationship between mothers and daughters. The former

is a valuable ideal, and in contrast to the usual heroines of animation who strive to change their lives in some way, becoming people they never thought they were. Reflecting on this it is refreshing to watch Brave portray a female character as being all she needs to be, yet fighting adversary. The latter focus is touching, perhaps almost a bit of a mature emotion to convey for a youthful.

Brave is a lovely film, I cannot deny that. Even with the lack of obvious comedy "for the whole family" as we have become accustomed to from Pixar, I found it very entertaining. I think perhaps the visuals contributed to this immensely, Brave has seen Pixar reform their technology for the first time in years. The colours are stunning, the light and darkness reflected

beautifully on the constructed scenery of Scotland creating an enchanting background that adheres to writers and director Brenda Chapman's original artistic direction to resemble the fairy tales of Hans Christian Anderson and the brothers Grimm.

The flip side to all the beauty and perhaps the immense female contribution is that as a women I wonders how boys, perhaps brought with the whole family or dragged with their sisters may react to the film, as mentioned the mother daughter relationship might not be so relevant to males.

The other issue widely commented on with regards to Brave, is its lack of humor to appease parents who sit through the film with their darling charges. However, one has to consider

whether a children's film should necessarily appeal to anyone else but its target audience. On Brenda Chapman's part I feel that before her controversial "sacking" over "artistic differences" she saw her project as being a back to basics simple and innocent story. To win hearts if not funny bones.

In conclusion, I found Brave endearing and entertaining, I perhaps only realised this afterwards when I found myself that not checking my rebelliously not switched off mobile phone for the time every few minutes. It surely is not going to ever be as wonderful as Up but it is a sweet offering of simplicity, a fairy tale for the modern age.

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Freshers' Week From The Other Side

A Special Report

For those of you who've just stepped off the bus, Freshers' Week has no doubt been a collection of delights to excite, titillate and, due to the amount of paint and foam, moisten your first week of classes. If, however, your memories of Freshers' Week are in the distant past, you might have had a rather different experience this time around. An Focal has spent the time looking into how non-Freshers spent their week. Some threw themselves heartily into the First Year throng, others stayed well away from the nicely organised chaos. For those whose first week was a string of attempts to have fun without meeting any Freshers, we dedicate this report.

Day One – Sulking and Evasion

Only First Years, it seems, descend on campus. And descend they did, to the remarkable horror of older students. The typical refrain, "These are the worst First Years we've ever had," is never true. It's also based on incomplete information, since hardly anyone meets a First Year in Week 1. But that doesn't stop second, third and fourth years accepting the maxim and assiduously avoiding any interaction with the newbies. So, as the 5,000 trotted into the Stables for the UV paint party (which we're assured was an orgiastic spectacle of suitably epic proportions), the rest of us decamped to the Scholars Club, known to the superannuated among us as "Java's". It was the first night of the Scholars Beer Club, a campus institution now as well established as those stickers you should have on the backs of your ID cards. Normally a fun, lively but slightly more laid-back event than a paint party, we found it a bit rowdier than we're used to. Whether it was the presence of wayward First Years or just start of term jitters was hard to tell. A delightful new feature was live music to accompany our sampling of

the wisely selected craft beers. This music was provided by none other than Emma Kate Langford, a name well known to this publication for her long years of perseverance with our drama critics. Ms Langford's repertoire, delivered with his usual melodious quirkiness, provided an oddly suitable accompaniment for those of us hiding from the Freshers' Week mayhem. Though not just an artist in residence, we expect Ms Langford will be back in Scholars before too long. Her end of set rendition of "The Wild Rover" was enough to assure her of her audience's appreciation.

Day Two – Quietude

On the day that "All tickets sold out" signs began appearing in the SU, students reported problems with logging on to computers, lecturers complained of an inability to use SULIS and the printing crisis was still in everyone's mind. Those celebrating Freshers' Week headed to Dolan's for the obligatory county colours night. For those of us abstaining from such frivolity, the day was quiet indeed.

Day Three – The Two Faces of Clubs and Societies

This was the day of foam, unless you're an active club or society member. If you are, then this was the day of recruitment. Once a year the Arena yields itself up to its most diverse clientele and committees anxious to look like they preside over armies of followers try to convince random First Years to devote the best years of their lives to hopscotch or igloo building or the French Horn (things have become pretty diverse in C&S). This year, recruitment stands were arranged in near-circular formations with clubs and societies grouped together, it seemed, based on the topics they cover. "Sports with balls" were located next to "sports



with sticks" while all the political parties were shoved together. Ogra Fianna Fáil and Young Fine Gael provided the bread for the Dáil sandwich, while the Socialist Youth and Labour Youth provided the questionable filling. We encountered Kelly O'Brien, late of this parish, who is now diligently pursuing an MA in Journalism. Ms O'Brien has already been hoisted on to more than one society committee, from which lofty perch she was happy to try and recruit us. After several hours of frantic recruitment, the tired, beaten but visibly upbeat clubs and societies committees wandered home. Another exhausting ritual of Week 1 was over. Meanwhile, those attending the Freshers' Week excitement donned virginal white and joyously plunged into the foam party in the

courtyard. Whatever about the mirth making, it seems to us that UL's clubs and societies are safe for another year. Both the shiny, bright new faces and the aged, haggard, world-weary faces will last the year, perhaps with renewed vigour.

Day Four – Sabre Rattling And More Paint

So yes, even we aging fogies, some of us, attended the final event of the week. We had been looking forward to it the whole week long, through paint, foam, First Years, lost mittens and the like. And then came the news, at the 11th hour, that the headline act had pulled out. However, this did not seem to adversely affect the mood. Certainly, those of us who have been

to a couple of these things didn't feel the sky had fallen and nor did the Freshers. Judging by their unbridled enthusiasm for the acts who did play, the last minute hiccup failed to derail the event. The decision to add a paint cannon as Maverick Sabre's replacement went down surprisingly well. Those who wished to indulge in more ultraviolet merrymaking happily stood before the cannon while the weaponry wasn't so pervasive that the more demure could absent themselves. As a grand finale, it may not have been sacrifices in the arena, but it served as a final bang to a long, exciting, sometimes infuriating, definitely tiring week of indulging First Years. It won't be like that this week.

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Broadcasting Begins For ULFM's Second Year

Fintan Walsh

THE University's radio station, ULFM, is beginning its second year as official broadcasting starts this week.

Over 150 students and non-students applied for a slot on the online radio station. Around 50 shows of all genres, from specialist music to specialist talk, will start airing from the Students' Union building on Wednesday, 19 September. A re-launch party which takes place on Tuesday, 25 September is in the planning, the ULFM Board of Management confirmed.

The Board is made up of students studying Music, Media and Performance Technology, and Journalism and New Media. With the Communications Officer position being made redundant last year, Kevin O'Brien was made the first non-sabbatical Station Manager of the establishment, after Kelly O'Brien left the post.

When broadcasting is underway, the studio will be on air from 11:00am to 11:00pm every day, with Friday being the exception as broadcasting ceases at 4:00pm. From 11am to 4pm, there will be morning shows, lunchtime shows and

afternoon shows broadcasted from the second floor of the SU building. From 4pm to 5pm, there will be specialist talk shows. On Monday and Wednesday, a show dedicated to clubs and societies will take place for an hour at 5pm. On the same time, on Tuesday and Thursday, there will be a sports hour. At 6pm, there will be an hour of chart music, followed by two hours of specialist music shows. To finish off the broadcasting, from 9pm until 11pm, Indie rock will storm the airways on Mondays and Wednesdays, as Dance and Electronic music takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

According to Station Manager Kevin O'Brien, the station contains personnel of "around 90 people any given semester". All students involved qualify for the President's Volunteer Awards.

Mr O'Brien told An Focal, "We're looking forward to the year ahead and accept all the challenges with it. It's a great experience for the students involved and it's going to be exciting."



ULFM Production Manager, Conor Keane.

How To Get Involved With The UL Students' Union

Adam Moursy
ULSU President

Hope you all enjoyed Freshers' Week and the first week back.

Just a quick note on how you can all get involved in the Students' Union. There are many different ways, shapes and forms. The main way you can get involved in the SU is through our clubs and societies. Last week saw the C&S recruitment drive take place but never fear it is never too late to join. We've one of the best and most successful clubs and societies networks in the country. There's something for everyone ranging from sky diving, to ultimate Frisbee to the old reliables in soccer, rugby and GAA. And if there's not something there for you or you have a good idea for a club or society, call in to Paul Lee or Liz Gabbett, our SU Clubs and Societies officers and they will be able to help you maybe even establish your own club. I really couldn't recommend joining at least one club or society anymore. They are a fantastic way to stay active, meet new people and settle in college. You'll meet your friends for life in our clubs and societies!

As well as that, you can get involved in the SU by joining our student council. You can do this by signing up with Roisin, our SU

Democracy Development Officer and this means you're part of the Unions main decision making body. Alternatively, you can become a class rep, which involves liaising with your department, your department rep and then the fun stuff such as organising class hoodies or a mystery tour for your class.

You can also get involved with any campaigns we run, the more volunteers we can get the better!! These campaigns range from Shag Week, to mental health week or you could grow a moustache as part of our annual Movember campaign.

On an unrelated topic, the SU is in the process of putting forward a proposal to students on the most exciting capital development that the SU has seen in over a decade. This development would cement and enhance the campus experience for every student here at UL. This project includes: development and improvement to the playing fields by the East Gate known as Maguire's, which are used for field sports training, an extension to the UL Arena for both dry and wet activities, and building a new Student Centre that includes space and facilities for the Union, every club and society, improved retail and chilling spaces, and a state of the art night club/venue. The Students' Union will hold



a referendum aimed at extending the levy, which students currently pay on top of the Student Contribution in the first semester. This levy would contribute towards the building of

a new students' centre. The current building is not only impractical but also is confined by space. The aim is ultimately to build a new building, with restaurants, shops, retail out

lets and plenty of open space. The building will also cater for our clubs & societies. More detailed plans are available in the Students' Union.

Welcome To University - The Home Of Diversity

Niall Russell-Richardson Out in UL PRO

Hello first years, and welcome to the University of Limerick. I hope you're all settling in, and are enjoying your university experience so far. For those of you coming straight from secondary school, you must notice a lot of differences in between school life and college life. No uniforms, no sitting in class all day, no strict rules. It's a whole new world; one which is exciting, bright and full of possibilities.

University is also a place to branch out, meet new people, and discover your identity. It's a place of diversity, colour, and many new and wonderful experiences. If you've come from a school environment where you couldn't be yourself or express yourself fully, now is the time that all changes. In school you might have felt ashamed of your differences; in university you should celebrate them. It is our differences which make us unique. It is our differences which make us interesting. It is our differences which make us who we are.

The campus community is so much more accepting of diversity.

We have a multi-award-winning LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) Society in the form of Out in UL. They provide an environment which helps you celebrate, come to terms with, or even discover your sexuality. They provide numerous support services, workshops, help with coming out, events and trips where you can meet new people, discussions forums, and so much more. They are here to help you embrace your sexuality, no matter what it is. University is an open environment, and if you need a support structure to help you come out, if you want to meet other LGBTQ people, if you want a place where you can talk freely about your sexuality or gender identity, then Out in UL a fantastic service. Use it!

Whoever said your school days are the best days of your life must not have had a very happy adulthood. Personally, my college days completely win over my school days. I couldn't wait to get out of the place, and the only consolation I found was in my small group of socially awkward friends. I didn't feel I could be myself fully, and I didn't feel able to express myself. That all changed when I came to UL. I became a whole



new person. I became me.

I am your Equal Opportunities Chairperson for 2012/2013. It is my job to ensure that all students are being treated equally, and that any discrimination that occurs on any basis is addressed quickly and efficiently. At the end of the year, I will present an Equality Report, which will outline the performance of

the university, its students and staff, on achieving equality throughout the year. Every single instance of inequality I encounter over the next year will be recorded and reported. That's why I need your help. If you see any instances of homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, racism, ageism, religious discrimination, sexism, or any other form of

prejudice or discrimination, email suequalopps@ul.ie straight away. I am your representative; I am here to ensure you are treated equally. Report inequality to me so that I can help fix it, and make sure UL remains a place that embraces uniqueness, celebrates differences, and loves diversity.

This is your university experience. Make the most of it!

Caving With The Outdoor Pursuits

Caitlin Lipscomb

My time as a student at the University of Limerick was filled with new culture, new friends, and new experiences. Most of these new friends and experiences came to me through the Outdoor Pursuits Club (OPC). Having come to the campus knowing no one, the OPC gave me the perfect opportunity to find my niche in my new home. The club was filled with amazing people and opportunities that will always be the highlight of my study abroad experience.

The club offered chances to go hiking, rock climbing, and my personal favorite, caving. Having never gone caving before I was a little nervous I would embarrass myself with my lack of experience, but this was not the case. Áine O Driscoll and Cillian Burke, the OPC caving gurus, immediately put me at ease and showed me how much fun caving can be! My caving trips became a regular occurrence and are some of my best memories of Ireland. Not only was I making great friends, I got to see a different aspect of Ireland I would never have found in any tours. (To receive more information about going caving with the OPC send an email to cavingopc@gmail.com)

After gaining some experience in caving I had the incredible opportunity to join the OPC vertical Caving Trip to Yorkshire, England. The weeklong Easter training trip was very affordable and was literally the best trip I took all semester.

While I was in England I saw sights that took my breath away and I would not trade the experience for anything in the world. As I visited each cave I looked for unique formations and rocks I could take away with me as mementos. Even though this may sound juvenile, those rocks are the best souvenirs I brought home. Each time I see them I am reminded of my extraordinary friends, the wonderful opportunities and my once in a lifetime experiences.

The Outdoor Pursuits Club was what made all of this possible. The best advice I can give to any incoming international students and also all Irish students is to get involved with the Outdoor Pursuits Club. The friends and experiences you will gain are irreplaceable.

To join the OPC and have the chance to do loads of Caving, Orienteering, Hill-walking, Rock-climbing, and Mountaineering during the coming semester/academic year pre-register to Join the Outdoor Pursuits Club at ulwolves.ie. Then come along to the OPC stand at the recruitment drive in the UL arena on Wednesday evening of week one to finalize your membership. You can also join at the Club climbing wall or before trips throughout the semester. Beginners are always welcome to the club and don't worry if you have not done any of the clubs activities previously. Club members will be taught all the skills you need to progress at your chosen activity of the five the club has on offer. Visit our website at www.ulopc.com

UL RAG Society Entertains Whilst Doing Good

Fintan Walsh

THE UL RAG society has confirmed a busy schedule for the next two semesters, as projects hit local and national platform. Alongside DCU RAG, the University's charity society was recently affiliated to the newly established RAG Ireland organisation.

The organisation was founded by Daithí de Butléir, who won the Arthur Guinness Fund Award, which is a prestigious 700,000 euro award for social development enterprises. Kevin Bolger of UL RAG told An Focal that the aim of the organisation is to enhance the image of Raising and Giving around the country. "Thanks to the success of RAG Ireland, we are going to see a far more cohesive expansion of the RAG model, but we will also see loads of benefits for UL RAG."

The society plans to do "great fundraising events" for Focus Ireland, where they hope to do a sleep-out in the Students' Union courtyard to raise awareness about homelessness. Other goals include a National Cape Day for Make A Wish Limerick, setting up a UL RAG hub for Childreach International, kayaking from UL to the Shannon estuary in aid of Pieta House, establishing a philanthropy group to help raise awareness on domestic abuse, social media lessons for local residents in Elm Park, and donations for the Parkinson's Mid-West Association. Mr Bolger also mentioned a project, pending student appeal, about social isolation on public transport. "We are



also launching our own social project called Bus Banter, pending student interest," he said. "The aim, as it stands, is to raise awareness of social isolation on public transport and will see UL RAG members going to bus stops around Limerick, and hopefully actually getting on buses and essentially striking up conversation with complete strangers." This was already done by a RAG student from Dublin, who popularised the idea by getting it featured on RTE Radio 1, where it was broadcasted to some 200,000 listeners.

The UL RAG Chief expressed enthusiasm about Charity Week in 2013, saying, "Charity week is going to be a huge step up from last year. Last charity week, we were only up and running a month, so this time round we have much more time to prepare. We will run our nearly naked mile which was the most successful daytime event during the week and I would like to see us try a daily RAG challenge for the week, where we get

students to do wacky and fun things throughout the week, like keeping a red RAG balloon from bursting and all they have to do is raise a bit of money for charity in the process."

Mr Bolger, who is also Sports Editor of popular e-zine, The Daily Shift, revealed that approximately 200 students registered for the society during the SU recruitment drive, last week, making it one of this year's most popular societies. He stated that it is not just an organisation for raising money and receiving volunteering awards; it is an organisation with "so much craic". He said, "Everyone who got involved last semester in our short life span has said that UL RAG has given them loads of confidence and helped them to get to know loads of people. It can also be a great way to link in to future careers, as the likes of Focus Ireland have told me they are looking to recruit high calibre personal. This is your chance to make a name for yourself."

The International Society

Triona O'Sullivan
PRO of the UL
International Society

Want to join the biggest and most vibrant society on the University of Limerick Campus?! Join the UL International Society!

The Society was founded back in 2008/2009 by a group of Second Year Students and has since then moved onwards and upwards as a result of the hard work and drive of some extremely active committees and fabulous society members who are hungry to do more each year! Last year we reached a new milestone for the society in so far as we became the largest society on campus with over 700 members!!

Our motto is "Students Helping Students", to facilitate the meeting of young people from around the world and embracing their different cultures and backgrounds. Whether you're Irish or from Timbuktu, here for four years or just a semester, an undergrad or a postgrad, we've got a place for you.

Our aim is to help students feel at home, and it doesn't matter if they are International or Irish! Our aim is to enhance the experience of each and every one of our members to the best of our ability, we also strive to help Irish students get a chance to meet people who speak the languages they are studying and experience the different cultures that visiting students have to offer. We do this via showcase events such as our International Week and Food Fair as well as our weekly activities including our Friday Night parties in the on-campus bar, our Mentor Meals/International Come Dine with Me scheme in which groups of people cook for each other and share traditional foods from their countries, book club which shows off some great Irish literature and (cheap!) trips around Ireland so you can really experience what our country has to offer! Whether you've an interest in radio and want to broadcast from our slot on ULFM (we were the only Club or Society to have a dedicated Radio Show last year!), or if you're into sports or fancy volunteering as a tutor to local teenagers, we offer it all! And if that isn't enough, we also hope to establish an International Society Music Club this year also, and all of this for just €5! Where could you possibly go wrong!?



trips around Ireland so you can really experience what our country has to offer! Whether you've an interest in radio and want to broadcast from our slot on ULFM (we were the only Club or Society to have a dedicated Radio Show last year!), or if you're into sports or fancy volunteering as a tutor to local teenagers, we offer it all! And if that isn't enough, we also hope to establish an International Society Music Club this year also, and all of this for just €5! Where could you possibly go wrong!?

Last year we were extremely proud to be voted Best Society in UL for 2012 - a title we have now won two years running and also one of our first year members (Sarah Jennings) won the Paddy McHugh Fresher Award much to our delight.

This year has already gotten off to a great start with our TGIF in the stables on last Friday night (7 September) reaching record high numbers of attendance and it was a hugely successful night, a great sign of what is to come for the year with

our Events, not to mention again our Trips, Clubs, Radio show as well as everything else!!!

We also have an International Food Fair taking place in Week 3 as part of the UL40 Celebrations and are currently looking for volunteers and for people and countries to cook so please do get in touch with us if you are interested!!

To join just pre-register on the UL Wolves website, get in touch with us via our email, or Facebook, our Twitter, whatever takes your

fancy and don't forget we are always looking out for new people to join the committee and get more involved so, if you think you have got what it takes to be a fun and outgoing person - get in touch with us too!

Facebook.com/ulinternationalsociety

Twitter.com/ULIntlSociety

ulinternationalsociety@gmail.com



Education Is Our Right... Right?

Paddy Rockett
ULSU Vice President Academic

Education is a right, right? It would seem so, young Padawan, and yet why then are we taking it for granted? Last week, our new First Years wandered fresh from the Leaving Certificate into an uncertain world of possibility and probability. In recent years, we marched on the Government and shouted "No to Fees", all the while missing the lectures and labs we so aggressively tried to protect.

In a meeting with Education Minister Ruari Quinn last year, I had the opportunity of quizzing the minister on his pathway to leadership being marred by a lie and the deception of the powerful voting student body. He casually shrugged off the question with pandering words of the difficulty of the times and when pressed further on the marches and how the new Occupy movement had gripped the fevered student protesters, he said with a casual laugh that student protests are fruitless in these times. With this in mind, we shall see a fees referendum in the second semester to talk intelligently about the real issues here.

But it is important now to assess what we are truly fighting for. Each and every one of you has worked to get here. Yet this year will be a shocking insight into what's happening on the ground in student life. Attendance is at an all-time low and failures in exams, especially in repeats, are on

the increase. So what has happened to the dynamic of education and learning?

We have become reckless with this gift by treating it as a God given right. You deserved this life because you worked to get here but for what purpose? To experience college life or to attain the qualifications you need to survive in the working world?

Some may say that these two are intertwined, and they would be correct, but the balance of the scales is tipping in favour of a new breed of under-qualified, lacklustre students.

We need change. So, I ask you with an open mind to challenge yourself in every aspect of your life here in UL. That's a very different type of learning, that's your learning.

Over the coming months I will be issuing an academic help series to aid students at key times during the semester. Hopefully this general student help series will aid you. It's time now to get back on track. I'm sure you are all delighted to be back. The novelty of this wonderful place will wear off and your focus will turn to worrying and stressing about exams and results. I have seen too many students go through dark and difficult times due to their inability to simply organize and knuckle down. Do yourself a favour, cut out the difficulty and put academics to the forefront. But also take a break from it, enjoy the good times UL has to offer. I wish you all the best with your studies.



PSU Eases The Postgrad Transition

Cian Spillane
President of the Postgraduate Students Union (PSU)

The transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study can be daunting, one of my duties as President of the PSU is to facilitate an easy transition for students. My role is to act as a social and academic representative for the postgraduate students of UL. I can assist you with academic and non-academic issues. So if you are a postgraduate and need help, I'm here for you. As a postgrad, you are a member of the PSU. You have access to the common room, located in the Stables courtyard. Here you can get free tea, coffee, wireless internet and newspapers. You can also run and vote in and PSU elections.

The pathway into postgraduate education for new students has become more difficult in the aftermath of Budget 2012. The decision to cut maintenance grants for postgraduate students has been widely criticised. It is estimated that the savings to be made by this decision will save the exchequer €12.6 million per annum. The short term saving to be made by this move surely are outweighed by the more damaging long term economic implications and seems bizarre when we hear so much political rhetoric around the need to build and cultivate a knowledge economy. Postgraduate education and innovative research is the foundation on which our economic recovery should be built, prohibiting access to postgraduate study makes



this difficult to achieve. The chief executive of the Higher Education Authority Tom Boland recently stated that this decision was 'inconsistent with the national skills policy'.

Bank of Ireland in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills and the National Treasury Management Agency recently launched Ireland's first ever postgraduate loan initiative. The loan will cover the full cost of tuition fees for students taking one or two year postgraduate courses and be subject to a variable interest rate of 10.8%. The interest rate of 10.8% is excessively high. The cost of interest for a €5000 loan would work out at €1500. The loan is for individual students so it is the student's individual credit rating that will be assessed. The likelihood is in that case that the students who are under severe financial pressure would not have access to these much needed funds.

From The An Focal Archives

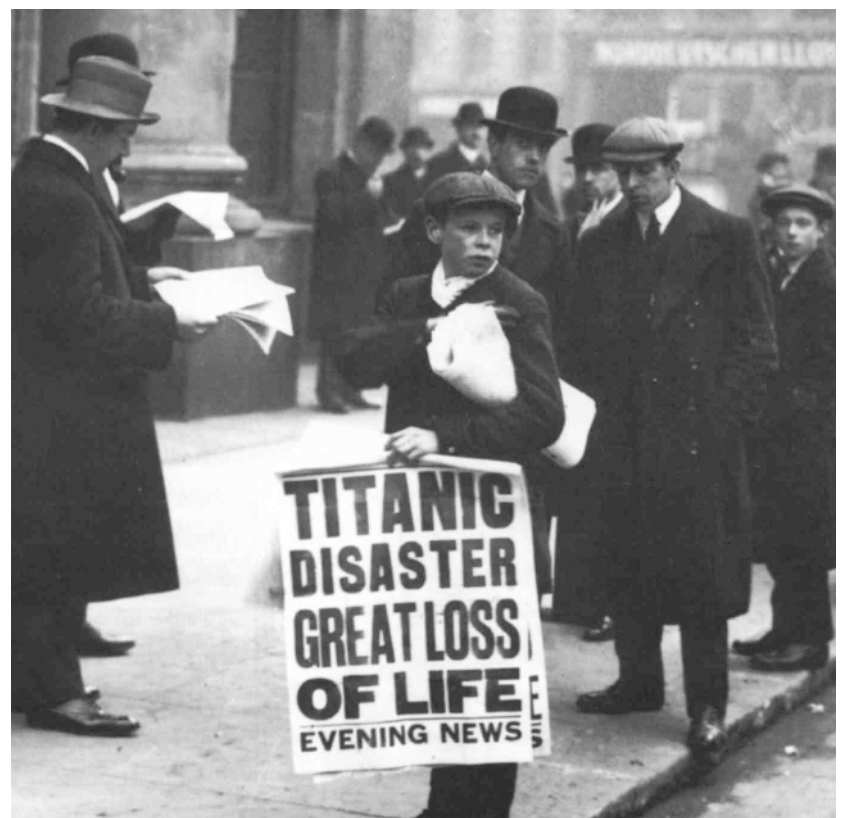
As part of ULSU's 40th year, and An Focal's 22nd, we are re-printing articles from the archives. The following was on the front page on 18 November, 2008 under the headline 'Maguire's Mudbath: UL's "Sporting Campus" Facilities' and was accompanied by a photo of then SU President Pa O'Brien and two students sitting on the muddy field holding a sign saying "Sporting Campus My Arse". The issue has resurfaced again, as development of Maguire's pitches is part of the levy extension proposal. This article was written by then editor of An Focal, Aoife Breen.

UL CLUBS have re-ignited the long-standing complaint against Maguire's field behind Kilmurry Village and have called on the University to guarantee proper maintenance to the pitch that will allow club to train safely.

Maguire's field has been a consistent burden on UL's GAA, soccer, rugby, softball and American football teams, who argue that the pitch's inadequate drainage leaves the field either totally unusable or highly dangerous to players.

Paul Lee, SU Clubs & Societies Development Officer said, "Traditionally, there has always been complaints against the facility, but the clubs have never managed to mobilise a group. This seems to have changed this year with games cancelled and the pressures of additional costs. This isn't a good reflection on Ireland's self-named 'sporting campus'".

Fiona Reidy of the ladies rugby club commented, "It is an inadequate training facility for our teams. The surface is uneven and has locks of water in it in most places. As far as



I am concerned, it is a hazard and for 'Ireland's sporting campus' it is simply not good enough".

Softball club member Eoghan Reade said, "The Bowl has been extremely well maintained but, sadly, this is very rarely given over to UL clubs".

Freshers in the soccer club have not been able to play a home game this year due to the referee deeming the facility unplayable on health and safety grounds, according to the club's president, Dr Martin Hayes.

The club, with the FAI, have also appointed a full time development officer this year whose remit is to organise recreational soccer in UL. However, at the moment the officer is unable to perform his duties because of the facilities made available.

SU President Pa O'Brien reacted angrily to the situation, saying, "The field is a disgrace. It's not fit properly for training and is unsafe for our clubs. UL is a top class facility only to a select few outsiders and elite athletes while our own students are forced to train and compete in woeful conditions, with some teams even being forced to travel to play home games. Maguire's is a potential danger to students and injuries seem to be becoming more and more common on this substandard surface".

The same issue of An Focal also carried the news that the Education Officer, Shane O'Callaghan, had resigned due to "unforeseen health problems".

A Who's Who In UL: A Freshers' Introduction



Don Barry

UL's current president is Prof Don Barry. Known almost universally as Don (or sometimes, the Don), Prof Barry holds degrees from UCC and Yale. Since his appointment, he has told all who will listen about his plans to shake up Irish university education and create a more American model. Unfortunately, this has not been possible since it would entail a fundamental change to how our universities work. Prof Barry is undaunted, however, as he presides over an ever expanding university. Having launched UL's Strategic Plan in 2011, Don's popularity amongst the general student population has remained steady. He is highly regarded almost universally and rarely associated with any unpopular decisions, with the exception of the new president's house that was built in recent years at some cost. Don Barry is intricately associated with the White House (Plassey House) where his office is based, along with other senior university offices. Prof Barry delivers an address to Student Council each year. Though he lives on the North Campus, he has never complained about the commute.



Ed Walsh

Though no longer a member of staff, UL's founding president, Prof Ed Walsh, still looms large over the university. Prof Walsh led the fight to establish UL while head of the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) and finally achieved his goal in 1989. His inimitable personality has also helped him to cast a long shadow over his successors. Views of the opinionated professor vary, with one senior Irish journalist referring to him as "Genghis Khan". His battles with former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald over UL's university status and his scathing criticism of successive Irish governments only add to his legend, though many were offended by his views on single mothers some years ago. His occasional visits to campus are punctuated with sporadic media appearances and comment articles. Prof Walsh is an outspoken supporter of UL's students and their clubs and societies, while never failing to stress their employability. His most recent triumph was delivering the oration at Béal na mBláth. Though his pivotal role in UL's history is undeniable, but to a lot of people in UL today, he's still Crazy Uncle Ed.



Paul McCutcheon

Though you will probably never see him, Prof Paul McCutcheon is a man of great importance here in UL. He is Vice President Academic and Registrar, which essentially means he's in charge of students. He's also in charge of discipline (but if you see him in that capacity, there's not much this guide can do for you). In a previous life, Prof McCutcheon was a renowned legal scholar and by all accounts a fine lecturer. One of his books is still a required reading for law students up and down the country. You can look at it in O'Mahony's, though you probably won't want to buy it. Law books are notoriously expensive. Prof McCutcheon may be a rare site for the average student, but generations of Students' Union sabbatical officers have tangled with him in meetings. Few have ever come off the better, with that keen legal mind as sharp as ever. Prof McCutcheon has the unique honour of being mentioned in the first ever edition of An Focal in 1991 (as the little known Mr McCutcheon) and as such is the longest serving staff member to gain mention in this newspaper, with the exception of Ed Walsh, whose all pervasive presence defies comparison.



Brown Thomas

So, he's technically not a person, but he is a campus institution. For most, "Brown Thomas" is highbrow store that sells expensive perfumes. In UL, though, Brown Thomas is the solitary figure who stands rigidly on the Plaza, looking mournfully downwards. This cast iron sculpture by Anthony Gormley is as much a part of campus as the fountains and the Stables. When and why he became known as Brown Thomas is not certain, but the name has stuck. Less controversial than Ed Walsh and more photogenic than most lecturers, Brown Thomas may be UL's most photographed person. During festive moments, Brown Thomas has worn hats, scarves, flowers and sometimes even people. You know it's Christmastime when Brown Thomas gets out his Santa hat. Though many people pass him every day without giving him second thought, Brown Thomas represents the best parts of UL – the never changing, always present sense of fun, even if he does look miserable.

UL is a place brimming with personalities. In fact, it's often the sheer force of someone's personality that's kept this place going. With that in mind, An Focal has prepared some brief sketches of our more substantial personalities.

how
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AN FOCAL

call
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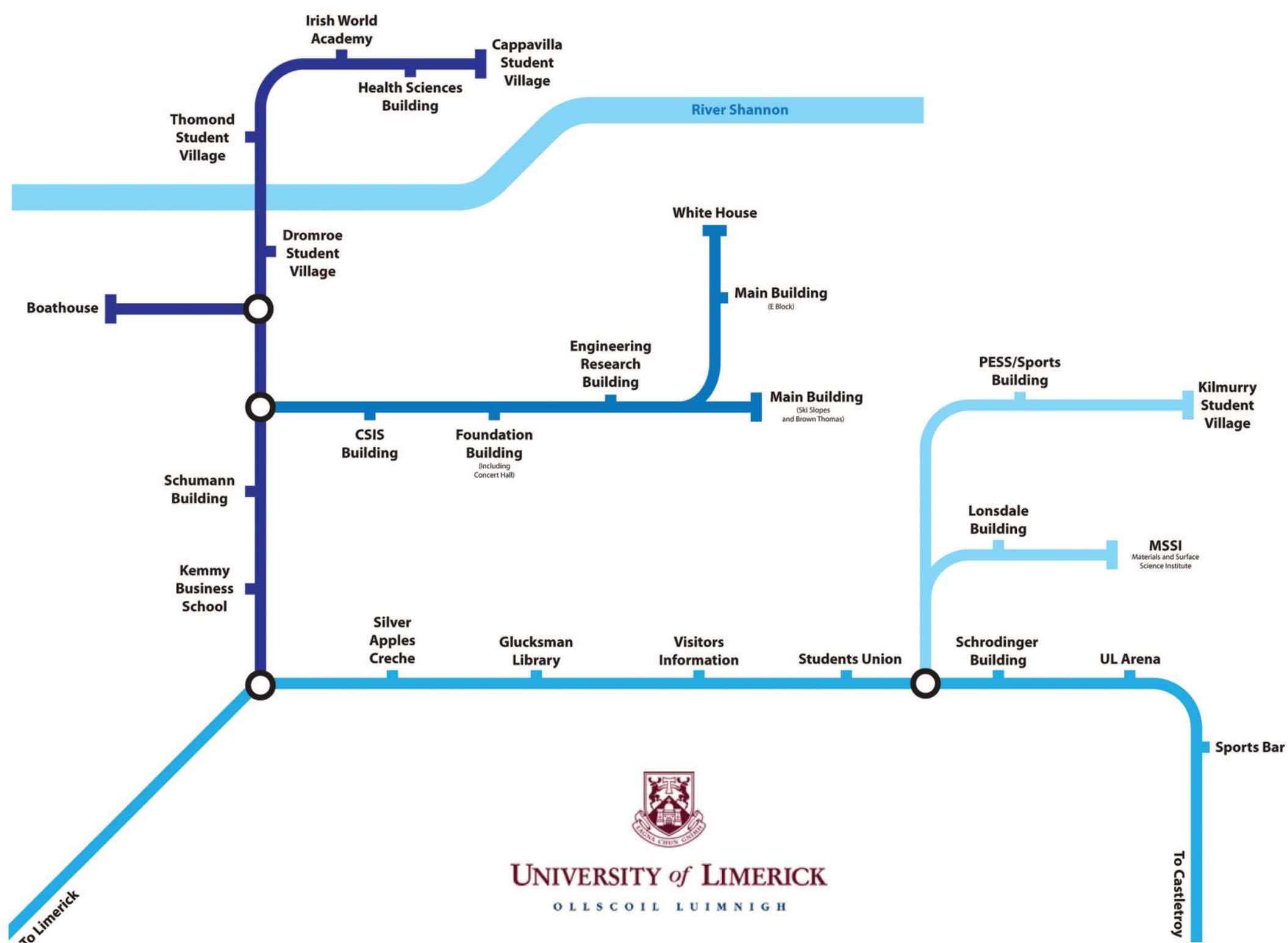
REPORTER

photographer

Graphic Designer



UL Campus Geography



WHEN you realise you don't know where you are, don't worry. Embrace the moment. It's proof that first year has really begun. The next step is finding your way back. This isn't always easy; it takes time, determination and a certain devil-may-care attitude to making it to your next class. But eventually, after wandering in and out of places you've never seen before and might not see again, comes the satisfaction of seeing a recognisable landmark.

"Oh," says the first year, "That's the front of the Main Building! I know where that is! I'm saved!" Or it might be the Students' Union or even one of the ubiquitous fountains, but the epiphany will come. This is just another part of being a UL student. UL's campus is extensive and boasts architecture as charming as Plassey House (or the White House or that nice building you feel you shouldn't be in after taking a wrong turn in the Main Building) and as horrid as, yes, the Main Building. There's a reason it's called "main". But UL's campus is increasingly littered with shiny new buildings, cast across the map like pebbles. From the Kemmy Business School and Schumann that occupy their own little square to the PESS building tucked away somewhere behind the

Schrodinger, just getting around can be an adventure.

And then there's the North Campus, one of UL's little parochial quirks. Nominally in Clare, and considered by many the furthest reaches of the college, it is reached by crossing a solitary, Living, bridge. The Living Bridge sits astride the Shannon and is hyped as an architectural marvel – it moves with you. To our knowledge, no-one has yet been sick due to the sensation, but nothing is impossible. Once safely across, the first year finds himself in a strange wonderland, penned in by the old Health Sciences Building on one side and the very new Irish World Academy of Music and Dance on the other. If your course is based in either, then trips to the main campus will become an occasional treat. By contrast, south campus residents making the trek northward see it as an arduous ordeal. Though some outreach programmes have attempted to unify the campus over the years, the divide has never successfully been bridged.

If you find most of your classes are in the Main Building, as many unfortunate humanities students do, it might be worth your while studying up on labyrinths. Built in

the golden age of architecture that was the 1970s, the Main Building follows no discernible plan. The staircases don't actually move but there are so many side routes, many of them forgotten in ages past, that the whole place gives the impression that it's misleading you intentionally. If you're daring, why not go in search of Ed Walsh's lost suggestion box? UL's founding president placed a suggestion box somewhere in the Main Building during the 1980s. It's still there, if you know where to look. Things do tend to get lost there, though, with some 5 year old election posters still gracing the notice boards.

But UL has other architectural adventures for the new student. Many Freshers fail to realise that the Concert Hall and the Foundation Building are the same structure, which can lead to many minutes of unnecessary walking. UL's class schedulers always prioritise time over geography, so expect to be in the Main Building at 10 and the PESS at 11. And expect to run.

One aspect of timetabling that can cause frustration is abbreviations. Every UL building has its own, from the Schumann (S) to the PESS (P) and everything in between (K, SR, IWA...). In this respect, the Main

Building once again follows its own logic, with a bizarre system of floors (0, G, M, 1, 2) and the task of finding which wing of the building you should be in (Hint: There is no F).

And if all this talk of getting lost and wandering about aimlessly through unknown corridors is worrying you, don't fret. UL students understand. When in doubt, just ask someone. Older students will be more than happy to tell you where this or that lecture theatre is, where you can buy coffee, why you're in the wrong building, that this is a third year engineering lecture, not first year history and almost any geography related question in between. Except where the Print Room is, nobody knows that.

“
You will get
lost... ”

Tomorrowland and Amsterdam: A Surreal Experience

Eoin Lyons

THIS summer, I packed my bags and headed for the continent with a group of friends, as many of you may have also done. In the year that both Oxegen and the big golden ball of heat in the sky decided to take the summer off, we headed for the Tomorrowland festival in Belgium followed by four days in Amsterdam.

This decision seemed obvious. The greatest appeal of going abroad for a festival is the anticipation in the back of your mind that comes with knowing you are about to experience something different and new. No matter where you go, no two festivals will be the same. While I do love the culture we have here surrounding live music and the pride we have in our traditions and their success, the experience of going abroad for a festival is unparalleled. The excitement of travelling to another country coupled with the buzz of seeing your favourite acts on a world stage brings the appeal of it all absolutely sky high. This was certainly clear in Belgium as not only was the weather exceptional, but also the people, the culture and the general atmosphere.

Likewise in Amsterdam, the experience was surreal. The city has broad appeal. What immediately struck me was the bustling core of the city. Dam Square in the middle of the city was the epitome of the Amsterdam's diverse and rich culture with thousands of both locals and tourists soaking up the sights, the food, the street shows, and the sun. Even the structure of the city was amazing, so amazing in fact that even someone like me, who

would not normally notice such a thing, couldn't help enjoying it! Apart from the centre, the city is a major grid made up of townhouses surrounded by beautiful canals. Our group managed to rent out one of these townhouses in the city for an extremely reasonable price. The fact that we did not pay a huge amount for the week did not reflect on the quality either. Our accommodation had views of the canals and a local park, and was also close to shopping centres and restaurants. My friends and I effectively lived as locals in the city for the week, travelling down to the supermarket every day to pick up food and drink which were both very good value.

The dreaded experience of travelling around two countries we had never been to before was also surprisingly easy. We had been apprehensive about making our way around, especially with the time constraints of entering the festival and booking into accommodation. However the train network, which we used most frequently, was not only easy to follow but also cheap and efficient. This made the entire experience much less stressful, leading to greater enjoyment of the week. On a day to day basis, the ease of travelling around the city of Amsterdam was terrific. For such a large and diverse city, I found it surprisingly easy to travel around it on foot. Or for those who would like to move around a bit quicker, bike rental shops were around every corner offering day rentals of bicycles for reasonable prices. Of course, for the more cultured, trips along the canal on tour boats seemed to be extremely popular.

Without a doubt, the experience of



either going to a festival abroad or going to a city such as Amsterdam over the summer is one I would highly recommend. If you can combine the two like I did, then all the better.

The city break in particular can be tailored to suit any demographic, with things to do and places to see for almost everyone. The whole culture of Belgium and the Netherlands is

one I certainly hope to experience again. And of course, the warm and sunny weather we so dearly enjoy but rarely experience is always a bonus!

Making The Move To Malta

Rachel Dargan

From my first day at UL, I'd heard the stories of other people's Erasmus placements, the good the bad and the funny. And now, as I get ready to embark on my own, I find myself incredibly nervous as I count down the days until I head to Malta.

The nerves aren't for lack of planning, thanks to my boyfriend being possibly the most organised person that I've ever met in my life.

The flights were booked at the beginning of February; that was the easy part.

We spent months looking for an apartment that we liked and that we were actually able to book. Because of the high number of tourists Malta attracts, a majority of the apartments are rented by the day and can be pretty expensive unless you are considered a long let, which is typically at least 6 months.

After much toil we managed to find a lovely apartment only a couple of minutes' walk from the University.

It is costing us much less than the University Residence would, which is where many Erasmus students choose to reside. We signed the lease in July

so all that remains is to actually head off.

Flight booking and apartment hunting weren't the only preparations that had to be made.

In June there was a sheaf of forms to be filled out and sent away for approval, and we also had to try and navigate the University's website to try and decide which modules to take.

There was much despair when it looked like we could be taking anything up to 12 modules based on the contact hours.

Most modules on offer only have one hour of lectures and tutorials don't seem to exist, but luckily we found some with two hours of lectures a week, allowing us to meet the minimum of 24 credits that are required.

Their semester does not start until 1 October, so we will have to go back in January to sit the exams, but I'm sure we'll be happy to go back after being home for Christmas.

At the moment, my main problem is that I have to try and figure out how to get an entire wardrobe of clothes and shoes into a 20kg suitcase. Or at least enough to do me for three months (there's a washing machine



in the apartment, so at least I won't have to make any trips to the local launderette!)

I also have to leave all of my friends at UL, a lot of whom are coming back from Co-op and their own Erasmus

placements this semester.

Leaving for Erasmus, and Erasmus itself are a little daunting, but I know that it will all be worth it once I get there and settle in, but I can't help feeling apprehensive and nervous

alongside my excitement as I wait to go. I also know that I'll miss my friends and family once I get there, but Skype and Facebook are great inventions!

The Canadians Know How To Make A Decent Cup Of Coffee

Aoife Murphy
In Canada

I DECIDED to choose Canada for my Erasmus destination simply because I thought I would never get the opportunity to come here again. I'm glad I made this choice. All summer before I left I had been hearing about the harsh winters and the very cold autumns. Stepping off the plane in Toronto was probably the biggest surprise. I had braced myself for harsh winds and rain, instead I was welcomed by humid, hot weather. I have been told by Canadians that this has been their warmest summer and fall to date. Coming from Ireland, where our summer lasts a day, this was indeed the biggest shock to my system.

I find Canadians to be very friendly and they almost seem to go out of their way to help you. They seem confused at the fact that I'm an Irish girl studying in Canada. I get asked "Why Canada?" a lot. They get more confused when I tell them I study English and Japanese: "Japanese in Mount Allison?! Really?!". Mount Allison itself is situated in a small town. When I say "small town", I mean small town. The university is pretty much the town. It is a quaint town. A place where everyone pretty much knows everyone. If someone notices you're new, they try to help you in any way they can.

Another big shock for me was the fact that I would be living in a dorm. Since in UL we all have our own rooms, the thought of sharing with someone gave me the jitters. It has

turned out well though. I adjusted to dorm life quickly, even with a hundred people (give or take a few) living in one building, there really is a sense of family. The upper-class students telling you about their past experiences (the ferocious swans in the Swan Pond is a favourite), The "Frosh" (First years) running around all excited; it really is like a family setting.

I will admit I was nervous about being the only Irish student here. But other International students and Canadian students are all very friendly and welcoming. You quickly make close friends in these surroundings. Since I am an International student I tend to hang out with International students more. This can create a language barrier since most of them haven't been learning English for long. We have had some funny misunderstandings because of this.

The biggest difficulty has been the food. I don't want to sound stereotypically Irish but I do miss Taytos and a decent potato. However, they do have really good food here. The small local businesses know how to make some delicious meals. I got to experience my first s'more and this has become my favourite type of food now. I have been missing tea a lot too, though the Canadians know how to make a decent cup of coffee.

So far I am really enjoying my stay in Canada. From roasting s'mores on the beach to my first game of American football I can safely say that I don't want to return home any time soon.



The Procrastinator Prepares

Aoife Coughlan
In Venice

IT is the eve of my departure for Venice, Italy. Such is my procrastinator's nature that I find myself in a whirlwind that is closer to resembling Dante's spiralling of Hell than the adventurer's optimism. So much is to be done and sorted, so much I probably should have thought about a long time ago. They say that failing to plan is planning to fail but I beg to differ. I find more wisdom in Burns' "the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry". This gives me some consolation when I am without packing lists, missing a course list and still wondering if there will actually be someone there to let me in to my new home!

Erasmus is exciting but it is also frustrating. Finding out about courses is time-consuming and then you have the mountain of documentation that needs to be filled out and given to all the relevant parties. This part of the logistics is the downside, I will not lie, however the expectation and excitement of facing the unknown more than expel any of that negativity.

For me the prospect of four months in Ca' Foscari University of Venice is exhilarating. Ca' Foscari was the palatial home of the Doge Francesco

Foscari in the 15th century, an historic Venetian political figure. The University itself is a landmark, with numerous frescos, murals and sculptures within its walls. In the heart of the city along the Grand Canal, the former palace has been the University's main building since 1868 when it was opened as a business school. The picturesque architecture is now a background for student life, and soon to become my daily landscape for the next few months.

How many people get to say they have lived in Venice? So what if it is flooded with high tides and bothersome tourists, nothing can take away the majesty and mystery of this island city. I do feel grateful to be given the opportunity to study in this city and in one of the most historic of university settings.

Between throwing in clothes, last minute emails, final goodbyes and lots of panic I still manage to hold some anticipation for sipping spritz cocktails, slurping spaghetti and scuttling through small streets. Of course I realize there will also be work and writing too, but that is for another day. As of now "Sono pronto" or, I am ready.



The Big Fella On Campus



After 90 years in hiding, Michael Collins this summer surfaced to go on his now famous State side tour. With the pressure of celebrity taking its toll, the six-foot Corkman has returned home. An Focal caught up with Mick and UL companion John Grace to find out about their adventures.

With the original Collins long gone, the substitute is an impressive six-foot cardboard cut-out, who accompanied John and friends across the US while on J1.

Of course, for a man who once carried a £10,000 price on his head, travel isn't always the easiest. Ditching the bicycle and heading for the airport, John describes the difficulty of smuggling

him out of the country.

"There we were, queuing with all these prams and trombones for the irregular luggage which we figured Mick would fall into. He was wrapped in bubble wrap and black plastic bags when we reached the check-in. I'm not sure they knew what to think, they just asked what we were doing with him". After a short pause they had their alibi: "Eh, we're making a travel guide of America! An Irish experience with a historical twist!"

With the 'Flying Column' safely in the US, the real question was, what now?

"Well we really wanted to get a picture with Liam Neeson. That was the aim".

Neeson, who played Michael Collins in the 1996 film of the same name,

proved to be just as elusive as his character. "Any time we got a sniff of him we were gone. We even went to the Dark Night Rises premiere in which he had a small role but no luck. We're not giving up though. We could still find him in Ireland!"

Even in his reincarnated form there was no mistaking the "big fella". Across the water this wasn't always the case, though, as John recalls. "We had people coming up to us asking us why we were carrying Hitler around Times Square, or why General Patton had a tricolour around his neck. We began calling him the Irish George Washington to get the message across!"

With the Irish generally so revered in America, one of the nation's most

notable patriots was sure to be well received. John smiles at the cardboard giant while regaling tales of generosity bestowed upon the duo.

"It's ridiculous really, when you look back on it. We were even contacted by the Michael Collins whisky company who asked if we'd like to do a collaboration. Unfortunately, between work and heading home we couldn't manage the time but they still offered to help us out. So we figured, when in Rome! They were really great and got us a few VIP tickets to a game in Yankee Stadium."

"One of my favourite stories, though, has to be the time we were in an Irish pub in Boston. Everyone was pretty taken with Mick and buying us drinks.

Next thing we know, some guy is pulling up his shirt and showing us a big tattoo of Collins on his back!"

Mick and John, while quick to remind that they hold no political affiliations, plan to continue spreading awareness of the big man from Cork. They are currently in negotiations for creating a charity calendar, using pictures of his American exploits, in aid of Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin.

You can follow them on their journey at facebook.com/michaelcollinsadventures.

time to turn over a new leaf
time to write for your newspaper

your campus
your life
your newspaper

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