

TORCH: A Year in View

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THE OXFORD RESEARCH CENTRE IN THE HUMANITIES

TORCH: Director's Newsletter

TORCH: A Year in View

It's been a year and a term since I became Director of TORCH. It's been a fascinating and frenetic time. Next summer (2025) TORCH will move into the new Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, along with many other Divisional teams, Humanities Faculties, and research institutes. This landmark building offers exciting new opportunities for researchers, tutors and students to experiment with new ways of working together across disciplinary boundaries and to work with the wider local and global community. TORCH has played, and continues to play, a key role in our shared journey into the Schwarzman. For more than a decade, TORCH has been a beacon for Humanities-led, interdisciplinary, outside-the-box research and practice. TORCH is a space in which researchers come together with external partners – from local to global, from communities, businesses and heritage organisations – to create exciting and impactful work which addresses some of the major challenges of our time.



Read on for TORCH activity, looking ahead to 2025 and looking back at 2024.

Best wishes,

Professor Christine Gerrard

Director of TORCH



Upcoming events for your diary

TORCH Talks: In January 2025, TORCH is launching TORCH Talks, a new series of cross-disciplinary conversations. We have invited artists, climate change activists, psychologists, scientists, musicians and clinicians to share their different perspectives on major issues in the public eye. Climate Hope/Climate Despair; AI and Creativity; Ageing and Ageism; Remembering and Forgetting, are only some of the scheduled events. These events are open to everyone.



Entrepreneurial Thinking: In Trinity term 2025 (in conjunction with [Enspire Oxford](#)) we are piloting 'Entrepreneurial Thinking', a short series of talks and workshops aimed at Humanities students. We at TORCH want to show the value and versatility of a Humanities education and its capacity to create opportunities for entrepreneurial careers across a range of sectors.

Professor Homi K Bhabha lectures: In April 2025 the eminent literary and cultural critic will be delivering the [TORCH-Princeton University Press Lectures for 2025](#)

What's On at TORCH

TORCH Talks 2025



In January 2025 TORCH is launching TORCH TALKS.

This new series will debate some of the most urgent and topical issues of our time from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Practitioners from radically different disciplines and fields will share their views and insights on major global challenges.

Four TORCH Talks are planned so far

[Climate Hope/Climate Despair: A cross-disciplinary perspective](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2025, 12.30pm.

[A.I and Human Creativity: A cross-disciplinary perspective](#)

Wednesday 5 March 2025, 12.30pm.

[Ageing and Ageism: A cross-disciplinary perspective](#)

Wednesday 7 May 2025, 12.30pm.

["Remembering and Forgetting": A cross-disciplinary perspective](#)

Wednesday 11 June, 2025. 12.30pm.

[Please visit the TORCH Talks webpage to book your places](#)

TORCH Talks 2025

Performance Research:

This year has seen some major new TORCH initiatives in performance research. In October TORCH launched the [Performance Research Hub](#) led by Professor Gascia Ouzounian (Music)



This Research Hub will align with new opportunities for performance research and practice. In due course we hope to build up to an interdisciplinary Oxford Masters course (MSt.) in Performance Research. A grant from the Van Houten Fund has enabled a number of strategic workshops and seed-funded performance-related collaborations. On 2 December we hosted a busy Performance Research networking event which saw 15 speakers from across local arts and cultural/academic sectors offering 3-minute pitches across a rich range of media and themes.

Performance Research also shapes the agenda of the Royal Shakespeare Company's major AHRC-funded initiative, the [Interdisciplinary Fellows](#) scheme.

TORCH is a proud partner in this scheme alongside BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music); The Music Center (LA); MIT Open Documentary Lab; Stanford Arts; Watershed (Bristol). TORCH is hosting two RSC fellows, the director Stephen Bailey and the cultural producer Amahra Spence.

Find out more

TORCH International

2024 has seen the launch of some major new TORCH global initiatives as well as the continued success of existing initiatives. We are proud to announce the launch of [CaribOx](#), a joint TORCH and All Souls College scheme enabling academics from Caribbean universities to take up visiting fellowships and travel grants at Oxford. The first open call attracted a large



number and wide range of applicants across all fields and disciplines. We are grateful to all involved including Professor Maria del Pilar Blanco' our academic lead, and the AfOx team from whom we learned so much.

The [Javett-Up BRIDGE Fellowship Programme](#) University of Pretoria Fellowship, open to Oxford researchers working within the fine arts, is now moving into its third year. The collaborations between Oxford scholars and the unique Javett collection have led to some ground breaking cross-disciplinary work.

TORCH/All Souls have also hosted as the Global Visiting Professor Dr Fouzia Farooq from Islamabad Pakistan, who works on the intersections between fiction and history and is currently writing a historical novel on the medieval poet Amir Khosrow. [Her talks at Oxford have focused on gender and performativity.](#)

Two major TORCH/European initiatives in Sweden and Germany launched this year. [The Oxford-Uppsala Culture & Creativity cluster](#) cemented by an MoU between TORCH and Uppsala's CIRCUS, has involved collaborations through workshops and an in-person event in Oxford in late November (our Swedish colleagues brought with them unseasonably early snow). Our focus is (broadly) on AI and Creativity, a subject constantly in the news. We are planning a larger funded project on this theme but we are also generating blogs and pamphlets. Uppsala is currently embarking on a larger cross-university initiative on interdisciplinarity, and in late November, representing TORCH, I gave a lecture at the Dean's conference in Uppsala on 'TORCH and the Future of Interdisciplinarity'.

We have also established an [MoU with UdK](#), the University of Arts Berlin. UdK's unique specialisms in fine arts, design, performance and community engagement will prove valuable to Oxford as we move towards the Schwarzman Centre. We have an open seed-funding call designed to enable UdK and Oxford scholars to collaborate across projects. TORCH is also a partner in the relationship between Oxford and BUA (the Berlin University Alliance) consortium which fosters mutual research engagement across a range of thematic areas, including democratic resilience, digital worlds, ageing and Ai and equity.



International Partnerships



Research Hubs and Networks

Interdisciplinary research Hubs and Networks are at the heart of the TORCH community. They bring together researchers and create research

communities and a culture of experimentation and collaboration. Our Research Hubs include [Environmental Humanities](#), [Race and Resistance](#), [Performance Research](#), [Intersectional Humanities](#) and this year [Medical Humanities](#) has gone

from strength to strength. In October it held a ground-breaking conference on Bio-technology and [What Makes us Human](#).

New networks have been established, fusing scholarly research with contemporary imperatives: these include Rent Cultures, Neurodiversity, Ars Memoriae, Divination, Oracles and Omens, and Labour.

Research Hubs

Projects

April Fakes Day 2024

April Fakes Day, led by [Professor Patricia Kingori](#), (Ethox) involved 13 partners across London and Oxford running from 1 to 6 April 2024. Oxford University researcher Professor Kingori curated a celebration of hoaxes, forgeries and fakes, where nothing was as it seemed.

Patricia was particularly in demand by the media to discuss her project and explain the impact of her research. [Find out more](#)



April Fakes Day 2024



Fantasy Futures: Guardians of Oxford

We welcomed around 500 members of the public to explore the development of a gamified environment and give their feedback on the Fantasy Futures project prototype. A city centre venue was transformed to enable members of the public to experience the characters and story created between researchers and industry partners. The experience included interactive experimentation using motion capture within an immersive environment.

[Watch the trailer here](#)

Fantasy Futures: Guardians of Oxford

Ark T: "Valuing the Everyday" Project

Over the last year we established an adult creative writing course co-created between the Ark T Centre and Professor Patrick McGuinness (MML, French). We

collaborated with the Museum of Oxford and their collections.

[Find out more](#)



TORCH Research Showcase

[The TORCH Team](#) welcomed a full house to St Luke's Chapel to celebrate and highlight some of the amazing interdisciplinary research, projects and people that we are supporting.

The audience consisted of a wide range of people from Oxford University faculties, partners across the city and guests from further afield who heard about projects from our [Research Hubs](#), our [Research Networks](#), our TORCH Global Visiting [Professor Fouzia Farooq Ahmed](#), local [Public Engagement](#) partners and specialist research projects.

It was very much a celebration of all the interdisciplinary research and innovative collaboration that TORCH has been facilitating since 2013.

The Research Showcase 2024 heard from -

The Medical Humanities Research Hub

Ars Memoriae - The Memory Studies Reading Group

The Ancient Anatolia Network

Professor Fouzia Farooq

The After the End Project

Adult Creative Writing and Wellbeing Workshops

Fantasy Futures

Conversational Learning

[Download the Presentation here](#)

TORCH Research Showcase 2024

Engage with TORCH



During 2024, TORCH has expanded its profile.

TORCH has joined Blue Sky [@torchoxford2013.bsky.social](#) — [Bluesky](#)

You can watch recorded talks on [YouTube](#), read in depth articles on our website from our [blog](#) and [news stories](#), Keep up with the conversations and updates

happening on [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#), [Threads](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

You can also join our [mailing list](#).

You can also email the TORCH Team directly to find out more! torch@humanities.ox.ac.uk

Find out more about the work of TORCH

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