New Technologies and Older People's Quality of Life
Design and Technology to Assist Ageing in Place

A symposium convened by
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Agenda

- Introductory Comments
- SPARC
- Four SPARC Projects
- Discussion
What is Interdisciplinary Research?

- Research involving a group of researchers from seemingly disparate disciplines

- The common goal is to investigate questions which cross traditional boundaries of the humanities, natural, medical and social sciences

- Involvement of end users can be a common thread extending across projects
Importance of Interdisciplinary Research

- Able to address complex questions which span different discipline areas
- Can avoid “reinventing the wheel”
- More likely to result in outcomes of value to end users
Fostering Interdisciplinary Gerontological Research

AgeNet

NCAR

EQUAL Consortia and Network

SPARC

NDA
The EQUAL Initiative: Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

- Aims to stimulate high quality, novel research addressing the needs of older people and others that need additional support to lead a full and active life.

- Collaborative research between engineers, scientists and organisations that can bring the user perspective to bear.
Examples of Interdisciplinary Collaborations under EQUAL

Design + Health + Engineering + Psychology

Humanities + Architecture + Social science + Clinicians

Medical physics + Social Science + Researchers from voluntary sector + Industry
Impact of EQUAL (1997-2001-....)

- Multidisciplinary, collaborative, user-engaged approach
  - Housing, urban design, accessibility, product design
  - Physical, sensory and cognitive impairment
  - Especially important contributions in relation to vision, stroke recovery and dementia
- Major impact on British Standards, Building Regulations, Housing Corporation requirements....
- Influence on best practice in a range of social, health, planning and design professions
- Disproportionate contribution made by designers
SPARC (2005-2008)

- Response to lack of progress and leadership in ageing research in early 2000s
- Focused on preserving commitment to ageing research fostered by EPSRC between 1997 and 2002 (researchers, practitioners and older people) and maintaining momentum and success of its interdisciplinary, collaborative user-involved approach
- Concerned with building capacity especially amongst early-career academics
Three Activities - Awards

- 34 Small Awards to newcomers to ageing research
  - across design, engineering and biology (only EPSRC and BBSRC prepared to support SPARC) but many projects include a large contribution from social and medical sciences
  - nearly 200 proposals
Awards

- £20,000 - £60,000
- 1 year - 18 months
- mentoring
- editorial assistance
- platform
  - national workshops
  - entree to international networks
- Lifelong networks
From Furniture Design to Stem Cells

Projects

- Life in the Home - 3
- Care Systems - 1
- The Older Worker - 2
- Product Design - 2
- Urban Design - 1
- Interface Design - 2
- Transport & Driving - 3
- Cognition & Communication - 3
- Vision - 3
- Activity, Exercise & Nutrition - 3
- Oxidative Stress & Ageing - 3
- Fundamental Mechanisms of Normal Ageing - 5
- Chemical Biology of Ageing - 3

People

- 100 investigators and researchers
- 100 scientific and professional collaborators
- Smallest Research Council ageing activity in terms of funding but largest in terms of numbers
Three Activities - Workshops

- Workshops for all stakeholders in ageing issues
  - showcasing ageing research and challenges for ageing research
  - 33 workshops since early 2005, some overseas, more to come
Workshops for All

- One week in March 2007
  - *Ageing Research and Occupational Therapy: building partnerships, creating opportunities*
    - included presentation from HRH The Princess Royal
  - *Anglo-Japanese Werner's Syndrome Consortium*
    - Tokyo
  - *Designs for a Caring Society*
    - British Polio Fellowship, Caversham Methodist Church Hall
Three Activities - Advocacy

- Advocacy of ageing research
  - to policy makers and influencers
  - Making the case that ageing research can and is making a difference
- Lobbying
- Developing a good track record
  - MPs do listen!
    - Two questions in Parliament on: Ageing Research; Older Workers
  - Ministers do listen (but most Civil Servants don’t!)
Today’s Presentations

- Perm any 4 from 34!
- Chosen to illustrate the theme of **New Technologies and Older People’s Quality of Life**

- **Design and the home**
  - Professor Paul Chamberlain, Sheffield Hallam University

- **Synthetic Speech for Older Ears**
  - Dr Maria Klara Wolters, Edinburgh University

- **Multimodal augmented reality to support ageing in place**
  - Dr Shaun Lawson, University of Lincoln

- **Older Better: Improving transport** – practical options for Leeds
  - Dr Mima Cattan and Jennifer Woodward, Leeds Metropolitan University
A taste of SPARC

- There is a great deal more to SPARC
  - so, please see brochure and contact me

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