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UNESCO Director-General

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**Cours en ligne et enseignement**

**Quel impact ?**

Le cerveau humain est le siège de notre identité. Il gère nos émotions, notre réflexion et notre comportement. Ses facultés d’apprentissage évoluent tout au long de la vie.

Pour favoriser cet apprentissage, les méthodes pédagogiques diversifient les approches pour solliciter les différentes zones du cerveau. En parallèle, notamment grâce aux cours en ligne, les écoles et les entreprises vont jusqu’à proposer des cours et des formations à la carte pour correspondre à nos horaires et nos besoins.

L’enseignement aujourd’hui appréhende l’individu dans sa globalité en tenant compte d’un ensemble de facteurs comme l’intelligence émotionnelle, la motivation, l’attitude et le comportement.

Les méthodes de recrutement actuelles, elles aussi, définissent l’individu dans sa globalité au travers de ses valeurs, de sa relation aux autres ou de son engagement dans la société, et plus seulement au travers de ses facultés intellectuelles.

Cette approche holistique atténue l’impact des facteurs socio-déterminants et tend vers une démocratisation de l’accès à l’enseignement, à l’emploi, et ainsi vers une plus grande égalité des chances.

L’accès à la connaissance est un droit fondamental reconnu comme prioritaire par les objectifs du millénaire comme un moyen d’émancipation. L’enseignement est un formidable outil pour développer son esprit critique, se forger sa propre opinion et se projeter dans l’avenir.

«Autant que savoir, douter me plaît».

–Dante

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**E-learning and Education**

**What is the impact?**

The human brain is the centre of our identity. It controls our emotions, our thoughts and our behaviour. Its learning skills evolve throughout life.

E-learning teaching methods foster this apprenticeship by varying the approaches to trigger different areas of the brain and stimulate motivation. To reflect our multi-tasking lifestyles, schools and businesses even offer ‘à la carte’ courses to match our schedules and needs.

Today, education considers the person as a whole and takes into account a number of factors, such as emotional intelligence, motivation, attitude and behaviour. It focuses on the development of critical thinking and interpretation of data rather than memory.

Current recruitment methods also define an individual not only by intellectual faculty but through values, relationships with others or commitment to society.

This holistic approach reduces the impact of socio-economic factors and helps to democratic access to education and employment, leading to greater equality.

Access to education is a fundamental right recognized as a priority in the Millennium Development Goals as a means of emancipation. Education is a tool to develop critical thinking, to form one’s own opinion and to determine one’s own future.

“I love to doubt as well as know”.

–Dante

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**Revue des fonctionnaires internationaux des Nations Unies à Genève et de l’Organisation mondiale de la Santé**

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“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” These words of Nelson Mandela became symbolic. Ms. Irina Bokova takes them further in a firm belief that on the way to education there are no immovable barriers. In her capacity as UNESCO DG, she strongly promotes education, across sectors, settings, nations, as the catalyst of a better future for millions of children, youth, and adults.

Over recent years, UNESCO has strengthened its global leadership, within the UN System, spearheading major initiatives like the UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, as well as safeguarding world heritage in Libya, Mali, Iraq and Syria, and elsewhere. UNESCO has been entrusted to steer forward major UN Secretary General initiatives, including the Global Education First Initiative and hosting the UN Scientific Advisory Board.

UNESCO’s action became more prominent in the sciences. This includes early warning systems to better anticipate risks and hazards, especially in the least developed countries, the Small Island Developing States, as well as for crisis and transition countries.

And, of course, UNESCO is working with all States to help them shape a post-2015 agenda, to build inclusive and knowledge-based societies. Our mission is far from done, but in this fragile and challenging world it has never been more important.

Recent studies on progress related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) show that there is an undeniable correlation between all of them, in particular between education and health. In other words, educated mothers better look after themselves and their children – so, those countries that are doing well on MDG 2 are also doing well on MDGs 4 and 5. Looking into Post-2015 era, what could we learn from UNESCO’s experience in talking to other sectors?

The visionary founders of UNESCO knew well that one single policy area would not suffice to uphold the dignity, equality and mutual respect of all women and men. UNESCO’s Constitution, in particular its Article 1, clearly speaks to that.

Now, turning more specifically to the MDGs, it is clear that the linkages between them have become increasingly evident. Despite the acknowledgement that the achievement of these goals had been uneven among and within countries, the MDG process remains, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has phrased it, “the most successful global anti-poverty push in history”.

NATASHA DE FRANCISCO
You are the first woman to head UNESCO. Last year you were re-elected for your second term which shows a true vote of confidence in what you have been doing. What do you consider your main achievement for the past five years?

 Already at the onset of my first mandate in 2009, I started reforming UNESCO to position it more effectively in the surrounding world, so that development assistance and our work to strengthen the foundations for lasting peace may have greater impact.

Gender equality is a global priority of UNESCO, and I have made it my personal priority by launching in 2011 together with then US State Secretary Hilary Clinton the global partnership for girls’ and women’s education. Gender equality means literacy, access to science and possibilities for girls to make their own informed choices. This is essential for human rights, for health, for sustainable development, for the fabric of societies as a whole.

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As a laboratory of ideas, a standard-setter and a catalyst of international cooperation, UNESCO is fully engaged in the global conversation on how the international community can channel the energies of humanity on a sustainable course beyond 2015.

We are actively advocating for the prominent inclusion of education as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda. Education is not only a fundamental human right; it transforms lives, alleviates poverty and has direct impact on health and well-being. Educating girls and women, in particular, saves children’s lives, delays the age of marriage and leads to dramatic reductions in maternal mortality. Education strengthens people’s confidence and gives them the knowledge and skills to secure decent jobs, improve livelihoods and act for the benefit of their communities and society.

We have a strong presence in science, technology and innovation (STI) for sustainable development, and in promoting water-related goals, which would reflect the broader concept of water security and encompass the human, environmental and economic aspects and dimensions of water security for sustainable development. Gender equality is one of UNESCO’s two global priorities, and we strongly support its central importance in the discussions on the post-2015 agenda, as a fundamental human right and an accelerator for sustainable development.

The need for dialogues across policy areas is essential, and culture is highly relevant in this regard. Culture is an enabler and a driver for sustainable development, which was not reflected in the MDGs. However, culture is a force that enables sustainability, as a source of identity and social cohesion, which generates income, creates decent jobs and improves livelihoods in a rapidly changing world economy. The emergence of creative cities in all regions of the world is one clear sign of this trend. The inter-linkages here are multiple, as also acknowledged by the UN General Assembly Resolutions on Culture and Development.

What does UNESCO do to preserve and promote childhood education in conflict areas and what are the challenges you face based on the most recent examples?

Armed conflict is today the greatest barrier to education. Some 28 million children of primary school age are out of school in conflict affected countries. To ensure the continuation of education during conflict and crisis, UNESCO provides emergency education in the form of catch-up classes for children and young people who have dropped out of school. UNESCO also provides alternative learning opportunities, including life skills and technical and vocational training which facilitate social and professional integration of young people. UNESCO focuses on girls’ education, as well as education for particularly affected and vulnerable youth refugees and internally displaced (IDPs), for instance. Just a few examples of our work: community learning centres offering literacy and skills training in South Sudan; secondary schools for young Syrian refugees and Iraqi IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq; emergency education programmes in North-Kivu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) which have allowed thousands of children to return back to school.

Leaving children and young people affected by conflict out of school is also an issue of protection of civilian populations and of security. Children and youth are more likely to be exposed to abuse and exploitation (i.e. child labor, early marriage), or to be attracted to violence and extremism (i.e. child soldiers, militant groups) fueling the spiral of war.

To ensure that education provides safe and enabling learning environments for children and youth, UNESCO gives special attention to psycho-social support activities, as well as professional development of teachers in order for them to cope with the impact of conflict on teaching and learning. Here are again a few concrete examples: training materials developed in partnership with the Queen Rania Teacher Academy that benefited some 2000 Jordanian teachers or training of secondary school teachers organized in Liberia to provide quality education to young Ivorians.

Education remains a “hidden crisis” within any conflict. Funding for education during and in the aftermath of conflict remains worryingly low – less than 1% of humanitarian assistance. As a result, the provision of education in conflict affected countries is limited and uneven. UNESCO advocates for governments’ and donors’ need to prioritize the development of inclusive education systems – this calls first for recognizing the vital role of education in conflict-affected situations through increased humanitarian aid; second for predictable financing to build capacity of governments to develop robust national planning and make the transition from conflict to longer-term recovery.

Your mission is extremely important: you are investing in development of a human identity through promoting peace, education, preserving cultural heritage. How do you personally see a portrait of a modern human being through the prism of these fundamental elements?

UNESCO’s Constitution establishes that lasting peace and development must be grounded on more solid foundations than political and economic arrangements, which are the minds of women and men. In globalizing and increasingly multicultural societies, it has never been more important to foster values, attitudes, and behaviours that strengthen the ties binding humanity together as a single and interdependent community. This is why UNESCO works to deepen and sustain intellectual and moral solidarity between all peoples, building more inclusive societies and promoting global citizenship.

The protection and knowledge about cultural heritage is paramount because it helps children and citizens to get a sense of our shared humanity and better understand the relationship among all people across history. Our heritage is an open book for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, the basis of the new “cultural literacy”. We need to make the most of our traditions and beliefs, while remaining open to all others on the basis of tolerance and respect.

I strongly believe that individuals who embrace this humanist vision can change the world for the better. We have many inspiring examples of extraordinary men and women who embodied these values. Let me mention just one of them, Nelson Mandela, to whom we are paying tribute in opening the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO. It is very important to identify role models like him for the future generations.

What would you like to wish our readers in the new 2015 year?

Let us promote the values of dialogue, diversity, and human dignity. Let us share and cherish common goals and learn to live together as a single “humanity”, whatever our origins, creeds, traditions, and cultures. Let us make choices that will create a world of inclusiveness, tolerance, and solidarity.

Special thanks to the UNESCO Director-General’s Office for coordination efforts and information support.
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New approaches to meet current training needs
Training UN Peacebuilders and Peacekeepers

Work-based learning, and more specifically professional training, has traditionally been suggested as a solution to build the competences and skills of employees with a view to improving productivity and performance.

Within United Nations peace operations, the situation is similar and work-based training has changed rapidly. Since the first UN peacekeeping mission in 1956, the skills and knowledge required of blue helmets has become very complex. Not even mentioned or anticipated in the UN Charter signed in 1945, peacekeeping has grown into a full-fledged and high-profile endeavor of the organization. In the 50s peacekeeping was characterized by the relatively simpler tasks of observing buffer zones and supervising ceasefire agreements with unarmed military observers. Subsequently mandates expanded to encompass new tasks associated with the sustainable re-establishment of peace.
The term ‘peacebuilding’ was almost inexistent before 1990 and in just over two decades, it has become a defining feature of multidimensional peace operations. The implementation of transitional justice activities and institutional reforms whether in the security system, electoral system, legal system or the constitution of the country are nowadays common in UN missions. Blue helmets have thus been required to learn new tasks that were generally not part of their training, and for example, it is only in 2011 that the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations developed a curriculum to enable peacekeepers to learn how to protect civilians as part of UN missions.

In this context, the Peacekeeping Training Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is participating in worldwide efforts to develop and deliver cutting-edge trainings. Based on current policy developments and anticipating the likely evolution of peacekeeping, the Peacekeeping Training Programme is contributing to meet the training needs of today and tomorrow. Established “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and “to maintain international peace and security,” the United Nations is paradoxically affected by a lack of capacity in the area of conflict management. As a matter of fact, in Training: A Strategic Investment in UN Peacekeeping published in July 2013, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Field Support (DFS) and the Integrated Training Service (ITS) recommended that conflict management be recognised as a priority training need not only for senior managers but also for all civilian staff and military staff.

In order to address this capacity gap as effectively and as quickly as possible, the UNITAR Peacekeeping Training Programme has thus launched a series of free online courses on key facets of peacekeeping. Available free of charge to people at any time and virtually anywhere, these courses are helping to make peacekeeping more effective. UNITAR has also developed a unique online curriculum on cutting-edge aspects of peacekeeping ranging from the protection of civilians to human security and transitional justice. With some of its courses being university-accredited, the Peacekeeping Training Programme thus provides an original answer to the challenges of work-based learning. But for how long? On 11 June 2014, the UN Secretary-General asked the Secretariat of the organization to initiate a review of UN peacekeeping, including in the area of training, in order to take into consideration new expectations and develop a timely understanding of the way forward. In turn, this is likely to impact existing professional trainings available for peacekeepers, including courses currently being developed at UNITAR.

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Identifying Talent to Produce Home-Grown Leadership

The Aga Khan Academies are an integrated network of 18 days and residential schools (K-12) being established by His Highness the Aga Khan in countries across Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East.

ALIA DHARSSI
The Academies select exceptional girls and boys based on merit, regardless of socio-economic background, and provide them with a high-quality, international standard of education, with an emphasis on leadership development, ethics, pluralism and social responsibility.

“The key to future progress in the developing world will be its ability to identify, to develop, and to retain expert and effective home-grown leadership,” said His Highness the Aga Khan at the Foundation Ceremony for the Aga Khan Academy in Hyderabad, India, in 2006.

“The well-led society of the future, in my view will be a meritocracy – where leadership roles are based on personal and intellectual excellence,” he added. “Our goal, then, is not to provide special education for a privileged elite – but to provide an exceptional education for the truly exceptional.”

In an effort to develop such home-grown leadership, the Aga Khan Academies network of schools run an intensive talent identification programme to detect bright students from diverse backgrounds. The programme looks for top grade 6 students with exceptional intellectual ability and leadership potential.

Identifying future leaders is a challenge. The Academies aren’t simply looking for students who are at the top of their class, but for those with leadership capacity – a quality that can be difficult to discern in a child. The admissions process is made more challenging by the Academies’ commitment to provide students from rural and marginalised backgrounds with an opportunity to obtain admission.

To identify talented students from these communities, the Academy in Mombasa, Kenya reaches out to networks of government and not-for-profit schools, including those benefiting from other Aga Khan Development Network programmes, for nominations of outstanding students.

Those who demonstrate the qualities the Academy seeks – intellectual drive and curiosity, leadership potential, and good character – are invited to go through a secondary assessment process involving a range of activities, including creative and personal writing, problem-solving tasks, another interview and a dynamic assessment. The latter gives students opportunities to respond to instructions and show how quickly they learn. These assessments are done in English or in the local language.

“We are not just looking at prescribed learning, but taking into account how the students think and their creative thinking capacity,” said Paul Davis, Dean of Admissions.

The range of assessments enables the team to piece together a holistic picture of each student and identify his or her academic and leadership potential, regardless of previous educational preparation. The multifaceted process highlights the strengths of students who wouldn’t necessarily do well on traditional school entrance exams.

Each year, a selection of students from rural and marginalised communities receive scholarships to the Academy for up to seven years. Scholarship recipients display high levels of intellectual aptitude and leadership skills from a young age, even though many of them come from families that struggle to put food on the table or keep a roof over their heads. They include students such as Maximin Oj’wang, who lives with six other family members in a two-room house in a Mombasa slum. Before he was identified by the Academy for his sharp analytical skills, mathematical acumen and compassion, he attended a primary school that did not have enough seats for its students.

Similarly, aspiring accountant Elizabeth Wanjiku comes from a home with no running water or electricity that is headed by a single mother who struggles to make ends meet by selling chapati and beans. Elizabeth has always been highly motivated and talented academically and recalls working diligently to improve her grammar, even in Kindergarten.

The talent identification programme enables the Academy to draw together students from all corners of Kenyan society. The Aga Khan Academies network is on the way to achieving a student body where 50% are on some level of financial aid. The network also ensures an equitable gender balance – currently, slightly more than half of Academies students are female. At each Academy, students learn with others of diverse backgrounds. Students from well-to-do families are friends with those who receive substantial scholarship support. Students of different faiths and cultures, from various provinces and countries, live and learn together. They also participate and take on leadership roles in a variety of extracurricular activities, ranging from sailing to Model United Nations.

Students such as Asma, a scholarship student from Garissa in Northern Kenya, seize upon the leadership roles offered. Inspired by the opportunity she has been given, Asma promotes education among girls in her home community, telling them about how it’s possible for girls to be leaders and why it’s important for them to get an education.

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Annick has over 15 years’ experience in learning and development. She is currently the managing director of e-Skills, a Geneva based firm that works with companies like Danone, Givaudan, Thunderbird University, Canton de Gèneve or Nestlé to develop e-learning solutions and to adopt new learning technologies.

I met you at Thomson Reuters where we enjoyed your trainings face to face; now you went online. Do you think online training is the future?

It does not replace face to face. It is just another tool providing great opportunities to train efficiently. Blending face to face and online learning is our present. Teachers – mainly in the US – are “flipping the classroom”. Kids get lectures through videos, games, and the live classroom is used to discuss and question the subject or, in other words, to help the student to understand and share.

How do you see the evolution of e-learning?

The idea is to maximize the benefits of face to face sessions. People have the opportunity to get knowledge in advance, based on their needs through on demand e-learning modules, videos, etc. Social learning platforms help them to share knowledge. This is becoming part of companies’ culture. We are coming from a tradition of learning associated with formal lectures followed by exercises. Now the focus is on motivating the learner, creating stories with the aim of enhancing performance not just delivering knowledge, and sharing best practices. Today, we have the tools and the techniques to do it.

Does this mean that the interaction of people in a class and the personal touch of a coach are to be lost in the future? How can remote training compensate the “human side”? That is a good point. It is important for companies that people get to know each other and face to face training events are great for that. But those events are expensive, in terms of time and resources. This is why blended learning experiences are encouraged.

How do you measure the success of a course or a project or what makes a course a success?

In order to assess the success of a course, we should always start by defining a performance objective and a measurable expected outcome. For example, a company has a high rate of mistakes in their data reporting. The objective is to reduce the error margin to less than 1% per year. This will help us define which behaviours should be trained to reach this objective.
Defining objectives and outcomes is crucial. This is where I invest a big part of my time, helping our customer to figure out what they need, if training is the right response and if e-learning would fit their need.

What do you think are the main motivators for an individual to enrol in an e-learning course? It has to make sense for learners and to correspond to their reality at work. It has to be challenging and make the learner think! We also need to make it easy for the learner to access specifically the learning they need, at that given point in time.

Are evaluations important in an e-learning course? It depends on the project. Some courses are based on practicing an activity in a safe environment before experiencing the reality. An assessment would be useless. In other cases, it is essential to check the understanding, for example in a compliance course.

What is your opinion about the MOOC1. Are you supportive of that idea? It is wonderful. What a great opportunity to be able to learn any topic from fantastic professors! I am amazed about such a library of knowledge that will be available for future generations. I have experienced a few courses, but I find it very challenging to complete them to the end. Next time, I will partner with another student to be motivated to study hard and follow the full curriculum.

About your project, what moves an organisation to request an e-learning course to your company? It is a mix of needs and curiosity. There is still a narrow conception of what e-learning is. We help our clients open new doors. With our help, they discover the potential of new learning technologies and methodologies that make the learning more effective and fun.

What do you think makes your courses unique, personal, very e-skills style? We focus on the learner. We create stories close to their reality. We imagine scenarios that reproduce their challenges. We make it interesting, motivating, interactive and bespoke for each company. We love involving our illustrator to create an engaging custom-made environment. We want the learner to have fun while working.

Annick, you decided to go your own way in the e-learning business some years ago. What makes your job so interesting? I am passionate about imagining and designing e-learning solutions. I love the freedom of working on my own, for different clients. I can re-invent the wheel every time. The subjects are so diverse. This year, I’ve learnt about the history of Switzerland, banking regulations, health and safety issues, and cyber-security.

Finally, could you kindly give some advice to our readers, students and training professionals. For learners, I encourage them to be curious, to leverage every opportunity to learn. For training professionals, make sure you focus on performances that need to be enhanced, not knowledge. Think about the learners first!

1 Massive Open online Course (MOOC)
To know more about e-Skills, please visit www.eSkills.ch
Vers des réseaux sociaux de l’enseignement

Avec chaque progrès des techniques de stockage et de transmission de l’information, de nouvelles pratiques d’enseignement qui mettent à profit ces nouvelles possibilités voient le jour. L’avènement de l’ère numérique, loin d’échapper à cette règle, change considérablement la donne.

OLIVIER BORIE

Contrairement au schéma classique du cours présentiel qui requiert la participation simultanée en un même lieu de l’enseignant et de l’élève, un cours e-learning offre une bien plus grande flexibilité, et permet de se libérer, à des degrés divers, des contraintes spatiales et temporelles.

Les cours par correspondance qui remontent au milieu du XIXe siècle en Europe avaient déjà cette caractéristique. Ils avaient été rendus possibles par la combinaison de l’imprimerie, de service postaux et de réseaux de transports ferroviaires toujours plus efficaces. L’enseignant et l’élève pouvaient déjà communiquer à distance.

Des initiatives privées et publiques offraient des formations dans des domaines aussi variés que les langues, la comptabilité, la préparation à des diplômes d’État, des techniques professionnelles ou administratives. On pouvait aussi y prendre part sans prérequis particulier et progresser à son propre rythme, voire suspendre ou interrompre sa formation.

Le développement de ce nouveau marché a parfois pu donner lieu à des méthodes commerciales agressives ou trompeuses, notamment par la vente au porte-à-porte (aujourd’hui, Internet est déjà chez une part croissante d’entre nous et nous accompagne partout), ou les promesses d’un apprentissage facile.
Les avantages de ces cours sont indéniables, notamment dans les situations d’éloignement géographique, ou dans le cas de mobilité réduite, par exemple à cause d’un handicap ou d’horaires incomplets. L’apparition de la radio au début du XXe siècle, du cinéma et de la télévision serviront aussi à diffuser des cours au plus grand nombre.

Avec les progrès de l’informatique et de l’apparition de l’Internet, les formations en ligne vont rapidement se développer. Un de leurs principaux apports sera de pouvoir assister en temps réel à un cours donné à distance, les cours pouvant aussi être suivis de façon asynchrone. L’apparition de la radio au début du XXe siècle, du cinéma et de la télévision serviront aussi à diffuser des cours au plus grand nombre.

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Les MOOCs (Massive open online courses), une évolution du e-learning, ont fait depuis peu une entrée spectaculaire dans le monde de l’enseignement: ils offrent un portefeuille croissant de cours gratuits pouvant être suivis simultanément par un nombre potentiellement illimité de personnes. Seules la radio et la télévision étaient auparavant capables d’atteindre de telles échelles. A cette différence près, toutefois, que les MOOCs permettent aussi la création de communautés autour de ces cours pour, entre autres, échanger des points de vue, poser des questions, corriger des devoirs et même procéder à des évaluations.

Les MOOCs constituent-ils réellement une rupture? Leur modèle remet-il en cause le système actuel de l’enseignement? Le pourcentage de ceux qui quittent un cours sans le terminer est très élevé, et les certificats délivrés, dont la fiabilité est régulièrement remise en cause, ne bénéficient, pour le moment, que d’une reconnaissance limitée du monde académique et professionnel. Cependant, lorsqu’un participant complète un cours développé par Harvard ou le MIT, l’aura de ces universités prestigieuses rejaillit toujours un peu sur lui.

L’engouement lors de ces trois dernières années pour les MOOCs a fait que de nombreuses universités n’ont pas voulu rester en retrait. Pour celles qui en ont les moyens, le coût de développement d’un MOOC pouvant être relativement élevé, c’est un nouveau mode d’enseignement qui cible les générations numériques. Reste qu’un des enjeux principaux est la nécessité d’être présent sur ces plateformes pour des motifs de réputation et d’influence.

Les MOOCs seraient-ils plus un instrument de marketing académique qu’une approche pédagogique révolutionnaire? Leur impact sur le marché mondial de la formation est potentiellement redoutable puisqu’ils agissent aussi comme un instrument de rayonnement culturel. Grâce à Internet, ils touchent des millions d’étudiants attirés par le prestige de grandes universités. Et en plus, c’est gratuit, enfin presque, puisque les certifications sont souvent payantes. Les plateformes principales des MOOCs, qu’elles soient à but lucratif ou pas, doivent encore consolider leur modèle de fonctionnement économique. Seront-elles tentées, comme les réseaux sociaux, de monnayer les quantités de données qu’elles récoltent sur les utilisateurs?

Reste que l’objectif global des MOOCs est louable en démultipliant l’accès à l’enseignement. Il y a, bien entendu, toujours une résistance au changement accompagnée par les débats inépuisables sur les différentes approches pédagogiques.

Mais qui voudrait s’opposer à un outil, quel qu’il soit, au service de l’apprentissage et du développement de l’esprit critique? La lutte contre toute forme d’obscurantisme est quotidienne et incessante.

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Everyone is ready to delve into a simulation exercise (SIMEX) on risk communications response in an emergency. The SIMEX includes a real-life scenario that crams into hours, a series of emergencies and crises in an imaginary country over 100 days...

Success is measured by what each workshop participant can take back to their country and put into practice. With this practical take-away in hand, one participant from Serbia offered that she, “is now fully motivated to facilitate communications activities with partners at the government level – so we can be prepared when disaster strikes”.

Risk communications:
Plan and prepare before it is too late!

It is a rainy, autumn day in Belgrade… 45 public health experts from eight countries in South East Europe gather nervously in a conference room, together with WHO experts from Geneva and Copenhagen.

This intensive exercise is designed to help officials and experts learn how to plan and prepare for communicating risks in a natural disaster or a disease outbreak including a pandemic or another public health emergency. Many of the participants, government officials who would normally lead emergency response in their own countries, are particularly interested in how to deal with Ebola, should the disease reach their countries.
Building capacity is about enabling people to practice

The World Health Organization’s (WHO) Department of Communications developed this interactive approach towards risk communications with the goal of preparing experts from Member States institutions and WHO country offices for dealing with multiple hazards.

The SIMEX concept requires experts from various sectors and disciplines to construct local responses to disasters of the crisis scenario. They also have to practice how to do this when dealing with multiple cultures, in different languages, working under pressure and very intense social and institutional environments.

Back in the training room, the atmosphere gets more intense by the hour, as new events and incomplete information add to the pressure. There are conflicting demands on the response team and the media is relentless in its appetite for new information. Participants are now totally immersed in their roles and are busy churning out talking points, briefing the Minister of Health, doing media interviews, talking to key stakeholders and taking the tough decisions on how and when information should be released to the public. The simulation helps experts apply the theory of risk communications and technical information into practice. For some of the participants, this may be the only practice they get before facing a real emergency. For others, it is an opportunity to improve on what they have done before in emergency risk communications.

The workshop in Belgrade was just one of many activities offered by the Department of Communications’ efforts to help countries strengthen risk communications capacity. Effective risk communications is an essential part of emergency response and helps manage health emergencies quickly with minimum loss of life, illness and financial and societal loss. The International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), and the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework (PIP) both require that all countries build and maintain sufficient risk communications strategies to manage health emergencies. Recent concerns over the spread of Ebola Virus Disease outside West Africa, as well as the ever-present threat of an Influenza pandemic, have spurred interest in the kinds of training offered by WHO.

Work goes on in real life, in other parts of the world

The 3-day successful workshop in Belgrade was the first in a series of new workshops to build risk communications capacity in countries. The Communications Capacity Building team at the Department of Communications will take the SIMEX model to 120 government officials and experts from 30 countries in the Caribbean region together, to practice risk communication preparedness in natural disasters, Chikungunya outbreaks and the possibility of an imported case of Ebola. Then the team is off to AFRO to deliver an urgently needed Ebola SIMEX workshop to the 15 high-risk countries in West Africa where coordinated, efficient and planned communications are crucial for the Ebola response.
Why would you choose Russian?

ANDREY NOVIKOV,
TEACHER OF RUSSIAN,
STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING SECTION (SDLS)

If you begin learning the language of Leo Tolstoy (who actually lived for some time in the Villa Bocage, which is now part of UNOG), you will certainly find out how to pronounce Russian soft consonants, how many cases there are in Russian, why we need aspects of verbs and short forms of participles as well as many other curious things.

First of all you might like to learn a bit about the work of the Russian language programme of the UNOG Staff Development and Learning Section.

What do you need to know about the Russian language programme?
The Russian programme offers Russian language classes for three terms per year, each term lasting twelve weeks, with four hours of language instruction per week. The Programme consists of 14 levels in total, meaning that, after 14 terms, students should have the level required to sit the language proficiency exam (LPE).

In September 2012, a new Russian programme was launched for all levels. It is harmonized with the language competence levels used in the European Community and in the Russian Federation – CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and TORFL (Test of Russian as a Foreign Language).

Почему бы не выбрать русский?

АНДРЕЙ НОВИКОВ,
ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЬ РУССКОГО ЯЗЫКА, СЕКЦИЯ ПОВЫШЕНИЯ КВАЛИФИКАЦИИ И ОБУЧЕНИЯ ПЕРСОНАЛА

Если вы решите изучать язык Льва Толстого (который, кстати, некоторое время жил на вилле Бокаж, расположен- ной на нынешней территории Европейского отделения ООН), то, конечно же, вы обязательно узнаете, как произносить мягкие согласные, сколько падежей в русском языке, зачем нужны виды глаголов и краткие формы причастий и многое-многое другое. Но перед этим, наверное, вам будет интересно познакомиться с тем, как сегодня работает секция русского языка Европейского отделения ООН в Женеве.

Что полезно знать о программе русского языка?
Учебный год языковой программы на Секции повышения квалификации и обучения персонала состоит из трёх семестров (каждый семестр продолжается двенадцать недель, группы занимаются 4 часа в неделю). Выполнение программы 14-ти семестров соответствует уровню, на котором студенты допускаются к сдаче квалификационного экзамена русскому языку.

С сентября 2012 года студенты наших курсов начали учиться по новой программе русского языка, которая согласована с уровнями владения языком, определёнными в Общеевропейских рамках владения иностранным языком (OERB) и русским
The new programme helps students to orient themselves in the study goals, vocabulary and grammar content of each level; it also helps the teachers to coordinate their teaching and testing materials for the various groups.

What teaching materials do we use?
The new programme is designed on the basis of the “Russian Language, 5 Elements” textbook, which is used for the elementary and intermediate cycles. It is a new generation textbook and offers a range of ways of studying the language.

It uses a modular concept which corresponds with the modern goal of teaching – to create communicative competence. The five components that our students focus on are: grammar, written and oral comprehension, speaking and writing.

The advanced level programme has a more flexible structure, based on real language sources and the professional needs of the students. The teachers prepare in-house teaching materials using video and audio resources, such as UN Radio, on-line TV news programmes and excerpts from feature films.

We also use the MOODLE learning platform in our courses to give students quick and constant access to materials, such as the various blocks of self-learning materials.

What is special about our specialized courses?
In addition to the core programme, we offer to students of advanced levels a number of specialized courses in response to their interest and need to enhance their skills in specific areas. These instructor-led courses involve two hours per

стандартизированном Тесте по русскому языку как иностранному (ТРКИ). Новая программа позволяет студентам легче ориентироваться в грамматических и разговорных темах, предлагаемых на каждом уровне, а преподавателям – координировать учебный и экзаменационный материал.

Какие учебные материалы мы используем?
Новая программа построена на основе учебника «Русский язык. 5 элементов», который используется на начальных и средних уровнях обучения. Этот учебник нового поколения предоставляет преподавателю широкие возможности в организации учебного материала. Учебник организован по модульному принципу, который соответствует современным целям обучения, прежде всего, становлению коммуникативной компетенции в языке. 5 элементов, на которые направлено внимание наших студентов, – это грамматика, чтение, аудирование, говорение и письмо.

На продвинутом уровне программа строится достаточно гибко, исходя из реальных языковых и профессиональных запросов студентов. Преподаватели готовят много собственных учебных материалов, максимально используя аудио- и видео ресурсы, например, радио ООН на русском языке, новостные программы интернет-телевидения, а также отрывки из художественных фильмов.

На наших курсах мы также используем интерфейс MOODLE, позволяющий студентам иметь постоянный и быстрый доступ к учебным материалам, а также создавать блоки заданий, которые можно использовать для самостоятельного обучения.
week in areas such as: oral expression, “It’s in the news”, “Views on the Russian-speaking world” and LPE preparation.

The oral expression course is aimed at enabling students to converse in Russian in everyday professional and personal situations. “It’s in the news” focuses on current world events and introduces students to the language of the mass media. The course “Views on the Russian-speaking world” presents Russian through classic and modern movies, songs and works of art.

We also offer a specialized LPE preparation course to help students practise their exam techniques, with grammar exercises, listening materials, written essays and individual oral interviews.

Two years ago, the section began offering a specialized course for UN interpreters who wanted to add Russian to their working languages. The course focuses on analysing material from international conferences. Specific exercises and glossaries have been developed to help students bring their knowledge of Russian up to a professional level. This course has been offered five times now and is a good example of how SDLS contributes to the Organization’s strategic goals.

Who are the teachers?
All the members of our team are native Russian speakers and highly qualified instructors with extensive teaching experience. Natalia Raskalei and Elena Gougkaeva have been teaching Russian on the UN language courses in Geneva since 1994. Andrey Novikov, who joined the team as a part-time instructor in 2011, has more than 25 years’ experience teaching Russian throughout the world. We believe that the professionalism and openness of our teachers, our individual approach and the warm friendly atmosphere in the groups contribute a lot to our students’ learning experience.

How do we see our future?
We are currently developing the distance-learning component of our courses, which can be used both during the class and from outside through the MOODLE learning platform. We are also continuing to develop materials for the on-line placement test.

One of our dreams is to organize a Russian club with activities such as celebrating traditional Russian holidays, learning how to make Russian handicrafts or to cook traditional Russian

А если выбрать специальный курс?
В дополнение к основной программе мы предлагаем несколько спецкурсов («Устная речь», «А что в новостях?», «Картинки русского мира» и «Подготовка к квалификационному экзамену»), на которых студенты, владеющие русским языком на продвинутом уровне, могут познакомиться с отличительными чертами разговорного языка и языка массовой сферы, произведениями русской культуры, развить и закрепить определённые навыки.

Курс «Устная речь» помогает студентам научиться более свободно говорить по-русски в различных рабочих и бытовых ситуациях. На курсе «А что в новостях?» студенты обсуждают текущие мировые события и знакомятся с основными особенностями языка средств массовой информации. Курс «Картинки русского мира» представляет русский язык через классические и современные фильмы, песни, произведения искусства.

Кроме, этого мы предлагаем курс по подготовке к квалификационному экзамену по русскому языку, в рамках которого объясняются требования экзамена и даётся большое количество грамматических упражнений, аудиоматериалов, письменных заданий, а также проводятся индивидуальные консультации по развитию устной речи.

Два года назад был организован спецкурс для переводчиков-синхронистов ООН, которые хотят добавить русский к своим рабочим языкам. В рамках этого курса анализируются доклады, представленные на русском языке на различных конференциях. Разнообразные задания с использованием текстов и аудиозаписей помогают слушателям курса развить навыки устного синхронного перевода с русского языка. Этот курс продолжается уже в течение пятого семестра и является одним из примеров вклада, который Секция повышения квалификации и обучения персонала вносит в реализацию стратегических целей организации.

Кто преподаёт на курсах?
На русской секции работают высококвалифицированные преподаватели с большим опытом работы. Наташа Раскалей и Елена Гугкаева преподают русский язык в ООН с 1994 года. В 2011 году в качестве внештатного преподавателя к ним
dishes, watching Russian movies, visiting exhibitions and performances, and meeting with Russian scientists, politicians and artists. ■

Take a look at the “Window to the Russian World” website (https://sdlsrussian.wordpress.com/) to find out more about our regular and specialized Russian courses, the Russian teaching team and how to enrol.

присоединился Андрей Новиков, который до этого более 25 лет преподавал русский как иностранный в разных странах. Индивидуальный подход и умение создать теплую дружескую атмосферу в группах, профессионализм и открытость преподавателей помогают нашим студентам преодолевать трудности в изучении русского языка и заниматься с желанием и интересом.

Что мы планируем в будущем? На наших курсах мы стремимся расширить дистанционный элемент обучения, создавать больше учебных материалов, которые студенты могли бы использовать не только на занятиях с преподавателем, но и самостоятельно с помощью интерфейса MOODLE.

На сайте «Окно в русский мир» (https://sdlsrussian.wordpress.com/) вы можете прочитать о регулярных и специальных курсах русского языка, преподавателях, а также найти другую информацию.

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E-learning and languages in the Staff Development and Learning Section (SDLS)

Language teachers in the SDLS have always been aware of the potential offered by e-learning. In a truly global organization such as ours, the possibility of being able to diffuse knowledge effectively and at a reasonable cost can only be embraced. Learners in the field, learners on mission and learners on-site can all benefit from content that is accessible from anywhere at any time.

SARAH JORDAN, SDLS, UNOG
Usage of online platforms (Nicenet, Blackboard) and blogs started in the Section about 10 years ago and have developed continuously ever since. In 2013, a need for a more coherent, organizational identity, led teachers and administrators in the Section to choose MOODLE, a free learning management system (LMS) widely used by European universities, UN Institutions and agencies.

MOODLE is a modern interface, easy to use on both desktop and mobile devices. Its customizable site design and layout mean that personalization with logos, colours,

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etc. is possible. It also has multilingual capacities, which is an important consideration for our Section, in which the six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) are taught. Another advantage is that MOODLE supports open standards, which means that files can be imported and exported in many different formats.

MOODLE, as we use it in the SDLs, has 4 “dimensions”: repository, assessment, collaboration and autonomy. So a few words now on what each of these dimensions involves.

Repository refers to the storage and reference function of the platform. Here, students can find the curriculum, administrative information, lesson summaries, reference documents and links to external resources such as YouTube, TED, wordreference.com, etc. as well as course materials in pdf, audio, video or text formats. These files can all be uploaded to the student’s own computer.

Assessment uses tools such as quizzes, tests, exams and assignments. Written and oral tasks can be submitted and corrected online by the teacher via audio or written interfaces allowing the student to see and measure progress, recorded in a consultable grade book. Linguistic strengths and weaknesses become clearer via such a system and the teacher can address problems quickly and easily by directing the learner to appropriate tools in the repository. The French Section now organizes placement tests through MOODLE. The flexibility this offers students in their timetable as well as the speed and ease of correction for teachers are improvements on the former system when students had to come to the Bocage to sit the test. Other languages will soon be adopting the same procedure.

Collaboration, be it between learners or between the teacher and learner(s), is the founding “constructivist” philosophy of MOODLE. Collaborative learning means sharing and exchanging documents and ideas in online discussions (forums, chats) or in group projects (wikis).

Autonomy encourages learner independence through self study. Tools such as dictionaries and podcasts allow students to take ownership of their learning, doing tasks that are both enjoyable and useful.

Newcomers to SDLs are given a “Getting Started” student guide and MOODLE also offers some short video tutorials. Teachers demonstrate new features in class backing this up with continuous support out of the classroom using messages via MOODLE or e-mail. Students are required to give mid and end-of-term feedback on different aspects of the course they are following, including MOODLE. Feedback to date has been very positive and students keep SDLs staff on their toes with suggestions of other features they would welcome on the platform… and we keep working at making these improvements possible. More than 1,800 students have used MOODLE since 2013.

At SDLs, we are all aware that e-learning is now a fact of life and here to stay. We can see its many advantages and by integrating it progressively into our programmes we have been able to maintain the quality and personalization for which our language courses have always been highly rated.

To get a limited guest access to MOODLE and the language course of your choice, write to sjordan@unog.ch

For information and reservation: gva.ch/e-services
« Il est important que les étudiants portent un regard neuf et irrévérencieux sur leurs études; il ne doivent pas vénérer le savoir mais le remettre en question. »

“It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known but to question it.”

— Jacob Chanowski
GOODWALL: Stand out by doing good

The power of technology, global connectivity and innovation has made it possible to foresee a brighter future for humanity, and yet, this same technological success, if poorly guided, can threaten our own survival. For society to thrive, everyone, every girl and every boy, should be informed and involved from a young age. Education has the power to create this impact. That being said, until reformed education and consistent social actions lead to an altruistic society and a behavioural change where everyone does good for the sake of doing good, the majority of the world requires a direct incentive to do good. As Adam Smith reasoned, “it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest”.

Today, the “self-interest” to do good is personal branding. Doing good makes you look good. To be a good person matters. Universities care. Companies care. Your friends and family care. By engaging in social actions, you take initiative and prove that you have character, leadership and potential. These qualities distinguish you from the crowd and can help you stand out when applying for university, for a job, for a promotion or even when looking for a life partner. It’s clear that by volunteering, you are not only making a positive impact in your community, but also advancing your career. Volunteering increases your social connections, skills, experiences (human capital) and professional contacts (social capital). With Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) a priority for companies, socially responsible recruitment, the evaluation of candidates based on their integrity and impact, has become popular. According to LinkedIn’s research, “41% of their members consider volunteer work equally valuable as paid work experience when evaluating candidates.” Furthermore, “1 of 5 hiring managers in the U.S. agree that they have hired a candidate because of their volunteer work experience”.

Here is a true story from LinkedIn: “Two equally qualified candidates were being considered by a Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) for a high level marketing position at a Fortune 100 company. Still undecided, she went to their respective LinkedIn profiles. Scrolling down to the ‘Volunteer & Causes’ section she came across one of the candidate’s work with the ASPCA along with this Gandhi quote: ‘The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.’ An animal lover and avid volunteer, the decision was suddenly crystal clear”.

This understanding led to the creation of Goodwall. Goodwall is an online identity for everyone to build their personal brand and showcase their social good and integrity for their school, university, career and friendships. After raising US$ 1.2 million in financing and winning the Public Choice Award at the LIFT Conference, with the support of the Swiss Confederation’s Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) and the United Nations Institute for Training & Research (UNITAR), the website launched in February 2014. The website’s core and most valuable feature is the Good CV: a visual social resume that allows members to share their humanitarian and environmental experiences. Members show who they really are and what they care about in a beautiful, fresh and intuitive timeline. Their social experiences, often life-defining, are highlighted. Their Good CVs tell their stories. For example, take founders and brother Omar and Taha Bawa: their unique upbringing shaped their identities. Their Good CVs show how they were born into the humanitarian world to parents with more than 50 years of experience working for organizations like the UNHCR, Save the Children, the WHO and the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. Their education was not limited to textbooks. As kids, they spent their summers visiting refugee camps in Iran. They could not turn a blind eye to the
Members can also discover recommended social actions and projects to take part in such as an opportunity to volunteer with the Red Cross, run a marathon for UNICEF or even raise awareness and funds for Charity: Water. With more than 300,000 members joining the network from 200+ countries in a couple of months, Goodwall has gained significant traction. This fast growth provides a particularly interesting opportunity for NGOs and international organizations seeking volunteers and interns to gain visibility and free exposure.

The most popular demographic on the site are high school and university students, with the largest university presence at Harvard, Oxford and Edinburgh. This momentum amongst Millennials, notably in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada can be explained by the theory that their “self-interest”, “the carrot” for doing good, is getting into university. For years, university admissions have been defined by standardized tests and examinations. Grades decided who got accepted and who did not. It was black and white. But the line blurred and the process evolved. With more than 21 million students competing every year and acceptance rates as low as 6%, it has become harder to distinguish candidates. Good grades are no longer enough to get accepted into the right university. To come up on top, students have to be special. “Sure, a student might have good enough grades, but so does almost everyone else applying. They have to show they are different”, says Atlanti Moquette, Board Member of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO).

So how does a student stand out from the competition? By doing good and showcasing it for universities to see, for the world to see. Nothing impresses an admissions officer like a kid who saved a dolphin, organized a fundraiser to build an orphanage, recycles regularly, planted hundreds of trees and ran a marathon for cancer research. It shows that the student is different: a leader with character and potential. And that is what Goodwall is all about: “standing out by doing good.” With this in mind, Goodwall created and optimised an experience that meets the Millennials’ needs. It’s simple. The students start by taking a quiz. They are asked “what and where they want to study?”, “with whom they want to study?” and “what their grades are?”. Goodwall’s personalised algorithm matches the students with universities whose acceptance criteria they meet. The students then show how they are different from the competition by showcasing their good actions and social projects on their Good CVs. Goodwall also proposes recommended opportunities provided by organisations for students to distinguish themselves further. Finally Goodwall helps them get contacted by the right universities.

Helping students get into university is just the beginning. Goodwall wants to assist them with getting their first job, getting a promotion and even finding their life partner. Goodwall’s vision is that as people regularly take part in more social actions, even if for their own self-interest, over time, perhaps a decade, mind-sets change and doing good becomes a habit, a behaviour. This will eventually lead to an altruistic society and a generation of people who can make sustainable decisions and create real impact every day.
Three ways to hack your brain to learn a language

As an educator, I’m always on the lookout for innovative teaching methods and resources. A few months ago, I stumbled upon an amazing video on the Science of Memory by Gabriel Wyner¹, an American opera singer who learned French in 5 months.

Muriel Lauvige, Education Consultant, French Language Coach, and Linguist²

In the video, Wyner provides an interesting account of how and why we memorize words and concepts. In August, he released “Fluent Forever”, a book in which he explains not only memorization, but also how to “language hack your brain”. It is one of the most accessible, practical and entertaining books about language learning I have had the pleasure to read.

Even though Geneva is an international city, French is still the common language. If you want to learn the language (or any language for that matter), this book is a must read. Not only is the book written in everyday language, it is also full of tips and tricks. Here are key things from the book I found that can help you hack your brain to learn a language.

Learn in context
Most people think that the challenge in language learning is being able to remember new words. According to Wyner, the trick is that you don’t actually try to memorize the word. The book provides an interesting account that highlights how our memory doesn’t work in isolation but requires a boost in making sure things, like words, stick. Usually, you might see a word you would like to remember and might repeat it several times in your head to memorize it. Instead, Wyner says that words are more likely to stick if used or heard in a specific context or environment. Such learning happens when the context is memorable; the author gives the example of testing and remembering the word “Moktor”, a viscous, foul, green drink in a bar somewhere in Scandinavia instead of learning it in the classroom.

Focus on High-Frequency Words
While our brain’s capacity may have limitless potential, in reality our ability to memorize and recognize words in a language has its limits. Determining which words are most useful to remember can help to increase the process of learning a language. For instance, in your mother tongue and in any new language, there are certain words that are used much more frequently than others. Obviously, these words should be the first ones to focus on. Once these words come to you with ease, you can continue building on your vocabulary.

Students learning French often ask me how many words they should learn. This usually depends on what level they want to reach and how they intend on applying the language. Wyner found that when learning the top thousand words of a language such as French, people will understand nearly 85% of the words heard and 75% of the words read. Learning the next top thousand words will give a 5% boost to reading and listening. In order to reach total comprehension of a language, you can either keep learning more and more words or to specialize and focus on a few words at a time and build up your capacity to progress in the language.

Make use of the new technology
We often believe that as we grow older, the ability to learn quickly slows down partially due to our brain’s development. Yet, like Wyner, I believe that we are in an age where we can continue this learning with new technology such as language apps, automated repetition systems and online language exchange sites. As adults we can make use of free online resources, such as duolingo, a game-like environment for language learning and where you can track your progress, Anki, an automated repetition system that allows you to create and review your own flashcards, or Italki, a platform where you can find language partners for free anywhere in the world.

Set realistic goals and tasks
People learning French often tell me that they want to become fluent in the language. While this is a definite goal to strive for when learning any language, language learners also have to play an active part in their own language journey. This means defining, from the start, what does fluency mean? Does it mean speaking and understanding at a conversational level, doing business, watching a tv show or film, writing a letter or giving a presentation at a university?

Language learning goals should also take into consideration the languages you already know, the language you are learning, daily constraints, time available to learn, and willingness to speak to other people (other than your teacher). Taking active steps can significantly improve learning time. For Wyner this includes creating your own learning material, such as flash cards, which incorporates images, words, sounds and personal memories to every word or phrase you learn. He believes that when you embrace learning by creating something, it becomes a part of you – each word needs to become your word, each grammar rule your grammar rule.

Language learning takes time, patience, a bit of innovation. It is not just about reading and memorizing. Take a break from the books, apply your new language skills to your own experience, get out and interact with people and the environment around you. You’ll be a language hacker in no time.

1 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPRiKaLS5vY
2 Muriel Lauvige has also worked on training initiatives with UNWOMEN, UNICEF, UNHCR and UNOCHA
UN Special’s 65th anniversary!

EVELINA RIOUKHINA AND IAN RICHARDS

UN Special is a living example of many years of close cooperation between two organizations of the UN system: UNOG and WHO.

Its first issue appeared 65 years ago, in October 1949. Since then, it has published 11 issues per year, with an average of 50 pages per issue, and embodies both the United Nations’ cooperation between people of all backgrounds and its capacity to adjust to changing circumstances. The magazine has not lost sight of its overall objective: being for and about the United Nations and its staff. A key element of the UN Special is that it opens a window into international organizations, diplomatic missions, academia and various other entities promoting mutual understanding and fostering synergy in the work covered by their respective mandates. The UN Special offers dialogue and reflection which renews a spirit of cooperation and humanitarianism, not only for international Geneva, but also for the world as a whole.

UN Special represents a sound example of a long-standing interagency partnership – perhaps one of the oldest in the UN common system. It is also an example of the dedication of a group of colleagues, mainly WHO and UNOG staff members, who invest their time and energy on top of their regular duties, to make this magazine a reality. It is a non-profit making, non-commercial magazine, and it functions on a volunteer basis. Although it is not written by professional writers and journalists, it was recognized by official media as an outstanding collection of examples of voluntary non-professional journalism.

The first issues of UN Special covered a number of points related to staff. However, the magazine itself has evolved considerably over the years, with a glossy and professional look. Today, it has featured interviews and articles, such as interviews with the leaders of both organizations: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Director-General of the WHO Dr. Margaret Chan and other leaders in Geneva. Likewise, UN Special relates issues on staff in the field, describing the work of our colleagues on mission. The magazine continuously raises awareness to the issues of security of the colleagues working in the field and in the peace-keeping missions. It is also a means for WHO to inform its readership about the facts and recent developments related to health issues by promoting the activities and initiatives from our colleagues like the recent Ebola crisis. UN Special was the author of several projects and initiatives, among them the inauguration of the Memorial to pay tribute to the Fallen Colleague (Ariana Park, 2003).

In 2004, the International Year of Rice, UN Special prepared and published the book, in collaboration with all Permanent Missions in Geneva, “Rice is life” consisting of 300 recipes from around the world. UN Special also participates in other activities promoting environment protection (e.g. initiated the UN Green Day in 2010). On the occasion of the 60th anniversary, UN Special organized an exhibition “History through 60 years”, which was attended by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, during one of his Geneva visits.

For its 65th anniversary, UN Special decided to launch a logo, which will accompany the magazine cover page from now on throughout the jubilee year. A survey recently conducted in both organizations showed the high interest of staff; 97% of WHO staff and 83% of UNOG staff who responded to the survey read the magazine. Interesting suggestions of improvements have been made by the survey respondents which provide us with new challenges to ever improve the quality of the magazine. We thank our readers for their high appraisal and dedication. It is the most rewarding present for our 65th birthday. Remain assured that we will do our utmost to make the magazine special in the many more years to come!
OMS/WHO

Fight against corruption:

“Your beliefs don’t make you a better person, your behaviour does”

Corruption is the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development around the world. Every year US$1 trillion is paid in bribes, while an estimated US$2.6 trillion are stolen annually through corruption – a sum equivalent to more than 5% of the global GDP.

GEMMA VESTAL WITH RESEARCH ASSISTANCE FROM ANGELI VIGO AND AURELIE ABRIAL

This UN Special issue is published on the same week as International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December) which has been observed annually since the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the first legally binding international anti-corruption instrument, came into effect in December 2005.
Interrelatedness between corruption, fraud, conflict of interest, and whistle-blower protection

Corrupt actions violate rules of public office and are motivated by private gain. “Corruption covers a wide array of actions. Most organizations which fight corruption have unbundled the term, and have specified types of activities or transactions which might be deemed as corrupt practices. For example, the OECD, the Council of Europe and the UN Conventions have offences which are considered as corrupt behaviour, one of which is fraud.”

Corruption and conflicts of interest are related phenomena; they are “two sides of the same coin” Conflict of interest is where an official might potentially commit corruption, since they will be serving two masters: the public and their own personal interests. Conflicts of interest which have been inadequately identified or mismanaged may give rise to corruption.

Corruption also differs in terms of scale. “Petty corruption is when people are expected to pay bribes to get the service they are entitled to from a public employee. Whereas, “grand scale” corruption by political and business elites involves the payment of bribes to gain contracts and the purchase of political influence.”

Corruption has far-reaching effects in society. A corrupt society is one that is dysfunctional, stagnant, stunted, impedes economic growth and deters companies from investment. Corruption destroys democratic institutions intended to safeguard the welfare of the people. Scarce resources are channelled away from basic services and into the hands of a privileged few.

Why should we care about fraud, corruption, and conflict of interest?
The International Anti-Corruption Day is an opportunity to:

- think about ways to ensure that we do not become unwitting partners in a corrupt transaction or where there is a perceived conflict of interest;
- exercise vigilant due diligence in all our work transactions; and,
- be ethical and courageous enough to expose corrupt practices in our workplaces.

We all need to be aware of the rules and policies in place to safeguard against fraud, corruption, and conflicts of interest. For example, at WHO, procurement policies require offers from at least three suppliers beyond a certain amount of money. The selection process and the contracting partner must be justified in an adjudication report. The Organization also has a disclosure of interest form that contractors, inter alia, must complete to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest or even a perceived conflict of interest.

If staff doubt or suspect wrongdoing, they can request ethics advice from the WHO Office of Compliance, Risk Management and Ethics (CRE). The Department develops and advocates for policies and processes that promote and uphold the highest organizational standards, code of ethics and core values.

But if corrupt practices, such as fraud are suspected, the situation should be reported to the respective investigative body. WHO has an Office of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) as does the UN which has its own Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), established to assist the Secretary-General in fulfilling his responsibilities towards resources and staff.

WHO staff have a duty to report any reasonable suspicions of wrongdoing, to the appropriate official body, which will take the necessary action. The Organization has a whistle-blower protection policy, which sets in place a mechanism for safeguarding staff from negative repercussions.

The UN and its agencies embody the highest aspirations for all people, and the only way it can secure a peaceful and just world is if international civil servants adhere to the highest standards of conduct and integrity. This means we all have a duty to fight against corruption, fraud, and conflict of interest. Remember, “if we are not part of the solution; then we are part of the problem.” It is not enough to believe that fraud and corruption are wrong. As trusted international civil servants, we have to vigorously fight against these wrongdoings as and when they occur.

Interview with Dr. Simon Abi Najm, Head of Ardentis Dental Clinic Geneva

“Ardentis is the result of bringing together eleven dental clinics in the French-speaking Canton of Vaud, Canton of Geneva and Canton of Fribourg under the same brand name. Our clinics offer an all-encompassing multi-disciplinary approach to dental care that allows us to provide our patients with a complete range of services for adults and children. Our emergency services are open seven days a week. In providing care we make use of the newest computer technology, including digital radiology, cone-beam computer tomography, digital patient records, microscopes, computerized conceptual laboratory work. In order to offer our patients the best possible care, Ardentis clinics have high-tech equipment at their disposal and never think twice about investing in proven devices and technologies.”
Elected to defend staff rights

EVELINA RIOUKHINA
AND CRISTIAN OLAAREAN

We met with Ian Richards, Executive Secretary of the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council, on the eve of the Human Rights day and asked him how he defends staff interests, actually, how he defends human rights for staff, and what he thinks, how he operates, what are the challenges, what are the achievements.

This is the first year of you being Executive Secretary, but not the first in the Council. How is it different from your previous engagements? Are you happier being ES, or were you happier combining both – Presidency and your work? The nature of what I do hasn’t changed much. However, what has changed this year is becoming President of the Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations, which means coordinating 17 unions around the world, representing 60,000 staff, on salaries, benefits, pensions, job security, and safety.

When we speak about Human Rights, what are the most important of those rights, which you defend being in the Council?

As a representative of staff I value most those which are closely associated with labour rights. They include working conditions, pay, social protection, job security and the freedom to join a union, which are in Articles 23 and 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With staff in the field increasingly working in conflict and other dangerous locations, it is important that they get the best protection possible.

However, we need to be clear. Human rights are fine words written down on paper. Not everyone respects them or interprets them as they should; this is the reason why we must work so hard to defend them.

What do you consider as your biggest personal achievement in your long-standing struggle to defend the rights of your colleagues?

There is no personal achievement as I have discovered some wonderful colleagues along the way, both in Geneva and around the world. They are full of ideas, reactive and hard-working. Together we have achieved a number of things. These include regaining our right to be able to negotiate with the Secretary-General on our conditions of service. It also includes campaigning to improve safety for colleagues in the field. We have also pushed for a massive regularization of short-term staff, which was mostly positive, and led negotiations, eight years after permanent contracts were abolished, to obtain continuing contracts – the first contracts were received last month. In these difficult economic times, with posts being cut, we have done our best to minimize the impact on staff, with as many jobs saved as possible. We also believe staff should be properly compensated for their work. There is the general service salary survey coming up, as well as the current review of how professional compensation is to be structured.

How do you see the ideal Council?

The ideal Council is one with members who are committed to help staff rather than focusing on their own promotion. With good people, as well as training, experience, natural curiosity about the challenges facing staff, openness, honesty and hard work, the Council can get on with the job.

Will you celebrate Human Rights Day this year?

Human Rights Day is an important event as it reminds us that these exist and should be respected. However, I question the notion of celebrating it. Last year we marked the day by highlighting how the UN was better at preaching human rights, including labour rights to member countries, than at respecting these in-house. This was in relation to our campaign to successfully regain our right to negotiate with management – rights which had been taken away earlier that year. It was quite a tough campaign, we had never done anything quite so public before and I learned a lot from it.

This year will be a grim Human Rights Day. OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) faces a US$30 million hole in its extra-budgetary account. As a result, and at the time of writing, a number of valued colleagues face losing their jobs with very little warning time. We are pushing to get as much information on the situation as possible, to share this with staff and to prioritize the retention of our colleagues whatever their contract status.

What message would you like to pass to the staff?

My colleagues in the Council and I were elected to defend staff rights – rights which unfortunately we cannot take for granted. Therefore we must remain vigilant and I encourage colleagues to get in touch whenever they have concerns about their rights being eroded. We are there to act on these concerns.
An unusual UN Day Celebration

EVELINA RIOUKHINA
AND CATHERINE PECK ARIF

It has become an annual tradition to hold a celebration of the UN Day with staff gatherings and open day events. This year, following on from the recently held “Open Day Escalade” training in the Ariana Park, the Staff Council held a celebration inside the Palais des Nations, focusing on the staff.

The UN Day morning in Geneva actually started thousands of miles away in one of the holiest temples of Bhutan, with a lighting of 1000 candles in honour of the 69 years of our Organization. This poetic gesture was attended by one of the main organizers of the Geneva UN Day event, Ian Richards, Executive Secretary of the Staff Council, who happened to be there on mission. Together with other local UN staff in Bhutan, he shared with us a photo of this beautiful symbolic gesture. This set the tune for the whole day – bringing light, joy, and solemnness which also demonstrated that we are the UN family serving as one despite the distances.

Celebrations at the Palais started at noon behind the Assembly Hall with an interactive and informative presentation of different clubs and volunteer activities. Staff was at their ease, and everybody could find something in line with their interests. Participants could try their hand or master their talents at the Golf and Photography Clubs. The Golf club held a putting competition, with second place going jointly to Ms. M. Yuwaka and Ms. B. Mora-Rubio and first place to Ms. I. Berclaz-Lewis. Those stressed at work could try relaxing with the Yoga Club, and those feeling sporty could try their hand at playing badminton, table tennis, or simply learn more about the various UNOG fitness clubs. For those interested to become volunteers in their spare time, several charitable initiatives such as caring for children and education in developing countries were shown with explanations given on how to become involved. Entertainment and refreshments were also part of the event: with a live-on-stage jazz performance plus light lunch and drinks offered by the Staff Council. And of course, a giant UN birthday cake specially baked for the occasion that was cut by no other than the Acting Director-General of UNOG.

However, the celebration did not end with the cake this year, something happened that had never happened before. The Office of the Director-General organized its first ever group photo of the staff, taken at the Cour d’honneur, where the staff gathered to create a giant shape of “UN70”, thus launching the upcoming annual celebration for the jubilee of our organization.

The UN Charter was ratified 24 October 1945, officially considered as the day of the establishment of the United Nations. It opened with the words “We the peoples of the United Nations”, and today, almost 70 years later, this photo of all UN staff together demonstrated that “We the staff of the United Nations” are one big UN family.
The fascinating journey of ilearn

ilearn is a simple web-based platform on which any WHO staff member can register for learning. Launched in WHO headquarters in Geneva in September 2013, it was rolled out to the WHO regions of the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, South-East Asia and Western Pacific in November 2014. Thus ilearn hopes to address the learning needs of over 7,000 staff across 154 countries and six regional offices.

What is ilearn?
“ilearn is intended to become WHO’s central hub of learning and development” noted Mahen Sandrasagren, Coordinator of the Global Talent Management Team. “This global learning platform is designed to effectively support the Corporate Framework for Learning and Development by improving the administration and timely delivery of centralised and diversified training”.

The ilearn platform provides a comprehensive supporting service to deliver training in an efficient and low-cost way to individuals, teams and departments, both instructor-led and self-paced. It now offers a growing course list of over 60 e-learning courses. These cover a gamut of fields that are related to the work of WHO staff, such as communications, management and leadership, IT training, compliance training, and induction for new staff. ilearn allows for the rollout of programmes that were previously too expensive to offer on a face-to-face basis, particularly on a global scale. A key tool to enhance competencies of staff in an unobtrusive, self-paced way, it also supports quality monitoring and evaluation.

Human resource and IT specialists based in WHO Headquarters worked together to provide access and support for ilearn across the Organization. The aim was to bring the best personal learning experience to WHO staff members and through ilearn’s innovative software. An interesting feature is the ease of navigating through the system to find courses, never more than 3 clicks away.

ilearn Ambassadors
There is an army of “regional ilearn ambassadors” to help create awareness about ilearn as well as provide support to individual users in the regional and country offices, making the experience truly global for WHO staff. ilearn ambassadors try to be client oriented, liaising with both management and users alike.

Staff take to it readily
Feedback from staff in the country offices attests to the utility of ilearn. Says Dr. Myo Paing from Myanmar: “It is a wonderful site loaded with extremely useful and most updated information on SDL, HR and many other related topics. Congratulations!”

Very soon, ilearn’s blended learning programmes will bring together the best of face-to-face and online learning to allow users to continue to benefit from the more traditional approach while also taking to the new modern approach of online learning. There is also planned collaboration with users via forums, pulse surveys and online questionnaires – all via the ilearn tool – to really gauge the response and further customize the system and its training accordingly. Future projects will involve the mapping of learning pathways, links with performance management, accredited training as well as tailoring content to suit specific target audiences within WHO. Also, with a drive towards knowledge-sharing and peer learning, ilearn ‘Connect’ will be developed during 2015, a social learning component within ilearn where users will be able to participate in online communities and share their experience with peers, combining learning with social networking.

New media and new platforms
ilearn does not stop at traditional software platforms. The platform will soon be made compatible with the myriad devices that are being used across the Organization, and ilearn’s learning content will be greatly influenced by this. For example, an e-learning course delivered via a desktop would not have the same impact when accessed via a mobile device. m-learning seeks to convey smaller chunks of information, in shorter amounts of time, allowing the user to access learning while on the move, anytime and anywhere.
“Cutting through the Jargon”, to further the understanding of the Organization’s work in the field of global health and to better communicate with its audience worldwide.

This is particularly relevant during an emergency situation or a disease outbreak such as the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa, where WHO’s technical advice needs to be fully and widely understood for the campaign to be effective. However, simpler language needs to be balanced carefully with protecting its technical authority – i.e. it remains vital that accuracy is not compromised in the effort to simplify.

A team of communication specialists were commissioned to help reduce the use of jargon and “technical speak” and replace them with “everyday language”, thereby improving the communication skills of WHO staff. A series of workshops were undertaken to engage staff in talking about their work to experts and non-experts alike, and thus began a process of orienting them to techniques they can use to create jargon-free messages.

Key scientific principles were explained showing how our brains process information in two ways – through intuition and cognition. Intuition is our gut reaction, our first impressions and emotional response. Cognition is weighing alternatives, making calculations and seeking out new information and other mental tasks that come into play when we “stop and think”. Most of our judgments are made through intuition because it requires less mental energy than cognition. Jargon requires a shift in mental gears from intuition to cognition, to work out what the unfamiliar words or phrases mean. Unless the audience is really focused and tuned in, they will tune out the jargon without making the effort to understand the meaning of your words. If your audience doesn’t understand your message, then it certainly won’t believe it either. This is true not only for unfamiliar language, but also complex ideas and visuals, which hamper understanding and trust. So the next time you sit down to write a report or prepare a Powerpoint presentation, keep the following tips in mind:

• Use words that are memorable, motivating and easy to process
• Use active verbs that demonstrate people taking action
• Use powerful language that creates emotional reactions
• Use familiar terms, which are easy to understand and evoke visual images
• Use language that is easy to remember and repeat.

“The jargon-busting workshop was a great success and indeed very timely. It’s not until you actually stop and look at our rhetoric objectively that you realize how much we use jargon” said WHO staff member Fabia Lonquist who led the workshop in the Western Pacific Region. “Not only did we really enjoy the sessions, we also found ourselves laughing at the jargonistic expressions that no WHO report can be without”. We even created a jar into which we put our “favourite” words that we want to eliminate from our communication with each other and the outside world – and we called that “JAR GONE!”

If you would like further information about “jargon busting”, send an email to media@who.int.
I Had a Black Dog,
his name was depression

Have you ever suffered from depression? Do you know someone who has? Chances are that you answered yes to one of these questions. If you did, you know how debilitating the condition can be, to the point that the sufferer becomes incapable of doing even the simplest everyday tasks. This is the story of WHO’s most successful video.

ALISON BRUNIER, WHO
Someone who is familiar with the devastating effect that depression can have on your life is writer and illustrator Matthew Johnstone. Although Matthew had suffered from depression on and off since his late 20s, it wasn’t until the tragic event of 9/11 in New York, where he was working at the time, that he had the idea for his first book, I Had a Black Dog. This came from the realisation that life is short and we never know what’s around the corner.

The “black dog” of depression
The term “black dog”, as a metaphor for depression, was popularized by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, to describe his own experience with the condition, yet the metaphor is thought to go back to ancient times. Matthew explains “I have nothing against black dogs, in fact I love all dogs, but I find this metaphor a useful one. It depicts something that is separate or different to our “normal” selves. It symbolizes a part of our emotional and mental wellbeing that we may temporarily have lost control of. Just like a real misbehaving dog, this condition requires discipline, engagement, patience and ultimately self-love and understanding to bring it under control.”

I had a Black Dog is a slim volume of drawings that tells the story of what it is like to live with depression and gives practical advice on how to overcome it. Following its publication, the book rapidly became a bestseller in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Matthew’s native New Zealand.
Back in 2011, the book came to the attention of the Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organization, Dr. Shekhar Saxena. Always on the lookout for simple ideas and partnerships that would help reach people around the world with practical advice on mental health, he immediately saw the potential of this simple story, told with compassion and humour. Dr. Saxena comments “What is different about Matthew’s book is that it strikes an emotional chord while still getting the facts right. It touches your heart. It takes a very skilled communicator to do that”.

The start of a partnership
This was the starting point of a collaboration that resulted in WHO’s most successful video ever. The video *I Had a Black Dog* was released on the Organization’s YouTube channel for World Mental Health Day in 2012. Christopher Black, head of WHO’s audio-visual team, points out “Within the space of 14 months, *I Had a Black Dog* became the most viewed video on our YouTube channel, with some 220,000 views.

Not only this, but the engagement with viewers, with pertinent, thoughtful and articulate debate and comments, was far beyond anything that we had seen before.”

In the last weeks of 2013, Christopher discovered, initially from a link on a friend’s Facebook page, that the video was gaining a lot of attention through other channels, specifically the website Upworthy and the UK mental health charity, Mind. Through the reach of these two organizations and an additional push on WHO’s Twitter channel, within a week the video had received over 1.5 million views. For the video production team, always keeping an eye out for the great idea that has the potential to “go viral”, this was a huge achievement. As at time of writing, the video has received over 4 million views, from about 200 countries, with close to 1500 comments.

A video for carers too
Keen to build on this success, Dr. Saxena asked Matthew to collaborate on a second project, to produce an animated version of Matthew’s follow-up to *I Had a Black Dog*. This second book is called *Living With a Black Dog* and was written with Matthew’s wife Ainsley. The audience for this second book is people living with or caring for someone suffering from depression. Narrated by Ainsley, the video provides advice for carers on what to do, what not to do, and where to go for help. Since its launch in October this year, the video has received over 100,000 views. Following high demand, both videos are now being translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

To watch *I Had a Black Dog*, and Living with a Black Dog: https://www.youtube.com/who
For more information about mental health: http://www.who.int/topics/mental_health/en/
TEDx comes to UN Geneva!

On 11 December 2014, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) will host TEDxPlaceDesNations, an exceptional event and the first of such kind to be organized by the United Nations in Geneva.

MILADIN BOGETIĆ,
UN INFORMATION SERVICE

What are TED and TEDx all about? TED, which stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design, is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. It started as a four-day conference in California almost 30 years ago, and has subsequently grown and expanded to support world-changing ideas through multiple initiatives. World TED Conference is held every year, and gives a chance to leading thinkers and doers from around the globe to speak on a diverse mix of topics.

In the same spirit of Ideas Worth Spreading, TEDx is a program of local, independently organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. While TED provides general rules and guidance and issues necessary licenses for TEDx programs, individual TEDx events, such as our own – TEDxPlaceDesNations, are fully self-organized and self-financed.

TEDxPlaceDesNations is organized by UNOG in partnership with ten other international organizations based here in Geneva: UNHCR, UNCTAD, UNISDR, ITU, IPU, ITC, WIPO, WHO, UPU and CERN, and with the generous support of the Canton de Genève. It is envisioned as a multi-disciplinary celebration of the three pillars of action of International Geneva: Peace, Rights, and Well-Being, and the impact Geneva has on the world, all in the context of the Perception Change Project spearheaded by the Director-General.

Our eleven extraordinary speakers, innovators, humanitarians, entrepreneurs, scientists and peacemakers, who come from ten countries across five continents, have been put forward by the participating organizations. They will address topics as varied as fighting for women’s rights in Afghanistan, building cities resilient to disasters, and using ancient traditions to create modern fashion. TEDxPlaceDesNations will thus celebrate and share ideas born, nurtured and developed in Geneva that have a profound impact on every person, around the globe, every day.

While more than 1,000 people will attend the event in person in the Assembly Hall on December 11, many more will be watching it via live webcast at the website www.tedxplacedesnations.ch. Our colleagues in Geneva and elsewhere who did not manage to register will thus be able to follow the event in real time online. A number of so-called “viewing parties” will also be organized around the world, including New York, Rio de Janeiro, Brussels, Copenhagen, Kiev, Lyon and St. Gallen. That way, the message of International Geneva and the impact it has on the world will be amplified across the meridians and time zones.

On 11 December 2014, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) will host TEDxPlaceDesNations, an exceptional event and the first of such kind to be organized by the United Nations in Geneva.
ONU/UN

MARKO STANOVIC,
UNSW PRESIDENT AND ALFRED DE ZAYAS, CO-FOUNDER
OF UNSW AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF “EX TEMPORE”

On 14 October 2014 a vibrant and well-attended Library Event was held in the great conference hall on the first floor of the library under the grand Le Rêve de la Paix fresco by Henrik Sørensen, a gift of Norway to the League of Nations on the eve of the Second World War.

Daniel de Roulet, Swiss novelist and laureate of multiple literary awards, delivered a keynote address in French on the noble vocation of writers as bridges between cultures and nations, the peace-making function of literature and the role of libraries in promoting a culture of peace. De Roulet’s lecture was followed by a lively “Q & A” session in which many in the audience participated. The ideals of UNESCO’s Constitution and of the Charter of PEN International¹ were highlighted, as, indeed, United Nations Society of Writers entertains synergies with many other literary associations including PEN, the Société génévoise des écrivains, the Société vaudoise des écrivains, the Société valaisaine des écrivains and the Geneva Writers Group.

The event was opened by Dr. Sigrun Habermann-Box, representing the UN library, who briefly noted the history of the United Nations Society of Writers (UNSW), which was founded on 14 August 1989 by Leonor Sampaio (Brazil), Sergio Chaves (Argentina) and Alfred de Zayas (USA). For 25 years now the society of writers has been tapping UN literary talent, which expresses itself in original essays, short-stories, poetry, drama and aphorisms in all 6 UN languages, and which has generated so far with the generous support of the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council, 24 volumes of the UN literary journal “Ex Tempore” with cover-art by Diego Oyarzun Reyes – all 24 volumes handsomely exhibited in two vitrines. The other vitrines prepared by the Library include letters, memoranda and books related to the establishment of United Nations and its pursuit of peace.

The anniversary Volume XXV of Ex Tempore is now being assembled and will be published later this year. This multilingual UN literary journal is kept not only in the UN library, but also in the Bibliothèque de la Cité (Geneva), the Swiss National Library (Berne), the Mediathèque in Brig, the United States Library of Congress, the British Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale Suisse, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek and the Biblioteca Nacional de España.

UN staffers, retired staff members, fellows and interns are invited to submit their “œuvres” before 10 November to Marko Stanovic (marko.stanovic@unctad.org), to Carla Edelenbos, Vice-President UNSW (cedelenbos@ohchr.org) or to Alfred de Zayas (zayas@bluewin.ch). Submissions received after that date will be considered for inclusion in volume XXVI.

The Library event was scheduled to last from 1 to 2 p.m., but actually lasted until 4 p.m., opportunity being given to the audience to read their original poems, essays and short stories. A verre de l’amitié with delectable finger-food followed during which UN staffers and guests continued talking literature in all good humour, so far away from boring resolutions and technical reports.

¹PEN is a worldwide association, with a membership of prominent literary writers and editors.
**Time to hit the slopes!**

Skiing with the International Ski Club (known in French as SCIG) means you can really get the most out of your time on the mountain. Say goodbye to staring at the plan of the slopes wondering which route to take, and know that you’re in good hands with an experienced instructor who is familiar with the resort. All of the instructors have passed a comprehensive training course, which hones their skills and experience in group leadership and route choice, and educates them on snow science, conditions and mountain safety.

Whether you are an improving skier or love adventurous off-piste skiing, the Ski Club provides the opportunity to ski with other members of similar ability and aspiration, and every weekend is a different resort, so you can pick the ones which suit you best.

In 2015 the Club will celebrate 60 years of winter and summer sporting activities throughout the Geneva region. Initially restricted to members and former members of international organizations, the SCIG quickly opened up to people from other professional backgrounds, acting as a bridge between the international and the local community in Geneva. A survey taken a few years ago revealed over 500 members from 45 different countries, confirming that sharing a common passion is one of the best ways to integrate into a new environment!

Today, in addition to downhill and cross country skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing the Club offers opportunities in the summer months for hiking, mountain biking, rafting, and via ferrata plus many more recreational and social activities. The Club’s committee members are already planning the 60th birthday celebrations on a cruise ship on the lake, taking in the breath-taking views of the Alps beyond the city.

A full programme of winter excursions can be found on the website, as well as details about its many evening activities such as night skiing with a Swiss fondue in Saint-Cergue (in February) and a “Black & White” dinner dance (in March).

For further details, drop into the Restaurant at the Varembé Swimming pool Avenue Giuseppe-Motta 46 on a Thursday evening from 18.00 to 19.30hrs where you can meet with the ski instructors, get further information and sign up for the next weekend trip.

Yearly membership for adults is CHF 50 per year and CHF 25 per year for children up to 16 years old.

For more information, www.scig.ch
Un atlas historique pour le pays de Genève
La frontière franco-suisse a-t-elle toujours été comme ça?

CHRISTINA BRANDES BARBIER

Certes, plus personne n’y fait vraiment attention; matin et soir des milliers de personnes la traversent. Cela fait partie de la routine. Les accords de Schengen l’ont rendu obsolète. Elle est pourtant toujours là : la frontière. Ceux qui sont originaires de ce territoire (Gessiens, Savoyards, Genevois, Vaudois) ou qui l’habitent depuis longtemps s’en sont accommodés au point parfois de l’oublier. Pour les autres elle est une bizarrerie.

Qu’est-ce-qui peut bien justifier que Genève se retrouve reliée à la Suisse par une bande de 4 km de large… mais est frontalière avec la France sur 103 km? Pourquoi la frontière passe-t-elle parfois au milieu d’un champ… et non au sommet du Jura ou du Salève? Et c’est quoi cette zone franche qui permet aux agriculteurs savoyards et gessiens de livrer leurs productions en Suisse, sans que cela ne passe pour des importations de produits étrangers?

C’est à toutes ces questions que répondent Claude Barbier et Pierre-François Schwarz, auteurs d’un récent ouvrage intitulé « Atlas historique du pays de Genève1 ». Ils ne se contentent pas d’aborder la seule situation actuelle, étrange certes, mais moins compliquée qu’elle ne le fut dans le passé. Ainsi, au XVIIIe siècle, pour aller de Genève à Lausanne, il fallait passer à Versoix (jusque-là tout le monde nous suit)… village situé en terre française!


C’est autour de l’an mil, alors que le roi de Bourgogne donne des droits politiques à l’évêque de Genève – à moins qu’il ne s’agisse d’une spoliation – que se dessine, d’événement en événement – explicités par les auteurs – la séparation de Genève et de son arrière-pays. Ils parlent également de l’Escalade, l’épisode le mieux connu des Genevois (le seul?) qu’on aurait tort de prendre pour une guerre entre… la France et la Suisse!

Sans pour autant jouer aux devins, Claude Barbier et Pierre-François Schwarz estiment que si les frontières ont bougé dans le passé, elles bougeront dans le futur: ils en prennent le pari. Chiche?


© Claude Barbier
MEG the Magnificent

“Vous n’imaginez pas tout ce qu’il est possible de faire au MEG”
“You just cannot imagine all that it is possible to do at the MEG”

*This is the slogan of the new Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève (MEG).*

SARAH JORDAN, SDLS, UNOG

Just four years ago, I interviewed Boris Wastiau, Director of the MEG for UN Special¹. At that time, an international architectural competition and referendum to decide the future of the museum were imminent. An extension and renovation project was chosen from the 49 entries submitted. 67% of Geneva’s citizens voted for it and the metamorphosis began. Four years of construction works later, on budget (68 million CHF) and on-time (Switzerland!) the new Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève (MEG) was inaugurated on 31 October 2014 with three days of celebrations – live performances, concerts, happenings, visits of the museum and exhibitions. Here a workshop, there a debate, a performance or a story-telling...

The building

The former ethnography museum was a converted school in which the biggest room was just 58 m². Four years later, the MEG boasts more than 2,000m² of exhibition space, which houses exhibits and welcomes visitors. The competition winners, architects Graber and Pulver from Zurich, proposed a solution that preserved and enhanced the existing environment. The district is situated between the Swiss Broadcasting Company (RTS), the University and the fashionable Quartier des Bains with its MAMCO (Musée d’Art Moderne Contemporain) and art galleries, yet possesses working class roots and idiosyncrasies. A 21st century museum of culture and cultures has now taken up residence at Boulevard Carl Vogt and, if the effervescence and long queues it generated during the inaugural weekend are anything to go by, it would appear to have already found its place.

Sami Kanaan, Mayor of Geneva, expressed this vocation for the MEG at the opening ceremony: “a living hub of encounters and exchanges – a new cathedral in our contemporary society, this museum symbolizes people from elsewhere who become people from here.”

The overall harmony of the different components, ancient and modern, is maintained with the beautifully landscaped esplanade, raised to reach street level, beneath which most of the new museum is to be found – two levels for the permanent and temporary exhibitions and cultural activities. The new premises comply with the highest specifications in terms of ecology, conservation, safety and accessibility. The MEG is a bilingual museum – everything is labelled in English and French.
The permanent collection – The archives of human diversity “A historical approach, with no taboos”

The introductory section to the permanent display explains how the MEG collection was built up. A huge rectangular table “Noah’s Ark” presents strange and exotic objects, valuable art pieces, ambivalent artifacts picked up by missionaries, diplomatic gifts received in the course of international relations (some originating from the Société des Nations) and items collected by scientists on fieldwork. The length of one full wall of this ante-chamber is dominated by a video mural of the sea by the contemporary French painter, photographer and film-maker Ange Leccia.

One then enters the proper museum, organized continent by continent, and all five of them: Asia, the Americas, Europe, Africa and Oceania – which is rare for a museum of anthropology or world culture – the more common name for ethnography museums in the Anglo-Saxon world. Selected from a collection of 80,000, 1,033 objects are presented here, representing 1,500 civilizations. They cannot claim to represent the cultural diversity of the entire world, but they act as remarkable messengers.


The Mochica kingdom dates back to over eight centuries before the famous Inca Empire and was contemporary to the Roman Empire in Europe and the Mayas in Mexico. The tomb of the Lord of Ucupe was discovered in 2008 on the north coast of Peru. The Mochica did not write and therefore made great use of symbolism, taking their inspiration from what they found on the sea shore and around them: the octopus, the sea horse, the spider and the owl. This exhibition is a world première and the ceramic, gold and silver treasures lent by the Peruvian Ministry of Culture and the Ethnography museums of Stuttgart and Berlin give a glimpse of a luxurious culture regarded as one of the most flourishing and complex of its time. The MEG will organize 1 or 2 temporary exhibitions per year together with cultural and scientific events.

Cultural Mediation

The MEG has the ambition of being a meeting point and a melting pot for visitors of all ages and from all cultures. Alongside the exhibitions, a full programme of cultural activities is on offer. Schools, families, senior citizens, the under-privileged, the disabled; nobody is excluded at the MEG. The mediation team encourages, invents, imagines and designs many events, supports and displays, in order to diversify approaches, promote traditional and current forms of expression and think about mankind today. The experiences it offers may be aesthetic, amusing, or educational and include guided tours, introductory tours, visits with an artist, interactive projects for teenagers, activities for preschoolers, treasure hunts, birthday outings, training courses and workshops. The MEG is a museum for the whole family.

The large auditorium, equipped with a stage, a cinema screen, a control room and state-of-the art audiovisual and acoustic equipment is also a new venue of choice for Geneva at which all kinds of events are planned: storytelling and dance performances, concerts, stage shows, lectures, screenings and debates during prestigious Geneva film festivals such as Black Movie, Filmar, the International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights (FIFDH).

Totem and eMEG – 2 essential tools

Totem is the MEG’s thrice-yearly publication (January, May, September) that gives information about everything that is going on at the museum as well as publishing more in-depth articles on events, exhibitions, etc. It is free at the museum in paper format and available on line.

eMEG is the MEG’s interactive platform and a remarkable tool. It gives access to everything the museum has to offer through all digital tools, tablets and smartphones. It accompanies the permanent exhibition and all temporary exhibitions, and provides access to databases, publications, the media centre and library. It podcasts lectures and suggests itineraries tailored to each audience. It also enables visitors to design their own itineraries. Visitors can use their own device or borrow one at the welcome desk.  ■

1 www.unspecial.org/UNS698/122.html.
For further details: www.meg-geneve.ch
Décembre 2014-Janvier 2015

TEXTE & PHOTOS CLAUDE MAILLARD

Commencé au printemps 2014, mon périple sur le chemin de Stevenson connaissait une fin prématurée à Florac lorsque mon compagnon de route se blessait à quelques kilomètres de la sous-préfecture de la Lozère (récits dans les UN Special d’octobre et de novembre 2014). Contactée pour lui raconter ma mésaventure, Gaëlle, l’assistante de développement tourisme à l’association qui gère le chemin (www.chemin-stevenson.org), se voyait navrée de ce qui m’était arrivé, à moi et à mon âne. C’est vrai que j’avais omis de préciser que mon compagnon s’appelait Bernard, qu’il était retraité de l’ONU, et qu’il ne s’agissait pas du compagnon à quatre pattes qui transporte généralement les bagages des randonneurs !

Au cœur des Cévennes

En mai nous avions quitté Florac sous la pluie et enveloppé par le brouillard… et quatre mois plus tard nous retrouvons la ville située au confluent du Tarn et du Tarnon sous les feux d’un bel orage. Le lendemain, toute la vallée se couvre d’un manteau de brume, mais bien vite le soleil prendra le dessus et nous accompagnera tout au long de notre randonnée.

Un vieux pont de pierre permet de franchir le Tarnon et le sentier s’engage alors dans une magnifique forêt de châtaigniers dominant des gorges abruptes où coule la Minente que nous traversons à Saint-Julien-d’Arpaon. C’est l’automne, le feuillage des châtaigniers commence à jaunir et les bouges hérisssées de piquants sont prêtes à libérer leurs fruits qui font la richesse de la gastronomie régionale. Un peu à l’écart, isolée sur un coteau, Jean Christophe Barthes élève une centaine de chèvres. Mais la terre est pauvre et ne suffit pas à nourrir les paysans. Du coup, certaines fermes, comme celle de La Borie, proposent le gîte et le couvert et permettent même aux randonneurs de participer à la fabrication du fromage dont le typique pélarson des Cévennes.

L’ancienne voie de chemin de fer reconvertie en un agréable chemin de randonnée, avec de nombreux tunnels, permet d’acéder à la gare de Cassagnas transformée en gîte d’étape. C’est là qu’Annabel et Magali nous reçoivent chaleureusement à l’« Espace Stevenson » (contact@relais-stevenson.fr) où nous aurons droit aux spécialités maison comme la tarte aux cinq épices, la saucisse aux herbes, le moelleux à la châtaigne ou la coupétade, sorte de pain perdu dont la recette a été élaborée il y a bien longtemps par leurs grands-mères.

Le château de Calberte
Rassasiés et reposés, nous emprunterons une vieille route royale bordée de bruyères roses dans lesquelles les araignées ont tissé d’immenses toiles couvertes de rosée. De là on devine la vallée plongée dans la brume. Au passage du Col de la Pierre Plantée, le parcours qui dévale sur Saint-Germain-de-Calberte devient plus rocailleux et le climat plus méditerranéen. Les fayards qui constituaient la forêt ont fait place aux pins maritimes. Ici, la crête de la montagne forme la ligne de partage des eaux. Celle qui s’écoule sur le flanc sud se déverse dans la mer Méditerranée et celle qui ruisselle au nord rejoint la Garonne avant de se jeter dans l’Atlantique.

Robert Louis Stevenson était surtout connu pour ses romans d’aventures comme «L’île au trésor». Peu de gens savent qu’il était également un grand voyageur. Il a traversé l’Amérique, a sillonné le Pacifique en bateau et a aussi parcouru le centre de la France en 1878 et en a tiré un livre «Voyage avec un âne dans les Cévennes».

Sur le chemin de Stevenson

(3e partie)

Robert Louis Stevenson était surtout connu pour ses romans d’aventures comme «L’île au trésor». Peu de gens savent qu’il était également un grand voyageur. Il a traversé l’Amérique, a sillonné le Pacifique en bateau et a aussi parcouru le centre de la France en 1878 et en a tiré un livre «Voyage avec un âne dans les Cévennes».

TEXTE & PHOTOS CLAUDE MAILLARD

Le petit train à vapeur qui permet d’emmener les touristes à Anduze pour découvrir la bambouseraie unique en Europe.
L’arrivée à Saint-Germain-de-Calberte permet de découvrir l’un des bourgs les plus typiques de la région qui s’étage sur une série de terrasses qui dégringolent jusqu’au Gardon dont la source est dans les environs. Au fond de la vallée profondément encaissée, au sommet d’un piton, se dresse le château de Calberte auquel on accède par un sentier taillé dans la roche. Depuis un demi-siècle Daniel et Irène Darnas ont passé tout leur temps libre à sa restauration. Et lorsque l’on voit les photos des ruines dont ils ont héritées, il faudrait plutôt parler d’une reconstruction tant le travail a été titanesque ! Mentionné dès 1092 dans les textes, Calberte était l’un des nombreux châteaux féodaux des vallées cévenoles. Contrôlé successivement par les familles d’Anduze et de Budos, il a été abandonné à la fin du XIVe siècle avant de tomber dans l’oubli. Sans la passion et l’acharnement du couple Darnas, aidé par leurs enfants, jamais ce joyau n’aurait revu le jour. Des fouilles archéologiques ont également permis de découvrir des vestiges de maisons construites au pied des remparts. Mais la tâche n’est pas terminée et beaucoup de pierres sont encore à assembler pour achever l’édifice. Pour un demi-siècle Daniel Darnas, ciseleur-orfèvre de profession expose ses œuvres dans le donjon du château qui date du XIIe siècle. Quant à sa charmante épouse, elle saura captiver ses hôtes en leur proposant de faire le tour du propriétaire.

Adieu Modestine !
Sans Modestine qui va trimbaler son énorme paquetage, Robert Louis Stevenson n’aurait jamais pu mener à bien son aventure. Mais, arrivé à Saint-Jean-du-Gard, il devra se séparer de celle qui pendant douze journées avait été son intime compagnon. Examinée par un palefrenier, son ânesse sera en effet déclarée inapte à continuer le voyage. Voulant rejoindre Alès, c’est en diligence que l’écrivain terrinera le chemin. Aujourd’hui, Saint-Jean-du-Gard ne présente pas trop d’intérêt. La soie fit la richesse de la région mais la concurrence des fibres artificielles, puis de celles venues d’Asie, plongea la cité cévenole dans le déclin à partir du milieu du XIXe siècle. Heureusement, un antique train à vapeur, qui relie la ville à Anduze et son fameux jardin botanique, dont la bambouseraie est unique en Europe, apporte un peu d’animation.

Avec le passage du Col Saint-Pierre, la fatigue se fait de plus en plus sentir et l’envie d’en terminer est forte. Mais une trentaine de kilomètres de sentiers parfois piégeux, avec de fortes dénivelées, reste encore à parcourir pour atteindre Alès. Exténués, nous trébuchons à plusieurs reprises et devons rester très vigilants pour ne pas nous blesser. Après avoir longé les ruines du château de Sauvage et traversé les anciennes mines à ciel ouvert de fer et de zinc de Trépeloup, nous apercevons enfin la capitale cévenole. Edifié sur les berges du Gardon, au pied de la colline de l’Ermitage, Alès (41 000 habitants) est une ville très agréable où il fait bon flâner le long de ses grands espaces piétonniers ombragés de platanes. Avec ses maisons aux couleurs pastel, la cité possède un cachet méridional indéniable.
Musée Rath – Gustave Courbet: les années suisses
Créativité en exil

PHILIPPE DEHALU
Connaissez-vous La Tour-de-Peilz, cette petite ville au bord du Léman, entre Vevey et Montreux? C’est là que le peintre français Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) passa les dernières années de sa vie et mourut.

Le Musée Rath, Place de Neuve à Genève, propose une très belle exposition de ce dernier épisode douloureux de la vie de cet artiste majeur. Intitulée « Gustave Courbet: les années suisses », elle présente quelques 70 œuvres de cette période, des documents relatifs à ce séjour et quelques œuvres inédites dont le très beau portrait : « La jeune Irlandaise ».

Courbet est un voisin de la Suisse, né à Orsans en Franche-Comté toute proche, il la connaît relativement bien, y ayant séjourné auprès d’amis ou l’ayant traversée au cours de ses voyages. Monté à Paris très jeune, peintre réputé et apprécié, invité de toutes les grandes expositions d’art contemporain, il devient le chef de file de la peinture réaliste qui tourne le dos au romantisme et à ses conventions académiques, et ouvre la voie à l’impressionnisme et plus tard au cubisme. Son réalisme peut être qualifié d’intime, subtil, sensible…. Jusqu’à la tragique Commune de Paris et sa terrible répression!

Sympathisant de la Commune, il devient même le « ministre de la culture » du gouvernement révolutionnaire. Dès le début de 1870, avant le début de l’insurrection, en pleine guerre franco-prussienne, il demande le déplacement de la Colonne Vendôme, symbole des victoires de Napoléon Ier, vers un lieu mieux approprié, plus « militaire ». Les Communards iront plus loin, détruisant la Colonne. Après la défaite de la Commune, il est tenu responsable de cette destruction, condamné à la prison et à payer la reconstruction. Libéré, il s’auto-exile en Suisse pour éviter la ruine, et s’installe à La Tour-de-Peilz.1 Il va coucher sur ses toiles les paysages des environs, les vues des Alpes et ses splendides Dents-du-Midi, le Lac Léman… Ses représentations des montagnes traduisent l’enfermement de l’exil, celles du Léman la nostalgie de la côte normande. Ses « marines » aux ciels immenses, annoncent déjà l’impressionnisme de la fin de ce XIXe siècle.

C’est à La Tour-de-Peilz qu’il s’éteindra le 31 décembre 1877, à l’âge de 58 ans, le jour où il devait payer la première annuité du coût de la reconstruction de la Colonne Vendôme…

Renseignements pratiques :
Au Musée Rath jusqu’au 4 janvier 2015
http://institutions.ville-geneve.ch/fr/mah/

1 François Dupeyron a consacré un de ses romans à cet épisode de la vie de Courbet : « Le grand Soir » paru chez Actes Sud
Décembre 2014-Janvier 2015 | 47

**Message de la rédactrice en chef**

Vous aimeriez partager votre opinion sur le magazine et son contenu ?

N’hésitez plus et écrivez-nous !

Nous serions heureux de recevoir votre avis.

Les plus pertinents, les plus intéressants, les plus originaux seront publiés dans le magazine.

Si le succès est au rendez-vous, le magazine comportera à l’avenir une rubrique « nos lecteurs nous écrivent ».

Et maintenant, à vos plumes !

Adressez vos commentaires à :

Laurence Vercammen, rédactrice en chef – UN Special
20, avenue Appia – 1211 Genève 27 – Suisse
Par courrier électronique: unspecial@who.int

**Message from the editor-in-chief**

Would you like to share your opinion about UN Special and its contents ?

Write to us !

We will be glad to hear from you.

The most interesting, relevant, or even ingenious responses will be published in the magazine.

We are also thinking of a regular feature with the messages from our readers.

Now, put pen to paper !

Send your thoughts to :

Laurence Vercammen, editor-in-chief – UN Special
20, avenue Appia – 1211 Genève 27 – Switzerland
By email: unspecial@who.int

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*Magazine of the international civil servants of the United Nations at Geneva and of the World Health Organization*

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