



**Director:** Professor Katrin Kohl  
**Coordinators:** Dr Charlotte Ryland  
Dr Madeleine Brook

**Email:** [ogn@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ogn@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)  
**www.oxford-german-network.ox.ac.uk**

## Oxford German Network: Report 2012 – 2013

The Oxford German Network was launched as an initiative of the Modern Languages Faculty's German department on 26 September 2012, European Day of Languages. The launch was preceded by a period of preparatory work by the Director and the Coordinator, Dr Charlotte Ryland, who was appointed as a Waynflete Intern in May 2012 by Magdalen College School, one of our Founding Partners. The establishment of the initiative was announced throughout the day on Radio Oxford.

The design and establishment of the website were generously funded by our Founding Partner BMW Group Plant Oxford. The commitment and creativity of the Faculty's Web Developer Linda Godden and the OGN team enabled the website to go live on 26 September. Adding and updating content and refining the design has continued to occupy much of the team's time. Alongside our presence on the Internet, we maintain a Facebook page and a Twitter account. The MCS-funded Coordinator continues to be key to all OGN activities and provides a vital active link between the University German department and local schools, ensuring that OGN activities meet school needs. Dr Madeleine Brook joined the team as an additional Coordinator when additional funding became available. Facebook has taken on an increasingly important role and the OGN page has now been incorporated as a live feed on the website home page, with the Administrator Dr Alexandra Lloyd taking responsibility for postings.

A central forum was established with termly meetings to which all teachers in Oxford and Oxfordshire are invited. These were hosted by our Founding Partner Jesus College and provided a fruitful opportunity for teachers from different types of school to make contact and exchange ideas, as well as a sounding board for exploring possibilities for cooperation between the secondary and tertiary sector. The meetings and other discussions with teachers generated plans for events and addressed issues of common concern (e.g. the "A\*" issue", which the Director raised with exam boards). They also yielded the idea of a Teaching Resource Exchange, which will be launched in 2013-14.

OGN organised a number of events in the course of the year. A visit to the film *Barbara* at the Phoenix Cinema was a sell-out even after the cinema moved the screening to their bigger theatre, and it was followed by discussion in small groups led by our excellent Undergraduate Ambassadors. A Christmas Biscuits event for Year 8 and Year 9 pupils hosted by MCS proved very popular with pupils from six local schools and was preceded by 'bake-offs' in some schools. Participants brought biscuits they had baked to German recipes provided on the website. They all received a certificate, and there were competitions for the tastiest, the most visually appealing and the most original biscuits, as well as for the best Christmas decoration. Radley College organised a lively social with 'speed-dating' and a 'Kneipenquiz'. Later in the academic year, Jesus College was the venue for a five-week German Reading Group designed for students in Years 11 and 12 from schools in the area. In advance, participants read set texts by key writers from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries and then, under the guidance of members of the University of Oxford's German department, came together with OGN Undergraduate Ambassadors to discuss what they had read.

Cooperation with the City of Oxford resulted in the OGN being involved in the organisation of Bonn Week 2013, when Oxford hosted over 200 visitors from its twin city. OGN contributed to the Treasure Hunt and set up a stall in Gloucester Green at the 'Burgerfest' on the occasion of the Lord Mayor's Parade on 2 June 2013. The Goethe-Institut kindly provided an exhibition of posters featuring motifs from Grimms' Fairy Tales for the foyer of the Old Fire Station.



*Networking in action: OGN team members and Bonner Stadtsoldaten at Bonn Week*

A major initiative was the launch of the annual Oxford German Olympiad, a national competition involving participants from a wide range of age groups and schools. It is intended to encourage activities beyond the curriculum without putting pressure on teachers. The main theme will change each year. The first round focused on the Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales, first published in 1812; it included 9 individual competitions. Business software company SAP donated the prize for a further competition, which invited ideas for 'Networking in German'. There were well over 500 participants in all. The challenging administration of the scheme was mastered by the team with huge commitment. Members of the German department generously gave their time to judge the competition. It culminated in a prize-giving event that was reported in the press, including the German press. The event was hosted by our Founding Partner Bodleian Libraries in the Divinity School and included an exquisitely designed exhibition of relevant items from the Library holdings. David Cornwell (aka John le Carré) kindly agreed to award the prizes, giving an inspiring speech to the winners.

In addition to the generous support by the Founding Partners, the Oxford German Network was fortunate in receiving funding from the Ferreras Willetts Family for schools outreach activities, and from Routes into Languages for the Olympiad. We also obtained a major grant from the HEFCE Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF5+), administered by the University. This contributed in fundamental ways to giving the OGN a higher profile, providing funding for publicity, equipment and web development as well as the Olympiad event, and facilitating closer engagement with cultural institutions and companies. It enabled OGN to become a member of the German-British Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Director attended their Annual Dinner, which offered further opportunity for forging contacts.

The HEIF grant also enabled OGN to appoint a Research Assistant in order to implement the first stage of a major initiative entitled "Joining up German Teaching in the UK". This involved building a database of secondary schools offering German, and contact details for German teachers; owing to the fragmentation of the school system and data protection legislation, this required considerable resources. The scheme is designed to create a 'horizontal' network among secondary schools and a 'vertical' network connecting up educational institutions at tertiary, secondary and primary level. Cooperation of the University's Department of Education and the Goethe-Institut proved most helpful. A mailshot was sent out asking teachers to complete a brief survey ascertaining their interest in

cooperation; the responses will be processed in the new academic year. The database will prove an invaluable long-term basis for furthering the aims of the Oxford German Network.

The University's Knowledge Exchange team supported the OGN by organising a dinner held at Jesus College and hosted by the Director. This provided an excellent opportunity to bring together guests from companies and from the University's Saïd Business School, Careers Service and International Office to discuss potential areas of cooperation. It was preceded by a planning meeting with SAP. The Director attended a number of meetings at the BMW MINI plant to discuss cooperation, including work with apprentices.

The Oxford German Network has been able to benefit from the outstanding resources of the German and Swiss Embassies, Austrian Cultural Forum, German Academic Exchange Service and Goethe-Institut, and above all their committed and helpful staff. In May, the Director was invited to present the Network at a round-table meeting hosted by the German Embassy, and it was commended to other German departments as a 'Best Practice' continuation of the 2010 Think German campaign.

The Director wishes to thank the Oxford German Network's Founding Partners, the members of the Oxford Network team, and the Undergraduate and Graduate Ambassadors for their fantastic support in launching the first university-led cultural network and making the year's activities possible.

Katrin Kohl  
26 September 2013