



eLIFE – news on life at LIFE

Thursday 29 January 2009

Email to the editors: elife@life.ku.dk

Final deadline for editorial changes is Wednesday before publication of eLIFE on Thursday.

Editorial changes may occur in relation to the online newsletter.

As regards links in the newsletter, please refer to the Danish online version at the faculty's website
http://www.life.ku.dk/Maalgruppe/medarbejdere/life_internt/nyhedsbrev.aspx

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, Editor, Communications, glb@life.ku.dk

Life at LIFE

Don't forget Goethe!

Last autumn, the Danish daily *Kristeligt Dagblad* ran an inspiring article. The main point of the piece was that the Danish language has never been static and that large parts of our native language come from other languages. To drive the point home, the article quoted Goethe, whose native language has had a significant influence on Danish: "A person who does not know foreign languages, does not know their own."

The old German romantic was onto something essential – the national and the international are not opposites. They are inextricably bound – even mutually rewarding! That is why it does not make sense to view language as a zero-sum game where English is a threat to Danish. The challenge in Denmark is to be better at both Danish and foreign languages – not just English, but also French, German, Chinese, Arabic etc.

However, that was by no means the point of view that characterised an editorial in the same newspaper last Thursday. Suddenly, they are demanding that the legislators step in and force Danish universities to preserve our mother tongue. In fact, according to the article, we at the University of Copenhagen have brought the need for intervention upon ourselves. The reason given for this point of view is that we at the Faculty of Life Sciences have a declared goal "of teaching only in English from 2010".

This description of the Faculty of Life Sciences is, unfortunately, symptomatic of the current discourse on language that is often depicted as black or white. It is true that the Faculty of Life Sciences has a goal to teach many more courses in English at the MSc level. But only in areas where it is relevant and where it strengthens the academic content; for instance, if it means that the Faculty's students can benefit from top-quality lecturers from abroad and talented fellow students visiting from other countries. At the same time, both the students and their potential supervisors have an interest in the students also being equipped for an international job market. MSc programmes where English is not relevant or does not strengthen the quality of the programme will continue to be taught in Danish. This applies, for instance, to most of the veterinary science programme, but also to the MSc in clinical nutrition, which educates nutrition experts for the Danish health sector. Most of the Faculty's BSc programmes are taught in Danish, and at the entire University of Copenhagen, only 13 out of 147 study programmes have English as their teaching language.

In contrast to the impression one might get from reading *Kristeligt Dagblad* last Thursday, the University of Copenhagen Board and management have, in fact, spent a great deal of time on strengthening both Danish and English. As a result, the University has adopted its first language policy which states that "there is a need to be able to communicate [...] across national borders and to keep Danish at a high functional level".

The most recent initiatives include the establishment of the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use, which is charged with, among other things, ensuring that students are not subjected to substandard English, or 'Danglish', in the lecture halls. This is neither linguistically nor academically acceptable. The Centre is responsible for 'certifying' the English competencies of the Danish lecturers who have to teach in English. Another example is that we now systematically communicate with our international students and researchers in English! The fact that this is actually emphasised as a new initiative in 2008 shows how dominant Danish is in the oldest university in the country!

The concept behind the University of Copenhagen's language policy is, therefore, completely different: Since the 1400s, the University has conducted research and taught in Danish, Latin, German, English and a variety of other foreign languages – for the benefit of Danish society. And we have done so without legislation, circulars and ministerial orders. Politicians and editorialists should therefore have faith that we will not – unlike Goethe's Faust – suddenly decide to sell the Danish soul to the English devil!

By: Rector Ralf Hemmingsen and Pro-rector Lykke Friis, University of Copenhagen

[Read Hans Hauge's reply: Misbrug ikke Goethe. Undervisning på engelsk vil forringe niveauet](#) (Don't abuse Goethe: Teaching in English will affect quality), *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 28 January 2009.

[See University of Copenhagen press clipping from *Kristeligt Dagblad* here – incl. link to Danish Broadcasting Corporation's television news report](#)

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gjb@lfe.ku.dk – latest update 28 January 2009

Did you know that...

... no fewer than 18 streets, roads and avenues in Frederiksberg have been named after some of the many prominent people who have walked the halls of the Frederiksberg Campus?

Dr. Abildgaards Allé; L.I. Brandes Allé; N.J. Fjords Allé; Segelckesvej; Stockflethsvej; Rostrupsvej; Storchsvej; Bendzvej; J.C. Schiødtes Vej; Bernhard Bangs Allé; Oscar Ellingers Vej; Rosenørns Allé; H.V. Nyholms Allé; C.T. Barfoeds Vej; La Cours Vej; Borups Allé; Moltkesvej; Tesdorfsvej

Sources: Lars Schreiber Pedersen, Archivist, and Gudrun Lefmann, former Information Officer at LIFE.

Take a voyage of discovery through LIFE's history at www.life.ku.dk/150.

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 23 January 2009

The pride of the Faculty went down with a bang

Around 5 pm on 29 May 2000, the Main Lecture hall in Bindsbøll's main building, considered one of the most beautiful lecture halls in Northern Europe, was destroyed by an explosion, and the entire hall collapsed like a house of cards.

The blast was so powerful that every wall in the hall was blown out and bricks, dust and iron windows landed on the lawn 10-15 metres away. It was a miracle that no one was in the room, so there were no injuries, but the trainee gardener who had been in the process of planting ivy outside the building that was now a pile of rubble was rather shocked when she came to work the following day.

About 50 students were sitting in one of the neighbouring rooms taking an exam at the time of the explosion. The plaster tumbled down and the walls cracked, but the room stayed intact. And no one was hurt, although they were undoubtedly a bit shocked. This part of the main building was subsequently closed for approximately six months, until it were certain that the building was safe to use.

The accident occurred in a utility corridor containing pipes and wires situated between the South and North wings and with a corridor that branched off under the Main Lecture Hall. Workers had failed to shut off a gas cylinder properly, and gas had leaked out into the corridor until at some point a switch was turned on creating a spark. The full length of the utility corridor shot 20-30 cm up through the lawn, and doors and door frames blew out of the two wings, but the weakest section was apparently the Main Lecture Hall. I can inform future visitors to the Main Lecture Hall that the utility corridor has since been demolished and filled in.

At the Gardens, the staff had switched to gas weed burners on the day of the explosion, and we had a gas expert visiting to show us how to handle the burners, how to control the gas seepage etc. The headline on the television news that night was: "KVL has blown up after a gas leak". The expert was shocked, and he called us early the next morning to see if we were alright. Luckily we could reassure him that the explosion was not caused by his gas equipment.

Although the building was listed as a historical sight, there had been talk of build a new modern auditorium. But fortunately, it was decided that the building should be recreated in its original form. That project was carried out by the firm of architects Erik Møllers Tegnestue, headed by Jens Fredslund, Royal Inspector of Listed State Buildings. It was originally thought that it would be possible to reuse the original bricks, but they were too damaged, and it would have been too costly to remove the old mortar. But our modern machine-made bricks all look exactly alike, and are rather dull without the hand-moulded glow and minor flaws of the old bricks. Fortunately, Falkenløve Teglværk still masters the art of making bricks the old-fashioned way, passionately hand-moulded and fired in an old-fashioned, coal-fired ring kiln. The facade was rebuilt with three layers of bricks and the 72-cm thick walls stand without any modern reinforcements.

The building's roof was also rebuilt with the original timbre dimensions, and all the joints use tenon and slot mortis like in the good old days. It was certainly a challenge for the firm of carpenters N.A. Nielsen & Søn, as everything had to fit perfectly at all angles because it was wood securing wood.

It took about two years to recreate the building, and then the painting process started. It took a team of five to eight conservators another year to finish the ceiling. The firm of painters Malerfirmaet Nielsen og Kroman, headed by Conservator Line Bregnhøi and her team from the National Museum of Denmark, reconstructed all the decorations down to the tiniest detail. However, there is one little detail that is new. At the time, Dean Per Holten Andersen promised to give DKK 1,000 to the first person who could tell the difference between the old and the new ceiling paintings. As far as I know, no one actually figured it out. But if you look up at the wild chervil on the awning, you will find two white cabbage butterflies – one sitting on the bushel of chervil and the other hovering just above it. The butterflies are almost the same colour as the chervil, so you have to really look closely to find them, but they are visible from the floor with the naked eye. The two little butterflies are the new painters' tiny little fingerprint, and they deserve to leave their mark. The walls themselves were also painted in the original colours, which were still visible under the old layers of paint, so it was a pleasure to see the shocking yellow of the 1972 restoration replaced by the Pompeii colours. The pig that was made so hideously piggy-pink in 1972 was likewise returned to its original black and white colour again.

The rebuilding of the old hall afforded the opportunity to rectify several past blunders, especially from the 1972 renovation. The seats are again form a beautiful curve – not precisely like their original layout, but definitely an improvement over the straight rows of seats. At the same time, the seats have been padded, and a lamp and a microphone have been installed at each seat. If you were wondering what the large semicircular curves on the floor near the two entrances are for, they are not for hiding behind if you arrive late for a lecture and need to sneak to a seat when the lecturer's back is turned – no, they are for acoustic purposes. The acoustics have been returned to their original excellence, and if you speak loud and clear, everyone in the hall can hear you – even without a microphone. And, of course, a high-tech projector has been installed to project nice pictures on the wall screen. It only requires an advanced degree as a projector operator. One thing that is easy, however, is shutting out the daylight from the hall. Just a light tap on the computer screen causes large, lightproof screens to shoot up from underground, coving the tall windows.

The newly rebuilt Main Lecture Hall was inaugurated on 20 May 2003, with the attendance of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe. The Royal Life Guards even played out front, and I personally stood near the Kongeporten gateway with my granddaughter Nanna, who was at the age where everything is about princesses. The coach stopped for a moment right in front of us while the horses assessed the narrow gateway, and I forgot all about common etiquette and gave Her Majesty a cheerful Hi. She waved and smiled, and the carriage continued through the gateway into the inner courtyard, where the queen was received and escorted into the beautifully decorated hall that still smelled of fresh linseed paint.

When the original Main Lecture Hall was inaugurated by King Frederik VII, the gardeners were also invited, but that was not the case this time. The only role we played in event was when the landscape architect Andreas Bruun ensured that the Grønnegård lawns were replanted after construction was over. I have been told that there were musical performances and speeches by everyone who had been involved in the project of rebuilding the Main Lecture Hall, so I am sure that everyone, including the queen, had a nice day.

The huge project of rebuilding the beautiful Main Lecture Hall cost a total of DKK 36 million, and because there was no one else to foot the bill, we the taxpayers paid for it ourselves – so thank you very much. However, never has tax money gone to such a worthy project.

Another odd detail is the construction time. When KVL was originally built, it took 2.5 years from the signing of the bill to the inauguration of the college. This time it took nearly 3 years just to rebuild the Main Lecture Hall.

In retrospect, the explosion was not necessarily such a terrible thing, because it provided an opportunity to make many improvements, in particular in relation to the 'restoration' of 1972. Now we have a brand new, old lecture hall that is really worth showing off and is still the pride of our Faculty.

Kim Greiner, Senior Gardener

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gjb@life.ku.dk – latest update 23 January 2009

Announcements

Courses in Beginner Danish for international staff

CIP – The Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use – is now accepting preliminary registration for courses in Beginner Danish for international staff at the University of Copenhagen in spring 2009. The deadline for preliminary registration by the faculties is Wednesday 11 February 2009.

[Read more on the website](#)

See also the CIP website www.cip.ku.dk – In English www.cip.ku.dk/english/

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gjb@life.ku.dk – latest update 28 January 2009

Where are our A-board signs?

At Communications, Faculty Services, we have purchased a number of A-board signs that can be used as poster displays, both indoors and outdoors. They are very useful and have been used and borrowed for events at LIFE over several years. Unfortunately, some of the signs seem to have disappeared. When we counted the signs in autumn, there were six size 70 x 100 signs and five size 60 x 80 signs left! – But here in January, we can only find five of the small signs in the basement – the six large signs have vanished.

If you have borrowed them, seen them or have an idea about their whereabouts, please contact Gudrun Lau Bjerno, Communications, gjb@life.ku.dk – We would really like to have them back!

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gjb@life.ku.dk – latest update 28 January 2009

Open house at Skovskolen

On Thursday 26 February 2009, Skovskolen will be hosting an open house from 7 to 9 pm.

There, you can meet students and teachers/guidance counsellors, take a tour of the school's facilities and learn much more about our new study programmes.

[Find out more on our website](#)

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gjb@life.ku.dk – latest update 27 January 2009

Consultation on searching for literature for researchers, PhD students and students preparing their final thesis at LIFE

The Faculty of Life Sciences Library offers you a free consultation on how to conduct a literature search in the literature databases (the electronic bibliographies).

You will receive information on how to create your own personal search profile. [Read more here.](#)

It will be an advantage if you are familiar with the Rex library catalogue system and if you have some experience with literature searching.

The consultation on searching for literature is based on a form, which you should complete and send by email to the research librarian who is responsible for your topic.

The research librarian will use this form to prepare for the consultation.

The duration of the consultation will normally be one hour.

If you are working in a group, you are all welcome and you will be allocated more time.

Please contact the relevant research librarian.

The research librarians at
The Faculty of Life Sciences Library

Jytte Emanuelsson, BVFB

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gjb@life.ku.dk – latest update 26 January 2009

Education

Language policy in the education sector

The benefits of implementing English as a teaching language at LIFE:

- Taking courses in English improves the English language competencies of science students, which means that they are better equipped to write scientific articles for recognised international journals, to embark on an international research career and to hold international positions after completing their studies (and many of the study programmes at LIFE are geared precisely to this end).
- If our graduates improve their English, the likelihood that their research findings will attract international attention and recognition is much higher than if they only learned in Danish. It will strengthen the LIFE brand, which will attract more international researchers and students to the Faculty (= better finances, even increased international attention and a higher level of teaching – also for Danish students).
- Offering two-year MSc programmes in English helps LIFE attract more international students who are most likely to apply to study in countries where they can take courses in English. Offering entire degree programmes in English will also make LIFE's collaboration on joint study programmes with top international universities an even higher priority.
- The more courses LIFE offers in English, the more international exchange students the Faculty can attract. This is financially advantageous and supports the internationalisation of the Faculty, which also

benefits the Danish students at LIFE, because more international students in the classroom helps prepare Danish students for working in an international and intercultural context after graduation.

(Source: Michael Guldager, Internationalisation, Study and Students' Affairs)

To ensure quality, evaluation of the language competencies of the lecturers is included on the course evaluations for all courses. A plan has been developed to upgrade the teaching skills and to certify the language skills of everyone who teaches in English.

Student Services is establishing a language lab and all students must be offered language courses. Read more at: [English support](#) (in Danish)

[Intake for MSc and BSc study programmes 1996-2008](#)

[International students 2007-2008](#)

[Share of international students in each MSc programme \(%\) – as per 1 October 2008](#)

[Exchange students 2006-2008 – Top 10](#)

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 27 January 2009

IARU Summer Schools 2009

The University of Copenhagen is one of ten members in the International Alliance of Research Universities, which also includes the following international top universities:

- Australian National University
- ETH Zurich
- National University of Singapore
- Peking University
- University of California, Berkeley
- Cambridge University
- Oxford University
- Tokyo University
- Yale

In 2009, it will be possible for all students at the University of Copenhagen to take summer courses at these top universities.

[Read more on the IARU Summer School website](#)

[IARU GSP Course Information – by university](#)

Application Deadline: 6 March 2009

Applications must be submitted to:

Anne Bruun
Head of Section
University of Copenhagen
University Education Services
The International Office
Fiolstraede 24
DK-1171 Copenhagen K

Michael Guldager, Study and Students' Affairs
Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 22 January 2009

Staff news

New chairman of the Veterinary Study Board

Associate Professor Jørgen Steen Agerholm, Department of Disease Biology, is the new chairman of the Veterinary Study Board.

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 28 January 2009

New professor of landscape architecture

Forest & Landscape is expanding the landscape architecture subject area with a new professorship. As from 1 February 2009, Ellen Braae, PhD and landscape architect, has been appointed Professor with special responsibilities in conservation and transformation of post-industrial urban landscapes.

[Read the press release \(in Danish\)](#)

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 26 January 2009

Jens Lykkesfeldt new professor at the Department of Disease Biology

As of 1 January 2009, Jens Lykkesfeldt is Professor in experimental pharmacology and toxicology at the Department of Disease Biology with special focus on oxidative stress in humans.

The professorship is part of an increase in focus on research in veterinary biomedicine as well as an expansion of collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry.

[Read the press release – click here!](#)

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 22 January 2009

Scholarships for MSc thesis students at LIFE

Three Novo Nordisk/Novozymes scholarships have been awarded to MSc thesis students at LIFE:

Tonni Grube Andersen, Department of Plant Biology and Biotechnology, LIFE – Supervisor: Barbara Ann Halkier, IPB

Catherina Steenstoft, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, SUND – Supervisor: Knud J. Jensen, IGM and Henrik Clausen, ICMM

Natasha Kristine Krahl, Department of Plant Biology and Biotechnology, LIFE – Supervisor: Birger Lindberg Møller, IPB, and Kirsten Jørgensen, IPB

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 22 January 2009

Research

Invasive insects to be studied

Senior Researcher Hans Peter Ravn from Forest & Landscape at the University of Copenhagen has received a grant of DKK 2.8 million from VKR FONDEN for research in invasive insect species. The Asian lady bug will be the focus of the project, which seeks to monitor, risk assess and develop precautions against the negative effects of invasive insect species.

[Read the press release](#) (in Danish)

Rasmus Burkal

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 28 January 2009

Denmark receives international recognition within agricultural research

KU-LIFE is now the seventh most cited agricultural science institution in the world.

The recognised Thomson Reuters Essential Science Indicators Database has just released a list of the world's leading research institutions in agriculture and food, and LIFE – The Faculty of Life Sciences at the University of Copenhagen has earned a top position as the seventh most cited agricultural science institution in the world.

At the very top of the list is the American Tufts University, followed by the Institute of Food Research in the UK and the University of Helsinki in Finland as second and third, respectively.

LIFE's Dean Per Holten-Andersen is pleased with the ranking, but not surprised:

“At LIFE, we have produced frontline research for the benefit of the agricultural sector for more than 150 years. In the beginning, we conducted research in order to advise farmers on profitable agricultural production so that they could feed their families, keep healthier animals and have a better life. Today, we are at the international forefront with the latest biotechnology solutions for the agricultural sector that can ensure a more sustainable food production in the future,” says Dean Per Holten-Andersen.

Katherina Ludvigsen, Communications

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 22 January 2009

Grants

Professor Sigurd Tovborg Jensens Legat – deadline for applications 2 March 2009

A grant of DKK 70,000 from Sigurd Tovborg Jensens Legat will be awarded in April 2009 to one or more students at or graduates from the Faculty of Life Sciences/University of Copenhagen. Applicants are expected to want to undertake studies or travel to pursue further education within soil chemistry, pedology and environmental chemistry and be deemed to have the potential to benefit professionally from such financial support.

Applicants who do not meet the academic requirements described will not be considered.

Applications must be submitted by 2 March 2009 to the Faculty of Life Sciences/University of Copenhagen, Study and Students' Affairs, Bülowsvej 17, DK-1870 Frederiksberg C.

Letters of rejection will not be sent out, but once the grant has been awarded, it will be announced in eLIFE.

Annette Guildal, Study and Students' Affairs, ag@life.ku.dk

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 28 January 2009

Grant awarded

Frk. Sophie Johansens Legat was awarded on 27 January 2009 – the recipients have been notified directly. Letters of rejection will not be sent.

Annette Guildal, Study and Students' Affairs, ag@life.ku.dk

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 27 January 2009

Research funds etc.

See the updated information on the Research & Information website.