

Connect

West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.

October 2021

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

A message from your Regional Trustee



Should I Stay or Should I Go? (With apologies to The Clash)

Is it Autumn already and what happened to the summer? Time has flown by through yet another disrupted year, and already the evenings are closing in just as u3as are trying to get their face to face activities back up and running. Regionally however, caution remains the watchword, with many u3as still struggling to find the right conditions to resume monthly meetings, and many members still reluctant to meet socially as the daily Covid casualty figures remain high, and the media forecast more of the same and even a possible flu outbreak.

Perhaps therefore, these are the times when members need their u3as the most. For many members, it's the regular contact with their u3as that they look forward to and keeps them going. It may be a monthly newsletter, an online interest group, a socially distanced meeting or just a telephone call, and whilst learning has always been at the heart of the u3a mission, its times like these that demonstrate that the social and fun side of u3as can be just as important.

During October, there have been discussion groups held throughout the UK as part of developing a new strategy for the movement, and almost all contributors have said that it's the social and fun side that creates the platform for members to pursue their interests, whether it be online or face to face. So, try to persuade your members not to hibernate over the winter - lets brighten up the season by treating members to some fun activities and show them that the u3a movement still has a part to play in local communities. This is the planning phase for Christmas activities and its easy to delay, delay and delay, in the hope that conditions improve. But all the indicators show that Covid will be with us for a long time and there is unlikely to be a significant improvement by the year end. So u3as need to plan now – think about just how you ensure that members remain engaged and inspired – even those still fearful of social contact – and how can you provide the social context that shows that u3as still care about their members?

Allan Walmsley. WM Regional Trustee, allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

JOIN THE TEAM

2022 is the 40th anniversary of the u3a movement and plans are currently being prepared for celebrations and events throughout the year. The focus of the year includes a further challenge to ageism with an All Party Parliamentary Group, and launching the new vision for the movement.

A new national working party is being set up to progress ideas and communications, and they are looking for u3a members who have never been on national committees before. Are you interested? If so I can send you more details. Contact me on allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

QR Code to Access u3a WM Region Web Site



QR codes are similar to click links, and are just another way of linking to information. This QR code is a link to the WM Region u3a website but the link can be to any document, website or source.

To open a QR code:

Search and download a QR code scanner app from your app store.

Open the app and hold your device so that the QR code appears in the Camera viewfinder.

The QR code will open immediately.

Thanks to Ross on Wye u3a for the idea.

For direct access to the W Midland Region Web Site click on the link below : -

CLICK HERE

Making news

Here's some advice from our PR Adviser Jeff Berliner on how to create a news story.

There's a story under every roof - my first lesson as a junior reporter on a large weekly paper in London. Since then, I worked nearly 50 years in newspapers, TV, radio and online.



Technology has changed, but little else has. Everyone in u3a has a story to tell. Although social media plays a massive part in modern communications, established local media outlets are part of the network.

1. Check local newspapers, magazines and radio stations.
2. Look for individual journalists – news editors and correspondents – for your mailing list.
3. Some journalists these days are on work experience – you will be more experienced than they are.
4. Anyone can be a journalist - smartphones take great pictures.
5. Members of other u3a groups such as photography could help.
6. The established principle for writers is the '5Ws'- Who, What, Where, When and Why of a story.
7. Make your story as interesting as possible – people are news, not just events.
8. Quilt making might not grab headlines, but the person making it could. They have a story to tell.
9. Keep it short, simple, clear – and accurate. Check names – Charlie, Charley or Charli?
10. Blind copying emails keeps your mailing list confidential. Journalists don't like to see your news has gone elsewhere.
11. u3a social media content will be seen by other media as well as by members.
12. Always give contact details – some people do forget.

Any questions, or specific requests, please email

jeffberliner7@gmail.com - 07801 179 714

Review of Member Services

The u3a Office has three departments,

1. Internal Services (finance, IT, etc),
2. Communications and Policy (PR, internal and external communications),
3. Member Services (which includes advice and volunteering, together with events).

Alison May, the Head of Member Services has started a review of the ways of providing advice in the future, and she has held a number of Focus Groups with the various sections of u3a membership around the country.

One of the Focus Groups included 8 Chairs from WM u3as which provided lots of useful information for the review.

A report of the Focus Groups is due and I would like to join Alison in thanking those Chairs for taking part.

We all look forward to seeing how the department sees its role in the future.

Allan Walmsley

Facebook Ad Campaign



The first u3a Facebook Ad Campaign has just launched - and will initially run for a month, but it will be reviewed and may extend. This campaign is to run on all general Facebook feeds through October and will hopefully support (and enhance) u3as who are running their recruitment campaigns. The campaign is based on 4 different photos with slightly different emphasis - same messages. The response will be monitored closely by communications staff in the u3a office, and content will be adjusted accordingly as the campaign continues. This approach will help us work out what approach and what photos work.

For those already on Facebook, you can see a preview by using the links below.

Say yes to u3a sharing an ad and then to see all the ads - click through the arrows at the top to see all the different placements, and click on the Learn More box to see what information is available.

<https://fb.me/1F1GAvs4Gp6ckq0> <https://fb.me/bXoFYFSbFFtXGA> <https://fb.me/1RYTwBh36Cu1VQn>

<https://fb.me/1LlqJOgDBH6Xexq>

Please circulate this as widely as possible within your u3a and encourage Facebook users to like, comment and share to friends/relatives/colleagues both within and outside the movement. The wider the circulation, the more we can spread the word about the movement within Facebook, and support ongoing local recruitment campaigns.

Do you have a group with unusual or interesting activities which you could share with other u3a's ?

If so please send details and photos to Allan Walmsley your Regional Trustee and where it is possible he will include them in the next Regional Newsletter. allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

RETAIN & RECRUIT U3A MEMBERS

A Working Party of members from 65 u3as has produced 35 tools to help with the retention and recruitment campaign.

There are papers, presentations & videos, showing how a bit of thought & lateral thinking can help u3as to stem & reverse reductions in membership and adjust an ageing profile.

The Toolkit is on the main u3a website to access it click the blue box

[CLICK HERE](#)

Zoom Training – Breakout rooms on Zoom

Following a number of requests – National Office are running Breakout rooms on Zoom, the dates are **Monday 8th Nov and Monday 15th Nov, with AM and PM sessions – please book on using the link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/breakout-rooms-on-zoom-tickets-190969263207>**

Outline :

This Zoom training specifically on **breakout rooms** only. This session is for those of you that have mastered the basics and could benefit from a session on breakout rooms .

This 40 mins session will cover :

1. How to assign and move people between breakout rooms
2. Assigning breakout room leaders
3. Sharing screen in breakout rooms

Q & As

For anyone who leads sessions, such as socials (quizzes) or more formal events like . presentation or talks. **Feel free to share and/ or join us.**

Mingma Norman—National Office

Help to run Hybrid Meetings

Many of you may be aware that we have been working with a group of Tech skilled u3a members who have been collating and developing resources and information for u3as to run Hybrid Meetings.

This will culminate in a website covering information for running hybrid meetings of different sizes and complexity, How To Guides and short videos, and details of different technology and devices to consider.

We are aware that as most u3as are restarting activities, the need for this information is now and the team will therefore be running drop in sessions that members can come along to via Zoom, to learn about the support that is available and to raise questions and request advice on alternative ways of running u3a meetings.

These sessions will be held every Wednesday lunch time between 13.00-14.00 the link and dates are below. Please can you cascade this information to the committees in your regions.

LRU3A is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting— Topic: Alternative Meeting Methods

Every week on Wed, until Jan 26, 2022, there are 13 remaining sessions all to begin at 13.00hrs
Nov 3, Nov 10, Nov 17, Nov 24, Dec 1, Dec 8, Dec 15, Dec 22, Dec 29, Jan 5, Jan 12, Jan 19, Jan 26,
Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZUkfuqqzguE93m57siJj8aIJGwx49YALZo/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGppzIpG9GWtBCORpwcHYr4b-vwmHZbj_oOkUqyECl5aFv3H8hlJaorSeHx](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/81993153499?pwd=OHM5eTlCS2YxaUdyRlZMcjFLU2tKQTo9)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81993153499?pwd=OHM5eTlCS2YxaUdyRlZMcjFLU2tKQTo9>

Meeting ID: 819 9315 3499, Passcode: 754565

If you have any questions, please do contact me -- **Regards Jane Bailey, u3a 020 3874 7625**

CAN YOU HELP?

The u3a movement is only possible because of the time and commitment that you give to help our many committees run smoothly.

One of those key committees is the Third Age Trust's governance committee, which is responsible for overseeing the legal responsibilities and duties of the Board and the legal documentation, policies and guidance needed for u3as.

The committee meets on average 4-6 times a year and meetings are via Zoom. The Third Age Trust wish to encourage one or two more people to join the Governance Committee.

If you have knowledge on the legal requirements for charities, risk management or auditing, either financial or quality systems please consider helping us by applying for the role.

To open your email system and get in touch : —



Exploring World Faiths

National Zoom Events

In response to many requests there are more sessions organised on Zoom as follows. There is no need to register in advance, just login on the day – login details are on the Exploring World Faiths Subject Page on the u3a national website. Queries to Dr Peter Rookes, National Subject Advisor, Exploring World Faiths, pjrookes@gmail.com.

Wed 17th Nov, 2021 at 10:00 am National Interfaith Week – Faiths Working Together—Open to all
Click the link to Join the Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83806892192?pwd=bjI1ZnJtbmpwSElrQjhIKzJ5bzJoZz09>

Meeting ID: 838 0689 2192 Passcode: 037603

Wed 8th Dec, 2021 at 10.0 am Presentation on the Zoroastrian Faith
by Jimmy Suratia, previous chair of Birmingham Council of Faiths
Open to all—Click the link to Join the Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88320298223?pwd=blZWY2tHQ3MycHlENkVMYVhoUkxvZz09>

Meeting ID: 883 2029 8223 Passcode: 493046

Mon 10th Jan, 2022 10:00 am -- This webinar is aimed at local organisers of Exploring World Faiths groups and others considering doing so. To join click the link below >>

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82009255381?pwd=RFNwQ0JVZXh0ZVByS2p0d2tyVGZlZz09>

Meeting ID: 820 0925 5381 Passcode: 386662

Balsall Common u3a Visit

Recently 20 members of the Balsall Common u3a Out and About group visited the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and Pagoda in Ladywood. They were given a warm and enthusiastic welcome and learnt a lot about Buddhist beliefs.

Photographs and report on the visit can be seen at: [Photograph album 2020 \(balsallcommonu3a.org\)](http://www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org) at the end of the visit they asked if they could take a group photograph as they were so pleased, that they visited their beautiful Pagoda.

Your u3a may be interested to hear of the existence of this Vihara and that it is well worth a visit. If any u3a group wants to arrange a visit, they should email Dr M M Kyi (Max) maxiekyi@gmail.com to make arrangements. They do not make a charge but would appreciate donations on the day of the visit. Their website is <http://www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org/>

Peter Calver, Balsall Common u3a, 01676 535318 07836 230464

RELAUNCH GRANT

The “Relaunch Grant” mentioned in the recent TAM is available for u3as which may have used their reserves, have lost too many members and/or be unable to fund starting up again until they have recruited new members.

The Board agreed that £100 would be available for u3as to claim from the Barbara Lewis Fund (BLF) to assist with relaunching costs, or opening up again after lockdown.

(The Barbara Lewis Fund is a legacy left by the late former Chair, Barbara Lewis, that is normally available to start ups, and on which u3as in difficulty due to Covid-19 may now claim a £100 grant to aid in getting going again.)

In addition there is also an Open Day grant of £200 available to u3as (once every two years) to enable them to showcase their activities to the public.

Lots of u3as don't realise what grants are available – this is being addressed - so the idea is to let you know what could be claimed by any u3a you know of “in distress”.

If any u3as are “closed during lockdown” or struggling to do anything because their member numbers are falling off, their committee is having difficulty recruiting, and they don't have funds to re-launch their u3a, they should contact the Trustee for the West Midlands, Allan Walmsley, who will discuss the options and will be able to support u3as making applications for the grants.

Allan Walmsley—Regional Trustee

COVID 19

The latest Covid advice is on the national website under Support for u3as – to access the web site and see this advice click here

[CLICK HERE](#)

Nothing is perfect and as always most of it is open to interpretation but there are now no legal restrictions on eg numbers assembling, although the public are advised to exercise caution. However, businesses/organisations have a responsibility to create their own conditions to ensure the safety of their employees/members, and people will also determine individually how they wish to behave.

So it's up to u3as to restart face to face activities where their members are comfortable to take part, and with conditions that your committee feel appropriate to ensure the health and safety of members.

New Facebook Group—information from Sarah Clark at u3A National Office

This is to let you know that a new Facebook group has just launched. This is called **u3a:Let's Talk Tech** and is part of a wider project developed by a dedicated group of u3a members addressing the need for more information around alternative ways of working, for example virtual and hybrid meetings.

I met with the Let's Talk team this morning and said I would share this with the regions. The link to the group, for any interested u3a/member is:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1002726203847774>

As with Keeping in Touch it is a closed group but will be more focussed in terms of content and discussion.

Sarah Clark -- Deputy CEO and Head of Internal Services, u3a National Office

Do you use u3a Subject Advisers ?

Learning More About: Philately with Subject Adviser, Jeff

What is philately?

Philately (stamp collecting) is an interest which is more than 150 years old. There are countless themes to collect, from Christmas to Military aircraft.

When and why did you become a Stamp Collector?

When I was a child, I started buying packets of stamps most of which were bought for the variety of colours rather than what was on them. This continued for about 4 years until, one day, I had an interaction with a spitfire. Since then, I have been passionate about thematic collecting. My collection is a "pictorial" history of flight to the present day.

Why join a group?

Postage stamps are a wonderful way to relax and enjoy what was 'the world's greatest hobby'. Philately can incorporate many u3a groups such as Art, Architecture, Birds, Botany, History, Sport, Transport, Travel and Zoology.



Read more about Jeff's life and his passion for stamp collecting on [our Sources blog](#).

Discover more about u3a Subject Advisers on the [u3a Subject Advice page](#).

Making Your Committee Bigger !!

This is a “How To” guide on making your committee bigger and better, written by Paul Martinez.

To access the document : —

[CLICK HERE](#)

u3a Growing the Future

To mark the u3a movement’s 40th Anniversary in 2022, the Trust is creating a u3a anniversary woodland situated in the Brecon Beacons.

u3a member's contribution to the u3a woodland will help benefit the environment, wildlife and climate for future generations.

The movement's target is for 5,000 trees to be planted between October 2021 and March 2022.

This project will be launched in members' magazine, Third Age Matters, and will come to the brand centre during September.

u3a members will be able to buy individual trees or a copse of 100 trees and u3as are also encouraged to plant trees within their own communities.

Buy u3a woodland trees on the u3a brand centre.

To access the Brand Centre

[CLICK HERE](#)

Toolkit to Challenge Ageism - Your Feedback is Needed

u3a and the Centre for Ageing Better have been working together to produce a toolkit of advice to challenge negative attitudes and promote positive ageing. Thank you to those of you who trialled the toolkit during the summer and have given us valuable feedback so far.

We are now relaunching the toolkit in November – and need your help. Please take some time to familiarise yourself with the toolkit and put some of the actions into practice where possible. We will come back to you at the end of the month to ask: What one thing did you do to challenge negative attitudes after reading the toolkit?

To see the toolkit >>>>>

[CLICK HERE](#)

LATEST COVID GUIDELINES

The latest guidance is set out on the national u3a website

Click the link below to see how it applies to your u3a:

[CLICK HERE](#)

Newsletter Express

To Third Age Trust Volunteers.

Read the latest copy of Newsletter Express by clicking the box below.

[CLICK HERE](#)

GUIDANCE Constitutions and Covid

To access the 26th March 2021 link to a u3a mailing on constitutions and Covid guidance, click the blue button below

[CLICK HERE](#)

Celebrating Networks

u3a networks are such an important part of the movement and we know that you want to connect widely with each other.

If you're part of a u3a network, you can soon have access to a brand new newsletter filled with the latest news from u3a networks across the movement. Sign up by using the link below .

Network Link Zoom – 12 October 2021

The Autumn session of Network Link was held on Zoom on 12 October, and 170 members from over 80 networks in the UK. There were four main speakers:

Michaela Moody, Trust Vice Chair spoke about the planned 40th Anniversary events to be held in 2022

Neil Stevenson, Trustee for North West, explained that Beacon is now available for Networks

Allan Walmsley, trustee for West Midlands described the Trust's Trading Company (TATTL) and its commercial activities

Alison May , Head of Member Services, reviewed the ways in which services, advice and support are provided to u3as .

Following the presentations and questions, Network members were split into break-out rooms and invited to consider a number of questions around each subject .

To receive more information about networks, sign up to the Network Newsletter. This will be issued 3 times per year starting in January. All u3a members are invited to sign up whether you are in a network or not.

To Sign up — Click the link >>>



[u3a Day and 40th Anniversary](#)

As 2022 is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the u3a movement, there will be a number of activities planned throughout the year. Details will (hopefully) be released shortly and all u3as will be encouraged to arrange their own activities.

As the summer period is likely to be dominated by events related to the Queen's Jubilee, it was decided to move the date and concept of u3a Day to mid September, not just for 2022 but as a regular slot in u3a diaries. The focus of u3a Day in 2022 will now be 21 September with (hopefully) some national press coverage, but, to accommodate many u3as who want to vary the date for various local reasons, the activities of u3a Day can be any time during the week beginning 19 September.

Nevertheless, the intention is not to waste the summer period, and plans are being developed for u3as to arrange a "u3a Picnic in the Park" in June as part of the Queen's Jubilee events.

For details of the events >>>>



[Interested in Research and Shared Learning?](#)

There is an Open Zoom Meeting for anyone interested in research at any level to be held on 15th Nov. , with a 10.30 start. If you want to take part in projects shared with other members around the UK, then click to access the meeting's enrolment form



SAD NEWS

Sadly, we heard this month that Lesley Bayston passed away mid October.

Lesley was a prominent member of Burton on Trent u3a and had been a Trust Volunteer for many years until she was forced to reduce her involvement due to ill health.

She had also been a member of the West Midlands Regional Team until stepping down earlier this year and in that role many u3as had benefitted from her extensive u3a experience as she initiated numerous start ups around the region

GET THE NATIONAL U3A NEWSLETTER!

Sign up [here](#)

It's a great way of finding out what's going on in u3as across the country: **you can copy all the best ideas!**

MODEL

CONSTITUTION

The **new** Model Constitution has arrived and is available on the main u3a website under **Support For u3as/ Document Downloads**. Look for Document

U3A-KMS-DOC-035.

Alternatively, log in to the main website and click [HERE](#)

Research and Shared Learning Coordinator

Interested in facilitating learning opportunities amongst u3a members?

Contact slp@u3a.org.uk

RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT

NOW AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD

This project was started by u3a members to support other u3as. From social media to interest groups, u3a members of the group have used their individual expertise and experiences at their own u3as to create the resources.

Marilyn Lean, Chair of Plymouth u3a, urges all u3as to have look at the toolkit: "All of the toolkit items offer very practical and manageable guidance and I have been very appreciative of them. The subjects that comprise the toolkit are key to almost every u3a."

[Click here to go to the National Office download page](#)

NEW ON THE BRAND CENTRE

The first tranche of merchandise is available on the brand centre. This includes mugs, bags and badges. You can use these to promote your u3a and on u3a day. More merchandise over the next few months.

Click [HERE](#) to go to Brand Centre Registration Page on the National Web Site

NEW ON THE IMAGE LIBRARY

The national image library has been updated. This is full of u3a member photos, from walking to ukulele playing. Use these on your u3a websites and publicity materials. The Trust will be updating this image library once they start doing photoshoots again.

Access the image library via the Main U3A Web Site

Shaping the Future of the Movement

Thank you so much for your positive response and help in developing a strategy to guide the future work of the u3a movement.

Many of you have got involved and told us how you see the priorities going forward and the targets we should be setting. We hope to collate these next month so there is still time to have your say.

To take part in this short survey, click the box below or get in touch at: strategy@u3a.org.uk

[CLICK HERE](#)

Looking Back on Lockdown !

This is a u3a shared learning project written by u3a members from all over the UK and compiled by the Research Network. To access the project and read what they have to say

[CLICK HERE](#)

ARE YOU A u3a CHAIR IN THE WEST MIDLANDS ? IF SO :-

Every Friday, I hold a “Fireside Chat”, a very informal Zoom session where Chairs exchange their news and views about u3a. If you're a Chair and haven't come along yet, please email me and I'll send you an invitation. — Allan

If you want to contribute to one of our newsletters or if you'd like to know more about any of the items featured

OR if you just want to say hello, email

allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk



STRUGGLING TO SET UP YOUR AGM ONLINE?

Help is at hand!

There are tutorials on the main u3a website & we'll publish guidance on the Regional site: take a look.

To access the WM Regional web site : -

[CLICK HERE](#)

Learn, Laugh and Move with u3a.

A movement-wide initiative to stay fit, keep moving and improve our general well-being. Hundreds of u3a members are showing us how to Learn Laugh Move. Click the yellow button below for more information.

[CLICK HERE](#)
