

Viewpoint

Helping CERN to benefit society

Anne Richards describes the thinking behind a new foundation that is spreading CERN's spirit of scientific curiosity to benefit the widest possible public.

I first came to CERN as a student in the mid 1980s, and spent an entrancing summer learning the extent of my lack of knowledge in the field of physics (considerable!) and meeting fellow students from across Europe and further afield. It was a life-changing experience and the beginning of my love affair with CERN. On graduation I returned as a research fellow working on the Large Electron-Positron collider, but at the end of three wonderful years I reluctantly came to the realization that the world of research was not for me. I moved into a more commercial world, and have been working in the field of investments for more than 20 years.

However, as the saying goes, you can take the girl out of CERN but you can't take CERN out of the girl. I stayed in touch, and when, a few years ago, I met Rolf Heuer, the current director-general, and heard his vision of creating a foundation that would expand CERN's ability to reach a wider audience, I was keen to be involved.

Science is, in some respects, a field of study that is open largely to the most privileged only. To do it well requires resources – trained educators, good facilities, textbooks, access to research and, of course, opportunity. These are not available universally. I was fortunate to become a summer student at CERN, but that is possible for a lucky few only, and there are many places in the world where even basic access to textbooks or research libraries is limited or non-existent.

And to those outside of the field of science, there is not always a good understanding of why these things matter. The return on a country's investment in science will come years into the future, beyond short-term



Anne Richards. (Image credit: CERN-PHOTO-201412-271-1.)

electoral cycles. There can appear to be more immediate and pressing concerns competing for limited spending, so advocacy of the wider benefits to society of investment in science is important.

The case for pure scientific research is sometimes difficult to explain. This is not just down to the concepts themselves, which are beyond most of us to understand at anything but a superficial level. It is also because the most fundamental research does not necessarily know in advance what its ultimate usefulness or practicality might be. "Trust me, there will be some" does not sound convincing, even if experience shows that this generally turns out to be the case.

Communication of the tangible benefits of scientific discovery, which can occur a long time after the initial research, is an important part of securing the ongoing support of society for research endeavours, particularly in times of strained financial resources.

After many months of hard work, the CERN & Society Foundation was established in June 2014. Its purpose is "to spread the CERN spirit of scientific curiosity for the inspiration and benefit of society". It aims to excite young people in the understanding and pursuit of science; to provide researchers in less privileged parts of the world with the tools and access

they need to enable them to engage with the wider scientific community; to advocate the benefit of pure scientific research to key influencers; to inspire cultural activities and the arts; and to further the development of science in practical applications for the wider benefit of society as a whole, whether in medicine, technology or the environment. The excitement generated by the LHC gives us a unique opportunity to contribute to society in ways that cannot be done within the constraints of dedicated member-state funding.

To translate this vision into reality will, of course, take time. The foundation currently has a three-person board, made up of myself, Peter Jenni and the director-general. It has benefited from some initial generous donations to get it off the ground and allow us to fund our first projects.

The foundation benefits from the advice of the Fundraising Advisory Board (FAB), which ensures compliance with CERN's Ethical Policy for Fundraising. It filters through ideas for projects looking for support, and recommends those that are likely to have the highest impact. The FAB, chaired by Markus Nordberg, consists of CERN staff who help us to prioritize the areas on which to focus. In our early years, we have three main themes where we are looking for support: education and outreach; innovation and knowledge exchange; and culture and the arts. With the help of CERN's Development Office, we are seeking support from foundations, corporate donors and individuals. No donation is too large or small.

Matteo Castoldi, heading the Development Office, has been instrumental in the practical side of the foundation, and is a good person to contact if you have ideas for a project, want help in formalizing a proposal for FAB or would like to discuss any aspect of the CERN & Society Foundation. Our website is up and running – please take a look to find out more, and if you would like to make a donation just click on the link. Thank you in advance for your support.

● Anne Richards, chair of the CERN & Society Foundation board, is chief investment officer, Aberdeen Asset Management Ltd. For more about the foundation, visit <http://giving.web.cern.ch>.

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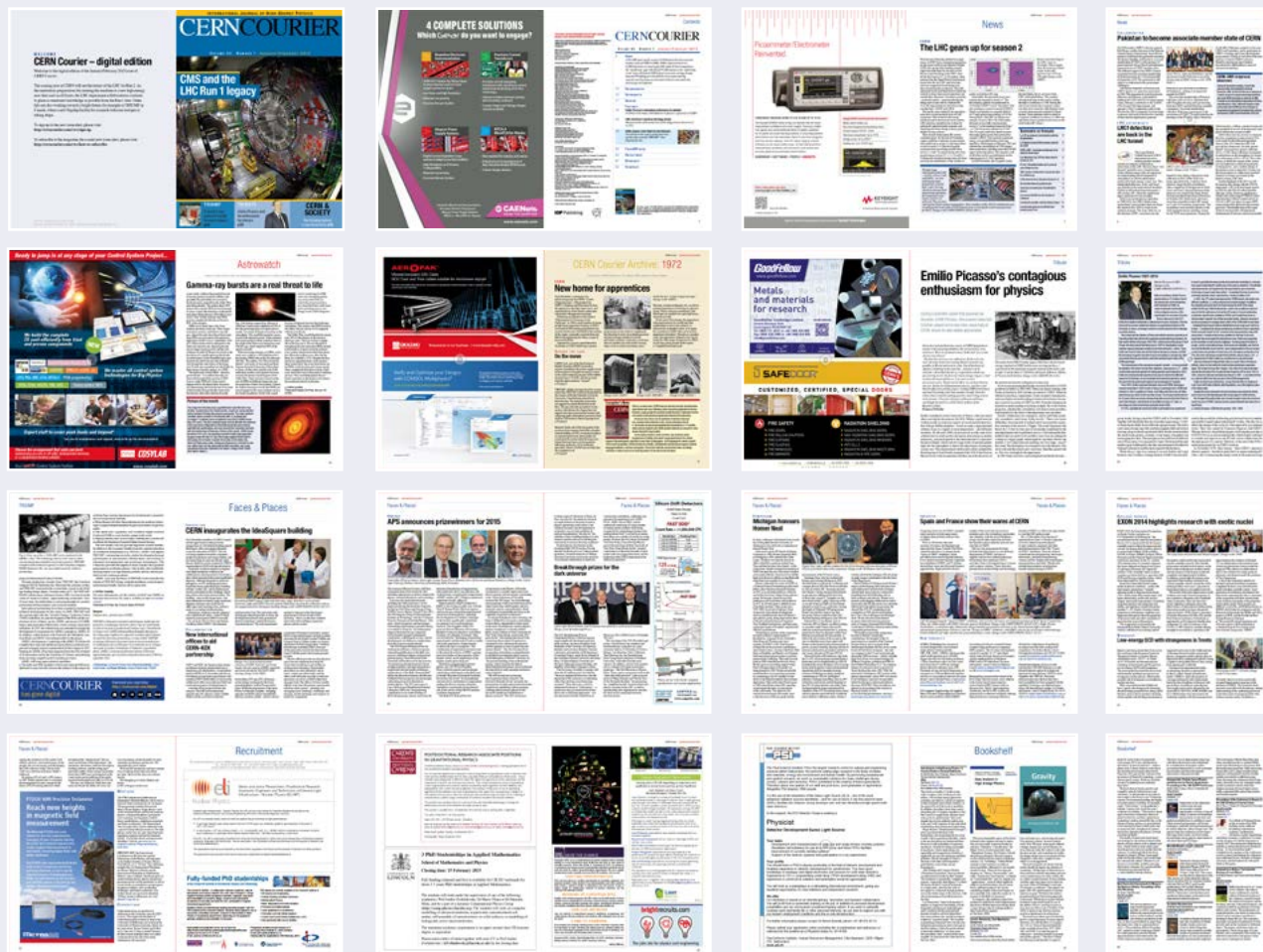


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WELCOME

CERN Courier – digital edition

Welcome to the digital edition of the January/February 2015 issue of *CERN Courier*.

The coming year at CERN will see the restart of the LHC for Run 2. As the meticulous preparations for running the machine at a new high energy near their end on all fronts, the LHC experiment collaborations continue to glean as much new knowledge as possible from the Run 1 data. Other labs are also working towards a bright future, for example at TRIUMF in Canada, where a new flagship facility for research with rare isotopes is taking shape.

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