



Felix

– Keep the Cat Free –

IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON UNION COUNCIL REPORT
5TH NOVEMBER 2019

HANDOVER

Handover was begun over the course of two weeks in June, during which I shadowed the production of an issue of *Felix* and worked on the annual Sex Survey. It was completed over a further two weeks in late July, during which I attended training sessions aimed at the other OTs. Some of these were useful, others were somewhat irrelevant to the *Felix* Editor role and often both myself and those giving the training were somewhat at a loss as to my place. The nature of the handover should be reviewed for next year, either to make sessions less solely focused on the President and Deputy Presidents or to develop a different program for other roles.

Handover was significantly aided by a document produced by Fred Fyles, who was Editor two years ago. However, many parts of the document need to be updated; this will be done throughout the year.

IT ISSUES: WEBSITE

Further issues were discovered when it came to the operation of the *Felix* website. This was partially because of failures during handover – for example, access to the Union webserver shell was not discussed or organised by my predecessor, and a lack of technical expertise on my behalf meant it took some time to figure out. There have also been problems with scripts used to deploy the website

needing to be transferred from my predecessor's account to mine, and with permissions on the Union webserver. Additionally, there have been structural problems on the *Felix* end, where software relied upon to construct the website no longer seems to work with GitHub.

The *Felix* Editor is not elected based on technical expertise, and the last person who fully understood the site's operation graduated at the end of the 2016-17 academic year. This is not sustainable practice. A new team of student volunteer webmasters is being integrated into *Felix* this year, with the help of the site designer, Charlie Egan, and with the hope of smoothing transitions going forward.

The site is finally operational again, though the process of uploading articles is slower than before as a workaround for the *Felix*-side problems. The Editor is working on uploading the backlog of articles from this year thus far.

As put forward two years ago, I suggest that the maintenance of many IT services used by *Felix* should fall under the remit of a paid member of Union staff – particularly over summer, when it is not being monitored by an Editor or the Arts and Ents Chair.

IT ISSUES: OFFICE

Upon entering office, it was apparent that several IT issues had emerged over the summer in the Felix office. Notably, several Macs that were apparently supposed to be replaced had not been; and multiple software licenses had expired and could not be renewed. Fixing the latter issue took some time and was completed, to my knowledge, almost solely by the Arts and Ents Chair – the delay in getting access to the software is one reason why *Felix* did not undergo a redesign this year, and seriously affected the ability to train new editors before the beginning of term.

The only solution found was to wipe the harddrives of all the Macs in the office in order to renew the licenses. Due to the necessity of almost constant work on the Editor's Mac, and the unavailability of the Arts and Ents Chair as they now study in White City, there is still no access to essential Adobe software on the Editor's Mac. Additionally, none of the three Macs to be replaced – one of which is nonfunctional while the other two are very slow – have yet been replaced. Together, these effects reduce effective simultaneous working capacity by between a third and a half.

Finally, on the night of the first issue's print deadline, it emerged that there were still latent issues with the licensing. Unfortunately, this led to the *Felix* Editor-in-Chief purchasing software himself, to the tune of a £300 commitment over the next 12 months, in order to get the paper out on time.

EDITORIAL TEAM

The editorial team has undergone a large renewal since the end of last year, with approximately two-thirds of the team leaving at the end of 2018-19. Our team has already grown even larger and currently stands at 42 members, 28 of which are new this year, including the GSU's *Felix* Officer who runs the Postgraduate section. We are continuing to recruit new members, especially for the copyediting team. Several of the team have also transitioned roles since last year – only

eight team members are in the same role they also occupied last year.

This upheaval has been difficult to overcome initially, with some unfortunate mistakes in the paper as a result of the learning curve – but should mean the Editor for next year has an experienced team to work with, several of whom have worked across multiple roles, and also ensures the development of a new generation of voices in the paper.

NEW CONTENT AND COLLABORATION

Along with the growth of the team, we have also been liaising with other media societies to produce multimedia content – specifically, ICTV and PhotoSoc. ICTV have worked with some of our editors to interview students about a variety of issues (e.g. Prince Andrew's visit) as well as producing short clips of campus news when applicable (e.g. library café), which have then been uploaded to social media. PhotoSoc came with the Editor to the St. Mary's strikes in order to take photos for the paper. We are also seeking to introduce more illustration-based elements to the paper.

We have also introduced or revived several new sections in the paper: namely "A Conversation With", "Constituent Union", "Throwback", and "TV". The first and second of these are aimed at giving outreach to, and insight into, the Sabs and the Constituent Unions respectively. These people and organisations work hard to improve student lives, but often have struggled with communicating effectively to students. The third is a celebration of *Felix's* 70th anniversary. The last is an important section on the cultural side.

Our News content has broadly been good this year, covering events such as the Welcome Fair, the St. Mary's strikes, and the expansion of the counselling service. There has been a strong push for interview-based content, which involves a much greater time commitment to produce, but generates more personable and informative news stories.

70th ANNIVERSARY

This academic year contains Felix's 70th anniversary, approaching at the end of this term. *Felix* is planning to celebrate in a couple of ways:

1. A special 72-page issue, hopefully to be printed on Monday 9th December (the anniversary itself) as opposed to Friday the 6th. This will feature a 4- or 6-page Puzzles pull-out and a special Throwback section, amongst other things.
2. A 70th Anniversary Dinner, inviting back various *Felix* alumni and current members. This will likely be delayed until 2020 due to the organisational commitments involved. Funding options for the Dinner are being explored.

TWO-WEEK EDITORIAL CYCLE

A two-week editorial cycle was discussed during the Editor's campaign. The turnover from last year to this year has meant this has not yet been implemented, but the aim is to introduce it beginning 2nd term. This will be subject to feedback from the editorial team about the idea.

EDITORIAL TEAM REVIEWS

The Editor will be reintroducing a system of consistent review and feedback from the editorial team this year, focusing on areas such as training and support as well as the balance of work and time-commitment. These will involve sit-down sessions of around 15 to 60 minutes depending on what is required with each set of section editors, or with individual editors if they have particular issues to address. These sessions will begin in the coming week.

FELIX AS A SOCIETY

A significant portion of the Editor's work is recruitment, engagement, and development of the social aspects of *Felix*. With a very fresh editorial team, establishing this social community becomes even more important for the ongoing quality of the paper. Weekly social sessions have been established, from attending Arts&Ents night to going to comedy clubs, as well as efforts to ensure the *Felix* office is a welcoming space for all – we've revived the coffee machine, in other words. We've also made sure to reach out to and invite writers to our events, not just editors, as we believe this creates a better working environment for both writers and editors, and writers naturally make a large contribution to the paper.

