

# UNITING ACADEMICS AND PRACTITIONERS TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE IN CIVIL PROTECTION

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The world of civil protection and emergency management contains many stakeholders. This article concentrates on just three: academics, 'pracademics' and practitioners. In simplistic terms, academics are individuals who focus on studying disasters and emergency management as a distinct discipline or from any number of disciplinary perspectives. Practitioners are those individuals who are directly responsible for implementing emergency management programmes at strategic, tactical or operational levels. Finally, 'pracademics', with their hybrid role, are generally regarded as being practitioners who have become academics in the specific area in which they were practitioners.

The gap between these three groups has been narrowing. This is vital if emergency management is to be recognised as a profession. All stakeholders should know and recognise the value of theory, research and experience and better understand how the knowledge gained from each works to achieve a more professional approach that will meet the increasing demands placed on civil protection and emergency management services.

The title of this article has been the Institute's strap line since its formation in 2009. The inaugural conference held shortly after its formation was entitled 'Removing Hidden Barriers: Bringing together Practitioners and Academics in the field of Civil Protection and Emergency Management'. At that conference there were sessions 'What do Practitioners need from Academia?' and 'What can Academia do for Practitioners?' During the first year, an article, written by the then Co-Chair of the

Executive Council,<sup>1</sup> entitled 'What Place does Academia have in Emergency Management?' appeared in the Institute's journal, *Alert*. More recently, in 2013 and 2014, the Institute has provided valuable support to University College London's Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (UCL-IRDR) at two academic conferences on research, teaching and service in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience. Thus the Institute has a history of bringing academics and practitioners together in the field of civil protection and emergency management.

Bridging the gap between academics and practitioners has not been easy. For instance, Lucien Canton has suggested that too much academic research is still written for other academics, a situation that practitioners find off-putting. He continued: *"... useful information [is] buried deep within what is to many practitioners a foreign language. In many cases, the information in the research is too specific and doesn't necessarily extract lessons that can be practically applied. Consequently, many practitioners are unaware of the many years of research that form the specialized body of knowledge required for a profession of emergency management."*

A number of the Institute's members have led the way in breaking down such barriers. For instance, three Professors, David Alexander, Ian Davis and Keith Still, all Fellows of the Institute, have published books that are accessible to both academics and practitioners. Already with a number of books individually to their names, David and Ian have spent the last five years writing a book on Disaster Recovery which

required them to visit a number of disaster sites around the world to review progress personally. The book describes 21 models of recovery, including six that were specifically developed by the authors. It also includes the result of a survey by more than 50 leading practitioners, each of whom has been asked to describe the ingredients of successful recovery. It will be published by Routledge on 16 August 2015. Professor Davis, has also recently edited a publication, *Disaster Risk Management in Asia and the Pacific* for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Tokyo and has updated the United Nations' guidelines on *Shelter after Disaster*, which he originally wrote in 1982, to enable them to be re-issued in 2015 by the International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRC). Professor Alexander is currently completing another book, of a very practical nature, entitled *How to Write an Emergency Plan*.

One of the country's foremost experts on crowd management, Professor Keith Still, published a book in 2014, *Introduction to Crowd Science*, and is writing another one on the topic of Crowd Risk Analysis and Crowd Safety to support the MSc programme in 'Crowd Risk Analysis and Safety' currently under development at Manchester Metropolitan University. He directs a level 5 diploma course in crowd sciences that currently runs as workshops around the world and which is in the process of going on-line for distance learning and workshop support. In addition, at Buckinghamshire New University and Manchester Metropolitan University he heads a team that runs a spectrum of training courses from NVQ Level right up to PhD programmes.

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Another example of material available to practitioners, some of which is written by academics, are the Occasional Papers published by the Emergency Planning College, to which Fellows Mark Leigh and Dr Kevin Pollack, have contributed. Dr Pollack's contribution, *Review of Persistent Lessons Identified Relating to Interoperability from Emergencies and Major Incidents from 1986* (Occasional Paper 6), is of particular value at a time when lessons identified are not always translated into lessons learned. It is perhaps worth pointing out that 11 of the Emergency Planning College's Associate Tutors are members of the Institute.

Academically, members of the Institute have an international reach extending from Central America, through Europe to the Far East but, at the same time, they play a key role in supporting practitioners in improving their performance in the operational environment. Professor Eric Dykes, a Fellow and President Emeritus of the Institute, heads up International Emergency Management in the Faculty of Health and Society at Narvik University in Norway. In addition to his full-time academic appointment at the University, he is a Forensic Advisor for the International Committee of the Red Cross. As such he recently organised and contributed in Geneva to a five-day course entitled 'Management of the Dead in Armed Conflicts and Catastrophes'. Ian Davis is a visiting Professor in Disaster Risk Management in Copenhagen University's Masters programme in Disaster Management. David Alexander is Professor at University College London at the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (IRDR). He is currently supervising doctoral students from Italy, New Zealand, Hong Kong, China, Bangladesh and Indonesia in their studies of the human effects of earthquakes and landslides. He also runs a Masters' programme in risk and disaster reduction. Away from IRDR, he has a number of research projects running overseas:

- The evaluation of the civil protection systems, with testing in Puebla State, Mexico;

- Two social surveys in collaboration with Tohoku University, firstly in the Philippines of the residents of Tacloban following a serious storm in 2013, and secondly in two Japanese prefectures following the tsunami of 2013, with the aim of identifying the effectiveness of the evacuation procedures and transitional accommodation; and
- With the Council of Europe, preparing a toolkit and guidelines for assisting people with disabilities in disasters and emergencies.

At the Institute's inaugural Conference in 2009, London firefighter Peter Simpson introduced his audience to the term 'pracademics', i.e., people who, having been practitioners then become academics in that area of expertise, and he went on to describe the 'Pracademic Curve' which demonstrated the optimum intersect between both practitioner development and academic achievement. At the same conference, Professor David Alexander pointed out that integrated emergency management was becoming increasingly complex and inter-dependent on a wide range of disciplines including academia.

Two of the Institute's 'pracademics', Richard Gordon and Gordon Macdonald, both Fellows, currently lead programmes at universities. Richard is the Director of the Bournemouth University (BU) Disaster Management Centre and Gordon leads the Health for England Emergency Planning Programme at Loughborough University. Richard served in the British Army before joining the staff at Bournemouth University. Immediately prior to taking up his post, Gordon had been successively the Head of Strategic Emergency Planning and Response at the Health Protection Agency and was the National Health Service's National Assurance Manager in the lead up to the 2012 Olympic Games. In addition, many of the

Institute's 'pracademics' bring reality to the academic programmes now being offered by universities. For instance, Fellow Gary Silver takes his knowledge and practical experience relating to disaster victim identification (DVI) to students undertaking courses at the Universities of Bournemouth, Cranfield and Greenwich. Fellow Roger Gomm takes his experiences of leadership and command, particularly as it relates to managing crises, to students at the Universities of Bournemouth, Christ Church (Canterbury), Glamorgan, Huddersfield and Portsmouth. Fellows Robert Flute and Karen Reddin are just two of the Institute's members to pass on their knowledge and experience to students taking part in the Emergency Planning Programmes at Loughborough University. Robert is an EPRR (Emergency, Preparedness, Resilience and Response) practitioner and registered paramedic of 18 years' experience, who now operates at the strategic level of the National Ambulance Resilience Unit (NARU), whilst Karen is currently the Strategic Emergency Preparedness Manager in the Emergency Response Department of Public Health England.

## Getting out 'into the real world'

At the inaugural conference in 2009, Professor David Alexander, quoting the noted sociologist Thomas Drabek, suggested that 'theory is the road map of disaster management practice' be it in risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness, response or recovery. But in order to provide meaningful education and training *'academics need to be on the same wave lengths as their students. They need to know the roles they fill, the pressures they undergo and the barriers they face.'*

This means getting out into the real world which many of the Institute's academic members do. Five examples follow but they are by no means the only ones.

Psychologist Dr Sarita Robinson, a Fellow of the Institute, is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire. At present, she has three primary research aims:

- to use a cognitive and psycho-biological approach to investigate how people respond to threat;
- to explore possible nutritional intervention which could safeguard cognition during threats and could also aid recovery; and
- to investigate how individual differences may predict resilience in trauma.

In conducting her research, Sarita works regularly with both civilian and military organisations. At Fleetwood Nautical College, she works with people engaged in fire-fighting and undergoing fire-fighting and helicopter underwater evacuation training (HUET). Recently, she has helped Greenstreet Berman to complete a review of HUET skill retention and has helped Public Health England to review processes people undergo when taking part in decontamination protocols.

Forensic anthropologist Dr Anna Williams, a Fellow of the Institute, is a Senior Lecturer based at the University of Huddersfield. She is actively involved in casework for police forces and forensic science providers, and is also a team member of the Kenyan International Emergency Services. Before the political changes in Egypt, she was deployed to Cairo by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide disaster victim identification (DVI) training to the Egyptian Police. Her current research interests are in forensic taphonomy and decomposition and she hopes to establish a human taphonomy facility in the UK. In an effort to improve canine

detection of decomposing human remains, she is currently also undertaking research to identify the volatile organic compounds released by a cadaver during decomposition in order to determine to which of them the dogs respond.

Psychologist Dr Mike Rennie, also a Fellow of the Institute, is a Senior Lecturer at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Last October, he returned from a 15-month deployment to Afghanistan where he acted as an Academic Mentor at the Afghan National Army Officers' Academy. Initially his task was to develop an applied behavioural science curriculum and help in the training and development of Afghan lecturers. He developed a 'train the trainers' programme for Afghan academics, in which he introduced a number of pertinent psychology theories and teaching approaches, and developed teaching exercises and an examination structure for the Academy.

In addition to her role as a Senior Lecturer at the University of Leicester, Member of the Institute Dr Nibedita Ray-Bennett has been involved in a number of external projects. In November 2013, she was selected by the United Nations to lead an international team to provide input to the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Thematic Review of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The team's work on 'hyper risks and critical reflective practices' also appeared in the UNISDR's Global Assessment Report on Disaster Reduction (GAR-15), which was published in 2015. In September 2014, Nibedita was invited by the UK Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) to join 25 of the 'UK's top social scientists working in risk management' to attend the UK-China Scoping Workshop on 'Developing Collaboration in the Natural and Social Sciences in the Areas of Geohazards, Palaeontology and Geofluids'. In the same month, she won a bid with the UN to

organise a Public Forum on 'Emerging Trends in Disaster Reduction' which was due to run in parallel to the UN's 3rd World Disaster Conference in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015.

Another member of the Institute, Senior Lecturer Richard Teeuw, runs the Crisis and Disaster Management MSc programme at the University of Portsmouth. The students come from the 'blue light' services, government departments, the military, business and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Each year, they take part in a three-day exercise, which, in 2015, is being run by the International Search and Rescue (ISAR) team of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service on Hayling Island, close to the City of Portsmouth, which will assume the status of a Caribbean state hit by an earthquake. Like others mentioned in this article, Richard's activities have not just been confined to the University. Funded by the UK Department for International Development, last year he visited Sierra Leone to provide training on the uses of free geoinformatics (Geographic Information and Global Positioning Systems, remote sensing) to map water resources and flood hazards. Arising from that initiative, one of his MSc students took on a one-month volunteer internship with the Sierra Leone Red Cross just before the Ebola epidemic hit the country. At the time of writing this (the end of February 2015), the student is still there, running the Red Cross mapping team, having, in the meantime, graduated with a distinction.

Member of the Institute, Edith Wilkinson is on the staff of the Centre for International Security and Resilience at the Cranfield University campus within the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom where elements of Civil Protection and Emergency Management are contained in a number of its Master programmes. At the end of April, a UK-US forum on emergency planning and

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resilience management will take place at Cranfield University between the University and Washington Georgetown University.

Finally but by no means least, Wolverhampton University is a Corporate Member of the Institute. The main link with the University is through Senior Lecturer in Emergency Planning, Stewart Mashiter, also an individual Member of the Institute, who is responsible for the Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and MSc programme in Emergency Planning Resilience and Response. Stewart was formerly the Head of Civil Contingencies

- A rich learning experience has been gained by both parties.
- Working together they can explore innovative teaching methodologies in order to provide the best learning environment for students who are undergoing training and education in the fields of civil protection and disaster management;
- By mutually reinforcing and enhancing the status of both parties, additional resources may be forthcoming from third parties, such as funding agencies.

Practitioners can invite academics to observe emergency management operations and provide an insight into various events. Academics can invite practitioners to classes, and, indeed sometimes do, as this article points out, in order to discuss their experiences. Alternatively, academics may ask practitioners to serve on advisory boards for proposed courses or research projects. Research needs to be shared with practitioners; and after-action reports need to be shared with academics. Academics should be encouraged to attend emergency management meetings.

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with Darwen Borough Council in the County Borough of Blackburn. The course attracts a range of professionals from responding agencies but also people who are seeking to enter the resilience profession. Although the reach of the British military is not as wide as it once was, a number of military units have been ordered to respond to civilian disasters and other emergencies in various parts of the world. So, Stewart is working with military partners to ensure the programme is aligned and accessible to military personnel, especially those in related fields or who are coming towards the end of their military service.

Within the Institute's membership there is mutual respect between academics and practitioners. The advantages of this are as follows:

- Within the academic world, there is a greater understanding of the problems faced by practitioners in managing crises, disasters and emergencies and what is needed to respond and recover from them.

If emergency management is to be regarded universally as a profession, the relationships between academics, practitioners and 'pracademics' need to be developed further. This will take time and effort. It is important to recognise that academics and practitioners typically create knowledge in different ways. Practitioners develop their understanding of emergency management based either on their own real-life experiences or the experiences of other practitioners. In terms of broader sharing, after-action reports are often developed and in some instances shared. Practitioners need to share their experiences with academics; academics need to ensure that practitioners have access to research by providing it in a language that is fully comprehensible to them, not only to fellow academics. Practitioners can identify the areas of research they would find beneficial. In turn, academics need to translate research findings into implications for practice.

Finally, 'pracademics' have a particular role to play. Having a foot in both camps, they speak the language of the practitioner and can open doors for academics to enable them to obtain a greater understanding of the subjects they are teaching.

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## Author Profile

Tony Moore is a Fellow and President Emeritus of the Institute. A former senior police officer, he joined the staff at Cranfield University and was the Associate Director of the Resilience Centre when he retired.