The Academy sponsors eight such institutions (in Amman, Ankara, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Nairobi, Rome and Tehran), as well as four organisations based in the United Kingdom and specialising in regions overseas (Egypt, Libya, South Asia and South-East Asia). Most of these bodies, whose principal focus is upon archaeological studies, administer limited funds for research in their areas; further details may be obtained via the Academy.

The Academy organises a series of public lectures in the spring and autumn and hosts a variety of other meetings. Lectures are without charge, and lecture programmes are available on request. Medals and prizes are awarded for outstanding work in various fields of the humanities.

The Academy publishes the results of certain of its Research Projects, primarily fundamental works of scholarship — texts, editions, corpora, dictionaries. There are also limited schemes for defraying the production costs of monographs and learned journals published by others.

In 1991 the Academy took over full responsibility for the scheme for the Postgraduate Studentships in the Humanities, which since 1984 it had administered on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. The competitive scheme provides both one-year awards for an initial postgraduate qualification and awards of up to three years for doctoral research.

The Academy provides advice to Government and other public bodies on questions affecting research and scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

### Presidential Addresses

The Presidential address delivered by Sir Keith Thomas at the Annual General Meeting of Fellows of the Academy, held on 7 July 1994.

As asked to assess the influence of the French Revolution upon world history, the Chinese leader Chou en-lai is said to have remarked that it was too soon to tell. The same may be said of some of the changes which have occurred within the Academy during the past year. But when the time is ripe to assess their significance, there is only one question which should be asked: have they helped or hindered the subjects whose interests we exist to promote?

This time last year the Academy was still adjusting itself to the disappointing news that the Government had declined to establish a Humanities Research Council. After long debate the arguments in favour of such a body had come to seem conclusive. The Academy’s position as a quasi-research council had become increasingly unacceptable. It was unacceptable to the research community in the country at large, who wanted a funding body which would be more representative, both institutionally and by subject, than the Academy, which is composed of Fellows elected solely for their academic distinction, could ever hope to be. It was unacceptable to the Academy, which was founded to be a learned society, not a research council, and was far from ideally constituted to handle these additional responsibilities. It had done so, conscientiously, fairly and economically, but only at the cost of much administrative strain and the diversion of energies which could have been devoted to other purposes. Moreover, by being excluded from the research council structure, the humanities were marginalised and shut out from the process of decision-making about the national research budget. There was, therefore, general agreement that the time had come to establish a Humanities Research Council which would distribute funds in a transparent and representative manner, take part in national policy-making and set the Academy free to play a role in the humanities and social sciences analogous to that of the Royal Society in the natural sciences.

In reaction to the Government’s rejection of this proposal, the Annual General Meeting of 1993 called upon the Council of the Academy and its Officers to devise some alternative means of funding research in the humanities through the Academy’s grant-in-aid. In his outgoing Presidential Address, Sir Anthony Kenny, to whose keen intelligence and creative energy the Academy owes so much, indicated that Council believed that the best way forward in the circumstances was for the Academy to set up a Humanities Research Board of its own, to operate at arms-length from Council with as high a degree of autonomy as possible. During the last year much of the energy of the Academy’s Officers, Council and staff has been taken up by the creation of that Humanities Research Board. The post of part-time salaried Chairman was publicly advertised and, after stiff public competition, we chose one of our own number, Professor John Laver. To assist him, Council nominated a Board of fourteen members, who took up their appointments with effect from 1 April this year. The members have been selected to be widely representative of subjects and institutions. Eight of them were not Fellows at the time of their appointment, though one is about to become one. Five are women. It is, of course, impossible for all academic interests to be represented on the Board at any particular moment, but a regular system of rotation will mean a steady turnover in membership. Moreover, many other scholars will be members of the awarding panels which will do much of the Board’s business.

To the Humanities Research Board have been assigned the allocation of grants for research, for conferences and for publication and, after this year, the administration of the postgraduate studentship scheme. The Academy will retain responsibility for grants to the Overseas Schools and Institutes, for overseas grants and exchanges and for the administration of the Research Readerships, the Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships and the Postdoctoral Fellowships. Small grants for research in the social sciences will also remain with the Academy; they will be administered by panels chosen by the appropriate sections, augmented where necessary by outside members. We are currently holding discussions with the Economic and Social Research Council about the possibility of its transferring to the Academy the administration of its funds for small research grants. So our social sciences budget may increase.

The Humanities Research Board will be answerable to Council, which appoints its members, provides it with its funds and can set general guidelines about the ways in which those funds should be spent. The Board will make an annual report to Council, but Council will not be involved in the Board’s activities during the course of the year. Obviously this
relationship between Council and the Board is potentially a delicate one, but so far all has been harmonious.

The Humanities Research Board should not be regarded as a pis-aller, a second-best replacement for the Academies Research Council which we failed to achieve. On the contrary, now that we have seen the form taken by the new Science Research Councils set up under the Office of Science and Technology, with their industrial chairman and their commitment to the creation of wealth and the needs of 'user communities', we can agree that a Research Council cast in such a mould, whatever its value for the sciences, would certainly have been highly inappropriate for the humanities. Work in the humanities seldom has direct applications for government or industry. Its contribution to the creation of wealth is at best indirect; and it does not have specific user communities, unless by 'user community' we mean the whole civilised world. So our failure to achieve a Humanities Research Council may prove a blessing in disguise. Of course, there is still the risk that, by not coming under the Office of Science and Technology, the humanities will be sidelined, since their representatives are still excluded from participation in discussions about the size and character of the national support for research. But the Department for Education has been very supportive and we shall look to it for regular assistance in the future.

Meanwhile, the Humanities Research Board starts off with a budget of £357,000, of which £13,712,000 is taken up by the Postgraduate Studentship scheme. Until more funds are forthcoming, its room for manoeuvre is thus extremely limited; and it is likely that the Board's creation will release more demands than it will be able to satisfy. A start, however, has already been made on a research grants scheme, which will provide replacement teaching costs for a period of from three to six months to enable university-based scholars to bring a specific piece of research to fruition. The starting grants for this scheme are much less than we had hoped and the Academy has bid for a substantial increase next year. Time in which to read, think and write is what we all need; and it is to the provision of that time that research funding should be primarily directed. Meanwhile, it will be one of the main tasks of the new Research Board to assess the financial needs of the humanities and to draw public attention to the pitifully inadequate provision currently made for them.

My impression is that the creation of the Humanities Research Board has been generally welcomed by the learned world. Within the Academy the welcome has been more cautious. In particular, some society has been expressed about the future of the Academy's own research projects under the new arrangements. The formal position is quite clear. The destinies of the title 'Academy Research Project' will remain in the hands of the business of Council, acting on the advice of the Committee on Academy Research Projects (CARP) or its successor. The funding of the project, insofar as public funds are required, will be one for the Humanities Research Board to determine; and to that extent Academy Research Projects will be in competition with research proposals coming from outside the Academy. Since the money is public money, it is only right and proper that it should be open to public competition. But there is no reason why a well-run and productive Academy project should have any reason to fear withdrawal of its funding. The Humanities Research Board will review projects' bids for funds in exactly the same way as CARP has done; and the Board has been informed by Council that it is expected to strive to provide appropriate and continuing support for the completion of the Academy's Research Projects, subject, as now, to periodic and rigorous review.

The setting up of the Humanities Research Board has been a large task, but, thanks to the extraordinary commitment of the Academicians, it has been achieved without any interruption of normal business. We have continued to appoint to research posts — Readerships, Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships and so on — and have made research grants and conducted research projects; we have awarded over a thousand new postgraduate studentships and fellowships and we have been able to sustain our visitor schemes and to maintain relations with foreign academies. In addition we have convened a successful meeting with representatives of learned societies to discuss ways in which it might be possible for the Academy to help these voluntary bodies and to represent their interests nationally. They have been helpful and we have benefited from our own experience that there are some subjects in which the Academy is a visible presence and its Fellowship has established and others in which it is remote and barely heard of.

It would do the Academy great harm if the wider academic world were ever to lose confidence in our electors. Our international credibility and our receipt of public funding depend upon the continuing validity of our claim to represent intellectual excellence in the humanities and the social sciences wherever it is to be found. An imbalance in our membership can also skew our activities, as can be seen from the list of our current Academy Research Projects, which, though excellent in themselves, are heavily weighted in the direction of classical, medieval and archaeological subjects, with large tracts of the Academy's territory left unrepresented. History is full of examples of learned academies which have collapsed or dwindled in importance because of their inability to move with the times.

Fortunately, the weight of opinion within the Academy has come down firmly in favour of rectifying the imbalance. I hope that Council will not be accused of having acted with undue haste, for it was as long ago as 1972 that it first set up a Committee to consider the sectional structure of the Academy, bearing in mind 'the need for the Academy's composition to maintain in future conditions a representative character in the fields of scholarship with which by its charter and traditions it is concerned'. That Committee found serious imbalances in the Fellowship, but its recommendations for change were rejected. Now, twenty-two years later, we have adopted proposals not wholly unlike those proposed on that occasion. Of course, as with any constitutional change, there is the risk that these reforms may have unintended consequences. But that is part of the process, and because these changes are obviously coming, Council has decided that the new arrangements must be thoroughly reviewed in three years' time. In addition we shall, later this afternoon, debate whether or not to explore further the possibility of enlarging the Fellowship.

The process of constitutional change is not over, however, for our Council has set up a small committee, comprising Sir Robert Megarry and Professor Wiseman, with a brief to bring forward proposals. Any Fellow with suggestions to make is invited to write to Dr Creaney.

When in 1974 Herbert Spencer declined an invitation to become a Fellow of the Royal Society, he commented on the tendency of many learned societies to become unduly preoccupied with the issue of whom to elect as a member. As he put it, 'co-operation for the advance of knowledge is the original purpose; the wearing of a badge of honour is the derived purpose; and currently the derived purpose becomes more important than the original purpose.' (David Duncan, The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer [1908], 114) A Fellow of this Academy could be forgiven for thinking that the main purpose of Section meetings was to decide whom to put up, or not to put up, for election to the Fellowship. It is right that the business of elections
relationship between Council and the Board is potentially a delicate one, but so far all has been harmonious.

The Humanities Research Board should not be regarded as a pi-aller, a second-best replacement for the Human and Research Council which we failed to achieve. On the contrary, now that we have seen the form taken by the new Science Research Council set up under the Office of Science and Technology, with their industrialists chairman and their commitment to the creation of wealth and the needs of ‘user communities’, we can agree that a Research Council cast in such a mould, whatever its value for the sciences, would certainly have been highly inappropriate for the humanities. Work in the humanities seldom has direct applications for government or industry. Its contribution to the creation of wealth is at best indirect; and it does not have specific user communities, unless by ‘user community’ we mean the whole civilised world. So our failure to achieve a Humanities Research Council may prove a blessing in disguise. Of course, there is still the risk that, by not coming under the Office of Science and Technology, the humanities will be sidelined, since their representatives are still excluded from participation in discussions about the size and character of the national support for research. But the Department for Education has been very supportive and we shall look to it for regular assurance in the future.

Meanwhile, the Humanities Research Board starts off with a budget of £37,700,000, of which £33,700,000 is taken up by the Postgraduate Studentship scheme. Until more funds are forthcoming, its room for manoeuvre is thus extremely limited; and it is likely that the Board’s creation will release more demands than it will be able to satisfy. A start, however, has already been made on a research grants scheme, which will provide replacement teaching costs for a period of from three to six months to enable university-based scholars to bring a specific piece of research to fruition. The Board is also considering a scheme for the purchase of equipment which is too expensive for any one institution to buy and to maintain relations with foreign academies. In addition we have convened a successful meeting with representatives of learned academies to discuss ways in which we might be able to assist the Academy to help these voluntary bodies and to represent their interests nationally. We shall continue to foster exchanges of British and foreign scholars and to maintain relations with foreign academies.

The process of constitutional change is not over, however, for our new Board and the Academy. As it is now, the Constitution of the Academy is quite unequal as the composition of our Fellowship would suggest. We do not need really have anything to tell us that the Academy should be seen as a whole, a diversity of interests. We have no objection, and indeed have welcomed, the experience that there are some subjects in which the Academy is a viable presence and its Fellowship has created and supports others and it is remote and barely heard of.

It would do the Academy great harm if the wider academic world were ever to lose confidence in our elections. Our international co-operation and our receipt of public funding depends upon the continuing validity of our claim to represent intellectual excellence in the humanities and the social sciences wherever it is to be found. An imbalance in our membership can also skew our activities, as can be seen from the list of our current Academy Research Projects, which, though excellent in themselves, are heavily weighted in the direction of classical, medieval and archaeological subjects, with large tracts of the Academy’s territory being unrepresented. History is full of examples of learned academies which have ossified or dwindled in importance because of their inability to move with the times.

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should be taken seriously, for the Fellowship of the Academy is a notable honour and should be bestowed in a discriminating way. But making such elections is our derived purpose, not our original purpose. Our primary objective is, in the words of our Charter, the promotion of the study of the moral and political sciences, including history, philosophy, law, politics and economics, archaeology and philosophy; i.e., as we would say today, the humanities and the social sciences.

Now that the Academy has devolved many of its funding responsibilities to the Humanities Research Board and largely completed the task of structural reform, it can turn its attention wholeheartedly to the discharge of these primary responsibilities. Sections have already been invited to suggest ways in which the intellectual life of the Academy can be developed. But Sections are essentially electoral units. They all have matters of common concern and some function very cohesively. Others, though, are inevitably intellectual hybrids. Council therefore plans to bring forward proposals to supplement the Sections with the establishment of smaller Subject Groups which will sometimes cross sectional boundaries. The history of science is one obvious area for a subject group, but there are many others. We hope that both the Subject Groups and the Sections will generate new ideas for Academy activities. In addition, Council plans to establish a new Committee which will review the Academy’s overall academic programme and offer a strategic plan for the future. It has already set up a Committee chaired by Sir David Wilson to review the work of the Overseas Schools and Institutes and the Academy’s support for them.

There are many obvious ways in which the Academy might do even more to promote the interests of the subjects for which it caters. We need more research projects, again with a wider intellectual area. We could develop our programme of lectures, symposia and publications, particularly on interdisciplinary topics. We should get out of London more often and hold meetings in other parts of the country. We should do more to raise public awareness of the importance of the subjects we represent and indeed of the Academy itself; for the sad truth at present is that a headline in the press about ‘the British Academy’ is more likely to be linked to a film or television award than to Cornwall Terrace. With the encouragement of the Department for Education we have put in a bid for a new staff post concerned with public relations; and it would be good to have a regular newsletter.

Of course, the expansion of the Academy’s activities will require money, not just public funds but also private ones. During the coming year, Council will be giving serious consideration to the question of how our new funds can be augmented. We also urgently require new and better premises. Our present ones offer nothing by way of facilities. To follow the example of some much too small, the office space is cramped, there is no room for new members of staff and we are under notice to vacate Canons Park by early 1996.

Above all, the expansion of the Academy’s role will require the active participation of the Fellowship. If we can fully mobilise the outstanding quality of learning and the intellectual distinction to be found within our ranks, then the possibilities are indeed infinite. Meanwhile, I hope that no Fellow will ever find any difficulty in answering the question, ‘What is the British Academy for?’

As a new president, I have been disproportionately dependent during the year upon the help and advice of the Honorary Officers and the members of Council. I am particularly grateful to the two outgoing Vice- Presidents, Professor Donald Winch and Professor Peter Wiseman; the latter, on top of everything else, has also chaired the Research Fund Committee. The Academy owes a great debt to these public-spirited individuals who give up so much of their time and energy to the discharge of unpaid responsibilities. The staff of the Academy, by contrast, are paid, but their commitment and devotion are not of a kind which money can buy. I thank all, most of all, our Secretary, who does more than anyone to set the tone of the Academy and to keep it the civilised, tolerant and tolerant body which it has always sought to be.

The Presidential Address delivered at the Annual General Meeting of Fellows of the Academy, held on 6 July 1995, by Sir Keith Thomson.

A year ago, I expressed the hope that, with the devolution of many of its funding responsibilities to the Humanities Research Board, and with the task of internal structural reform largely completed, the Academy would be able to concentrate upon developing its primary responsibilities as a learned society. I am glad to be able to report that the last year has indeed seen a broadening of our horizons in our activities. But it is still too soon for the recent changes to have been completely digested or for their full consequences to have made themselves felt. Essentially, this has been the Academy’s best year of adjustment and consolidation; and an exceptionally busy one.

The Humanities Research Board (HRB) came into existence in April 1994, when it took over the responsibility for most of the funding programmes financed by the Government’s grant-in-aid. Under the chairmanship of Professor John Laver, its members have embarked vigorously on their task, as can be seen from their First Annual Report, which was submitted to Council a few weeks ago. This Report will be distributed to all Fellows with the minutes of this Meeting, and subsequently incorporated into the Academy’s own Annual Report. But I ought to draw attention here to some of the Board’s main activities during the past twelve months.

The HRB has set out to be as transparent and accountable as possible. In particular, it has sought to make its procedures fair and open and to give them maximum publicity. The Chairman has addressed many universities and professional associations, while each Board member has been made responsible for maintaining links with a particular group of universities. The Board engages in extensive consultation and it publishes a regular newsletter. This policy has achieved great visibility for the Board and won wide praise. There has been an associated increase in administrative costs, as we knew there would be, but we can also point to increased expenditure on research.

Inevitably in the first year, much energy has had to be devoted to putting in place the necessary structures for the development of the Board’s business. A pattern of committees and panels has been devised and a system of peer review for the assessment of applications. Working Groups have been set up to look at the boundaries of member and to examine the boundaries between the humanities and the social sciences and between the humanities and the creative and performing arts.

So far, the transfer of responsibility to the Humanities Research Board has not resulted in any great change in the pattern of Academy grants for research and publication. Despite some gloomy forebodings, neither archaeology nor the Academy’s Research Projects turn out to have suffered as a result of the new arrangements. The Board has confirmed to Council’s instruction that it should seek to provide appropriate funding for the completion of the Academy’s work in progress, subject of course to continuing and rigorous review; and those Projects have duly received an overall increase in funding from $491,000 in 1994-5 to $520,000 in 1995-6, an increase which is proportionately somewhat higher than the general level of the increase in the Academy’s expenditure.

An important new initiative taken over by the HRB has been the Research Leave Scheme, which provides replacement costs for one term (or semester) to enable scholars to bring a piece of work to fruition, on condition that the scholar’s own institution matches the grant by paying for a second period of leave to follow immediately. So far, 118 scholars have benefited from this admirable arrangement. Inevitably, the number of deserving applicants for exceeds the available funds; and more money is currently being sought from the Government to enable the scheme to be expanded.

In the coming year, the HRB will have just under £16.4 million in grant-in-aid to support its various activities. Of these, the postgraduate studentship scheme will absorb over £14 million, leaving only a little over £2 million for the support of all other forms of research, a figure, which is equivalent to roughly £250 for each of the 8,000 research-active members of academic staff in British universities. This pitiful sum has been supplemented by a further grant of £0.5 million from HEFCE, with the promise of increased amounts in subsequent years and the hope of support from the other Funding Councils, to finance a scheme of Institutional Fellowships for collaborative, interdisciplinary research. The total available to the HRB for the support of advanced research in 1995-6 is thus £2,585,000, an increase of nearly 25% over last year, but still a tiny figure, especially when compared with the £2,360,000 made available by Research Councils for the support of scientific research or even the £394,000 at the ESRC’s disposal for the support of research in the social sciences.

The HRB has therefore developed the case for raising the level of government support for research in the humanities. Council finds this case persuasive and has endorsed the HRB’s bid for a substantial increase in research funds over the next three years. This bid, if successful, would have the effect by 1998-9 of quadrupling the amount of money available for research, other than postgraduate research. It remains to be seen how the Department for Education and Employment will respond to this request.

Meanwhile, it seems clear that the activities of the HRB have been well received in the universities and that the openness of its procedures has been generally welcomed. Professor Laver congratulated the Academy’s division of responsibility between the HRB on the one hand and Council and its committees on the other. The members of Council, he congratulated, have been painlessly resolved. Liaison between Council and the HRB has been improved; and some early fears that the Academy would find itself standing to the Board did as Frankenstein to his
giving serious consideration to the question of how our current funds can be augmented. We also urgently require new and better premises. Our present ones offer nothing by way of facilities for Fellows, the computer room is too small, the office space is cramped, there is no room for new members of staff and we are under notice to vacate Canon's Park by early 1996.

Above all, the expansion of the Academy’s role will require the active participation of the Fellowship. If we can fully mobilize the astute and 20th-century science and technology to be found within our ranks, then the possibilities are indeed infinite. Meanwhile, I hope that no Fellow will ever find any difficulty in answering the question, ‘What is the British Academy for?’ As a new president, I have been disproportionately dependent during the year upon the help and advice of the Honorary Officers and the members of Council. I am particularly grateful to the two outgoing Vice-Presidents, Professor Donald Winnie and Professor Peter Wiseman; the latter, on top of everything else, has also chaired the Research Fund Committee. The Academy owes a great debt to these public-spirited individuals who give up so much of their time and energy for the discharge of unpaid responsibilities.

The staff of the Academy, by contrast, are paid, but their commitment and devotion are not of a kind which money can buy. I thank all, most of all, our Secretary, who does more than anyone to set the tone of the Academy and to keep it the civilised, polite and tolerant body which it has always sought to be.

The President’s Address delivered at the Annual General Meeting of Fellows of the Academy, held on 6 July 1995, by Sir Keith Thomas.

A year ago, I expressed the hope that, with the devolution of many of its funding responsibilities to the Humanities Research Board, and with the task of internal structural reform largely completed, the Academy would be able to concentrate upon developing its primary responsibilities as a learned society. I am glad to be able to report that the last year has indeed seen a beneficial course of development in our activities. It is still too soon for the recent changes to have been completely digested or for their full consequences to have influenced our thinking. Essentially, this has been the Academy’s year of adjustment and consolidation; and an exceptionally busy one.

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The HRB has set out to be as transparent and accountable as possible. In particular, it has sought to make its procedures fair and open and to give them maximum publicity. The Chairman has addressed many universities and professional associations, while each Board member has been made responsible for maintaining links with a particular group of universities. The Board engages in extensive consultation and it publishes a regular newsletter. This policy has achieved great visibility for the Board and won wide praise. There has been an associated increase in administrative costs, as we knew there would be, but we can also point to increased expenditure on research.

Inevitably in the first year, much energy has had to be devoted to putting in place the necessary structures for the conduct of the Board’s business. A pattern of committees and panels has been devised and a system of peer review for the assessment of applications. Working Groups have been set up to look at the boundaries of knowledge and to examine the boundaries between the humanities and the social sciences and between the humanities and the creative and performing arts.

So far, the transfer of responsibility to the Humanities Research Board has not resulted in any great change in the pattern of Academy grants for research and publication. Despite some gloomy forebodings, neither architecture nor the Academy’s Research Projects turn out to have suffered as a result of the new arrangements. The Board has confirmed to Council’s instruction that it should seek to provide appropriate funding for the completion of the Academy’s projects, subject, of course, to continuing and rigorous review; and those Projects have duly received an overall increase in funding from £91,000 in 1994-5 to £200,000 in 1995-6, an increase which is proportionately somewhat higher than the general level of the increase in the Academy’s own income for the year.

An important new initiative taken over by the HRB has been the Research Leave Scheme, which provides replacement costs for one term (or semester) to enable scholars to bring a piece of work to fruition, on condition that the scholar’s own institution matches the grant by paying for a second period of leave to follow immediately. So far, 118 scholars have benefited from this admirable arrangement. Inevitably, the number of deserving applicants for exceeds the available funds; and more money is currently being sought from the Government to enable the scheme to be expanded.

In the coming year, the HRB will have just under £14.4 million in grant-in-aid to support its various activities. Of these, the postgraduate studentship scheme will absorb over £14 million, leaving only a little over £2 million for the support of all other forms of research, a figure which is equivalent to roughly £250 for each of the 8,000 research-active members of academic staff in British universities. This pitiful sum has been supplemented by a further grant of £0.5 million from HEEC, with the promise of increased amounts in subsequent years and the hope of support from the other Funding Councils, to finance a new scheme of Institutional Fellowships for collaborative, interdisciplinary research. The total available to the HRB for the support of advanced research in 1995-6 is thus £2.85 million, an increase of nearly 25% over last year, but still a tiny figure, especially when compared with the £2.225 million made available by Research Councils for the support of scientific research or even the £39.6 million at the ESRC’s disposal for the support of research in the social sciences.

The HRB has therefore developed the case for raising the level of government support for research in the humanities. Council finds this case persuasive and has endorsed the HRB’s bid for a substantial increase in research funds over the next three years. This bid, if successful, would have the effect by 1998-9 of quadrupling the amount of money available for research, other than postgraduate research. It remains to be seen how the Department for Education and Employment will react to this request.

Meanwhile, it seems clear that the activities of the HRB have been well received in the universities and that the openness of its procedures has been generally welcomed. People may have reservations about the Academy’s division of responsibility between the HRB on the one hand and Council and its committees on the other, but the HRB has been keenly congratulated on the energy and imagination he has brought to this task. Inevitably, some minor tensions and difficulties were generated by initial ambiguities in the Academy’s division of responsibility between the HRB on the one hand and Council and its committees on the other, but these things have not been painlessly resolved. Liaison between Council and the HRB has been improved; and some early fears that the Academy would find itself standing to the Board as did Frankenstein to his
creation have proved groundless. Conversely, the Board of Trade, well aware of the 40 years of operation during its first 80 years, unimpeded by any irksome intervention from the House of Commons, has been able to maintain its independence, and its activities are not constrained by the obsession with the creation of wealth which currently dominates the policies of the Research Councils.

The first year's postgraduate studentship competition was a success by any standard. However, the HBFR may have less money than a third-year student, but it has greater independence, and its activities are not constrained by the obsession with the creation of wealth which currently dominates the policies of the Research Councils.

The Honorary Officers have had useful meetings with the Secretary of State for Education, Mr. John Nott, MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and Mr. David Blunkett MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education. The meetings have been taken over by the Academy's own business, but CAC has also been much concerned by some of the consequences of the current tendency to subject universities to ever more stringent forms of accountability. In particular, we have expressed reservations about HECCE's plans for its 1996 Research Assessment Exercise. We have pointed out that while the Funding Council that its rules appear to downgradate the status of the work involved in compiling bibliographies, handbooks and similar reference works (for learned societies, indispensable for the progress of scholarship though such publications are). We have also urged that account should be taken of certain features that are not published work and to encourage individual panels to consider all forms of work in their judgement of the esteem deserved.

Following the example of the Royal Society, the Academy has retained for itself the administration of its Research Studentships, Postdoctoral Fellowships, and Leverhulme Senior Research Studentships. We were delighted to hear that the Leverhulme Trust has agreed to renew the latter scheme for another three years. We encourage all institutions to consider the benefits of these awards for any given subject area.

The Academy has also remained responsible for providing financial support to the British Schools and Institutions overseas, currently at the rate of £500,000 per annum. This is subject to further increase in future years. A Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Sir David Wilson to review the work of the Schools and Institutions in general and the Academy's provision for them. The Reviewing Committee has set itself a comprehensive programme of meetings and overseas visits and the Academy will wish to express its gratitude to its members, who have devoted long hours to this task.

The Board of Trade has enjoyed freedom of action during its first years, unimpeded by any irksome intervention from the House of Commons. The HBFR may have less money than a third-year student, but it has greater independence, and its activities are not constrained by the obsession with the creation of wealth which currently dominates the policies of the Research Councils. The first year's postgraduate studentship competition was a success by any standard. However, the HBFR may have less money than a third-year student, but it has greater independence, and its activities are not constrained by the obsession with the creation of wealth which currently dominates the policies of the Research Councils.

The Honorary Officers have had useful meetings with the Secretary of State for Education, Mr. John Nott, MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and Mr. David Blunkett MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education. The meetings have been taken over by the Academy's own business, but CAC has also been much concerned by some of the consequences of the current tendency to subject universities to ever more stringent forms of accountability. In particular, we have expressed reservations about HECCE's plans for its 1996 Research Assessment Exercise. We have pointed out that while the Funding Council that its rules appear to downgradate the status of the work involved in compiling bibliographies, handbooks and similar reference works (for learned societies, indispensable for the progress of scholarship though such publications are). We have also urged that account should be taken of certain features that are not published work and to encourage individual panels to consider all forms of work in their judgement of the esteem deserved.

Council, however, remains concerned about the more general effectiveness of the Research Studentship Awards. The current rule is that all research published by an individual over the whole six-year period of assessment (for the social sciences) should be credited to the institution of which he or she is a member on 31 March 1996. This has led to an unproductive scramble by universities to buy in distinguished scholars from elsewhere so as to have them on their books on the key date. It has also tended to create an unhealthy separation between those who teach in universities and those who conduct research. Furthermore, the assessment exercise has encouraged much academic publication which is either premature or unnecessary or both. Very soon it may be only retired scholars, exempt from such pressures, who can afford to contemplate the production of a genuinely major piece of scholarship. In the natural and social sciences it may possibly be true that all research, however routine, is welcome, but I am quite sure that in the humanities it is infinitely more important that publications should be high in quality than that they should be numerous. Indeed the effect of an outpouring of mediocre writing is to increase pressure on library budgets and to waste the time of other scholars, who have to wade through the flood, for fear that they might miss an item of value. The President of the Royal Society and I plan to meet the Chairman of the HECCE in the near future in order to express our concern about some of these unintended side-effects of the Research Assessment Exercise.

The policies of the Economic and Social Research Council are also causing us some anxiety. Acting in response to government pressure for more directive programmes of research, the ESRC is currently planning to focus its funding of research projects upon selected 'themes'. We understand the thinking behind this approach, but we are concerned that it may unduly diminish the funding available for the support of original and fundamental research in the many areas of the social sciences which are not represented in the chosen 'themes'. We are also worried that basic training in all the social science disciplines may be damaged by the ESRC's plan to extend this thematic approach to the funding of postgraduate studentships, possibly for those studying taught courses as well as those doing PhDs. We have communicated these anxieties to the ESRC and are currently waiting to hear the outcome. The Academy is as concerned for the future of the social sciences as for that of the humanities and will wish to register its concern about any funding policies which threaten to cramp their free development.

During the past year Fellows have been learning to live with the changes in the Academy's internal structures and procedures, now that the onus has passed from the Government to the Academy. The amalgamation of some sections and the division of another; the establishment of Groups; and a limitation on the size of the core has been met with enthusiasm where it has been possible. After a general poll in which all Fellows were invited to confirm their Section of primary allegiance, the new arrangements seem to have fallen easily into place; and, although some Fellows, I know, found them potentially unattractive, even threatening, they have adapted themselves to them with tolerance and good humour. The so-called 'hybrid' Sections are rapidly learning to function as a single unit, while the standing committees of all Sections have brought a new thoroughness to their survey of the field of potential candidates for election to the Fellowship. The Groups have rapidly justified themselves as essential elements in our electoral procedures, which have, as a result of all these changes, become fairer and more representative. The Groups have also demonstrated their value as a forum for the expression of opinion on matters other than elections.

With these new structures in place, the Academy can now focus its attention upon the expansion of its academic activities. In order to achieve this end, a new pattern of committees has been established. The Activities Committee also has a coordinating and strategic role: it meets once a year to agree an annual plan and to delegate responsibility for implementing that plan to the three subsidiary committees of the Activities Committee, the Publications Committee and the Research Projects Committee (alias CARP). Those three committees have all been busy during the year. Working in close collaboration with the HBFR and responding to its stimulus, CARP has embarked on a series of joint visits to our existing Research Projects.

Long-term scholarly activities, like the compilation of dictionaries and the publication of indispensable texts and data-bases, are among the Academy's most enduring achievement. The current works of fundamental research upon which several generations of scholars will depend. CARP attaches the highest importance to them and is concerned to monitor their progress so as to ensure their speedier possible completion. CARP also wishes to broaden the Academy's portfolio by taking on new projects, particularly those which relate to the modern world and carry more involvement with the social sciences.

The Meetings Committee is investigating various ways of improving the Academy's programme of lectures and conferences and of reaching a wider audience. An innovation has been the successful one-day meeting for our Postdoctoral Fellows, which took place last December; and some promising ideas for future symposia and for joint meetings with the Royal Society have been put forward by Sections. The Committee is currently exploring ways of giving the wider public a better sense of the academic disciplines we represent by linking the Academy's lectures and meetings to programmes on radio or television.

The Publications Committee is seeking to develop a more balanced programme, paying particular attention to the needs of each discipline and also considering the possibility of sponsoring the occasional shorter publication on a matter of topical interest. Its greatest wish is to have commissioned an historical account of the Academy, to be published in 2001, when we shall be celebrating our centenary. Fellows will be delighted to know that the author of this intended history is to be the Secretary, Mr. Peter Brown.
creation have proved groundless. Conversely, the BHR enjoyed freedom of operation during its year, unimpeded by any interloping intervention from Council. The HRE may have less money than a law school, but it has greater independence, and its activities are not constrained by the obsession with the creation of wealth which currently dominates the policies of the Research Councils. The postgraduate studenthip competition was already underway when the HRE was established, so it remained, for the last time, the responsibility of the Academy's Postgraduate Studies Committee. That Committee found itself faced by an increase in both number and quality of applicants; indeed the numbers have increased by 75% since 1990. The fact that only 982 awards could be offered, although 1,742 of the candidates had a first-class degree and 1,306 had postgraduate experience, gives some idea of the stiffness of the competition. In the event, 490 of one- (or two-) year awards were made and 492 of three- (or two-) year awards. In the latter case, only 41 awards were made to students without previous postgraduate experience. In other words, it has now become normal for successful candidates for three- year awards to have had prior experience of postgraduate work, often privately financed. We should be glad that so many young people wish to do advanced work in the subjects for which we are responsible, but it is abundantly clear that the increasingly fierce competition for these postgraduate studentships is seriously prejudicing the progress of scholarship through such publications are. We have also urged that account should be taken of certain types of work in the Research Exercise. In response to our representations, the HEFCE has now agreed to modify the rules so as to take account of certain kinds of work that are included in the HRE's selection panels with some very hard problems in coming years, particularly as the proliferation of universities has made it more difficult to measure candidates by a common standard.

Following the example of the Royal Society, the Academy has retained for itself the administration of its Research Fellowships, Postdoctoral Fellowships, and Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships. We were delighted to hear this week that the Leverhulme Trustees have agreed to renew the latter scheme for another three years. The field for all these awards continues to be of very high quality and we are currently investigating ways of involving our holders in the Academy's programme of meetings. The Academy has also remained responsible for providing financial support to the British Schools and Institutes overseas, currently at the rate of some 

Council, however, remains concerned about the more general effects of the Research Exercise, in particular the amalgamation of some sections and the division of another; the establishment of Groups, and a limitation on the scope of the exercise. After a general post in which all Fellows were invited to confirm their Section of primary allegiance, the new arrangements seem to have failed easily into place; and, although some Fellows, I know, found them potentially unattractive, even threatening, they have adapted themselves to them with tolerance and good humour. The 'so-called' hybrid Sections are rapidly learning to function as a single unit, while the standing committees of all Sections have brought a new thoroughness to their survey of the field of potential candidates for election to the Fellowship. The Groups have rapidly justified themselves as essential elements in our electoral procedures, which have, as a result of all those changes, become fairer and more competitive. The Groups have also demonstrated their value as a forum for the expression of opinion on matters other than elections.

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How, you may ask, will the Secretary find the time to do that? The answer is that the Academy must help him to find it. At the moment our staff are immensely over-burdened. The operations of the Humanities...
The British Academy

Research Board, the new and more elaborate electoral system, the review of the Schools and Institutes and the flurry of new activities have had one effect in common: they have all generated new work for the office and put our staff, and sometimes even the Honorary Officers, under almost intolerable pressure. This year some vital tasks have been delayed as a result of the new calls on staff time. Most notably, our Annual Report for 1993-4 is yet to be published; and the Committee on the Reform of the Bye-Laws, whose recommendations it had once been hoped to put before this meeting, has not yet begun work. The Academy's administrative budget has always been low for an institution of our size and our staff have always been exceptionally helpful and accessible, both to Fellows and to the general public. I am sure that the staff will continue to be helpful and accessible, but, in my view, that will only be possible if their numbers increase and our administrative budget increases longer. Meanwhile, I know that the Fellowship will want to record its gratitude to the exceptionally able and devoted people who work here for us.

This year sees several changes in the Academy's Honorary Officers. Professor Timothy Smiley ceases to be Secretary for Postgraduate Studies. He was the first holder of that office and he is also the last, for the administration of the postgraduate studentship scheme has now been taken over by the HRB, of which Professor Smiley is fortunately a member and one of whose Postgraduate Committee he is chairman. To him, has fallen the demanding task of monitoring the competitiveness for postgraduate studentships and, since the number of deserving candidates always exceeds the supply of awards, the even more demanding task of defending, through unfailing humanity, the difficult decisions which have to be made. He has established as a norm the new pattern of awards on a '1 year plus 3 years' basis, converting doubters and securing the confidence of the academic community. Professor Joe Trapp gives up the Foreign Secretaryship after seven years of devoted service. He has represented the Academy at innumerable meetings overseas and received countless delegations at home, with invariable tact, sensitivity and good humour, winning the gratitude and affection of many foreign scholars in the process. Professor Tony Wrigley has been Treasurer since 1989. He has rationalised the organisation of our private funds and established a firm basis for their future development. Council has benefited immeasurably, not just from his prudent and careful management of our finances but also from his rocklike dependability and solidity of judgment.

The Academy is deeply indebted to all three Honorary Officers for the huge amount of time and energy they have voluntarily dedicated to its affairs; and I thank them most warmly. In their places we welcome Professor Barry Supple as new Secretary and Mr John Fleming as Treasurer. The Vice-Presidents for the coming year will be Professor Gillian Beer, who continues for a second year, and Professor Peter Haggatt, who has accepted my invitation to succeed Mr Fleming.

One of the most difficult problems in the Academy is that of how to make the actions of Council and the Honorary Officers genuinely responsive to the opinions of Groups, Sections and individual Fellows. With a Fellowship of over six hundred, it is inevitable that the Academy, like any large organisation, has to rely for its day-to-day decision-making upon a relatively small number of people. It is, of course, always possible for any Fellow to raise an issue at the Annual General Meeting. But what is also needed is a less dramatic or confrontational method of ensuring that during the course of the year Council acts in a way which the majority of Fellows regards as appropriate. Wherever possible, it is already the practice of Council to seek the views of Groups, Sections or Section chairmen. Moreover, the Secretary and I turn to knowledgeable individual Fellows for advice on particular issues on an almost daily basis. But there are many matters on which quick decisions have to be made in response to outside pressures without time for adequate consultation. In these cases, I fear that Fellows have no alternative but to rely on the good judgment of the members of Council and the Honorary Officers whom they have elected.

The method of election of those persons is thus an important matter. A suggestion has been made that the responsibility for nominating candidates for Council should be transferred from Council itself to the three Groups, each of whom would nominate two members annually. This suggestion will be carefully considered by Council in due course. The main problem will be that of how to achieve a balanced membership for Council in terms of subjects, institutions and gender, while there are three separate nominating bodies and no general overview.

As for the election of the Honorary Officers, the Annual General Meeting next year will have to elect a successor to me as President. It is my intention later this year to write to all Fellows to seek their individual views on this matter. That will, I hope, help to ensure that our next President will be someone who commands the widest possible support within the Academy.

Our highest priority now is to find new premises in place of 20-21, Cornwall Terrace. The present building is much too cramped to accommodate the growing Fellowship and our greatly expanding volume of business, and we urgently need new headquarters. A month ago it seemed as if we had found the ideal solution in the shape of a distinguished building not very far away. Because it was larger than our present home, there would have been increased rent and running costs to pay, but the DP was splendidly helpful and we were encouraged to think that we could afford it. I had confidently looked forward to continuing my address today with the news that next year's Annual General Meeting would be held in our magnificent new premises. Alas for human vanity! One sad day last month, we were informed that the landlords of the building in question had, contrary to all the expectations we had been given by their agents, suddenly and unpredictably chosen to lease the building, not to the Academy but to another party. So the search starts again, and with renewed urgency.

Painful episodes of this kind will be familiar enough to any Fellow who has ever tried to buy or sell a house. To the Academy they are less familiar and the experience has been all the more bruising. However, one of the lessons we have learned on this occasion is that the costs of acquiring and refitting new premises, when we eventually find them, are likely to be considerable; and that it is very probable that we shall need to look for help, not just from the Department of Education and Employment, but also from private benefactors and possibly from Fellows themselves. In this connection, it is worth noting the example of our sister body, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which a few years ago succeeded in buying its own premises outright after raising much of the purchase price from an Appeal to which the majority of its Fellowship contributed. My Scottish colleagues will forgive me if I suggest that, if that can be done in Edinburgh, it might a fortiori be possible to do it here.

Until new premises have been secured and a larger administrative staff recruited, there will be severe limits to what the Academy can hope to achieve. But the changes of the last few years have cleared the ground and the way is now open for us to demonstrate our vitality as the premier learned society and public representative of the humanities and social sciences. So I hope that it is with enhanced confidence that we assemble today for our annual ritual of renewal, in which we renew our colleagues who have gone and rejoice at the election of the new Fellows with whom the future of the Academy will lie.
The British Academy

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