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UKAN Blog

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In January 2022 I was asked by Prof. Kirill Horoshenkov if I would be interested in being an equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) champion for the UK Acoustics Network Plus (UKAN+). Kirill mentioned that I would be perfect for the role, and it is just what the team needs – a female, Early Career Researcher (ECR) of colour that can help diversify the current acoustics network by being present and noticeable and one that is already involved in many other public engagement activities. I told Kirill that I would think about this, as it meant that taking on such a role would require me to give it the time that it deserved. I was forwarded the email of Prof. Simon Chandler-Wilde – the UKAN+ lead for EDI and later that evening, I got in touch with him.

March 2022, I am now the ECR champion in EDI. Since my role, last year, the EDI team – Simon Chandler-Wilde, Zoe Hunter and I have had plentiful discussions about EDI and how we can diversify and be more inclusive in our growing acoustics community. Conversations such as varying our webinar speakers where people with a disability, more women and ECRs are approached to deliver our talks took place. Other considerations within our meetings include supporting activities that allow acoustics to be more accessible to everyone, initiating conversations on childcare support and costs, and help with travel funding for our ECRs with conferences / research visits. These are just a handful of things that have been discussed, actioned upon, and successfully delivered within our network in the time that I have joined as an EDI champion.

For me though, I felt as though our successes of tackling EDI within the network were not visible enough. It was in a meeting one day where I suggested “*Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could document the great work that women in acoustics do? Some people may not feel comfortable to be video recorded, it would be so good to interview them and record them just like a podcast.*” Simon, Zoe and Kirill were in full support and that's when Zoe mentioned a group of researchers at UCL who were already doing something of similar sort (a COVID project supported through UKAN+ funding), where they had a recording facility, inviting guests and speaking to them about acoustics – a podcast channel called *The Rest Is Just Noise* (<https://www.justnoisepod.com/>). The team behind this clever idea are Andrew Mitchell, Dr Francesco Aletta and Dr Tin Oberman.

Fast forward to the present day and since that conversation, I got in touch with the just noise pod team, and we've been working together to turn the Women in Acoustics (WiA) special podcast series into fruition. I've been in contact with some remarkable women in acoustics who are breaking barriers, glass ceilings in fact with the incredible acoustics work that they are doing. The first guest was Prof. Eleanor Stride – Professor at the University of Oxford, specialising in Biomaterials and the fabrication of nano and microscale devices for drug delivery. One of which is using bubbles and ultrasonics! It was interesting to see how she propelled in her career and understand if there were any challenges she faced, being a woman in acoustics. The first episode for this has already been recorded and edited, with it being released on Friday 23rd June 2023 to celebrate International Women in Engineering day

<https://www.justnoisepod.com/1438372/13064708-wia-special-series-bubbles-everywhere-with-eleanor-stride>).

The second guest was Ms Angela Lamacraft – acoustic consultant at Sustainable Acoustics working on various projects such as prediction of vibrations in mining activities and analysing noise in the river Thames! Angela was wonderful to speak to, I gained so much understanding on what it means to be a working parent – finding the right balance between homelife whilst remaining successful in her career. The third guest was Ms Helen Sheldon – Director at RBA Acoustics working specifically on buildings and residential properties. Helen has worked on many impressive projects both nationally and internationally covering areas such as the Middle East and Eastern Europe! I enjoyed speaking to Helen so much, I found her extremely genuine and approachable. This made me fully appreciate why Helen has been the perfect advocate for promoting acoustics as a STEM subject to the wider public. The episodes with Angela and Helen have been recorded and are currently being edited, ready to be listened to, by not just the acoustics community but to the broader society.

This is one of the things that I was pleased with, about this project. The idea was to promote underrepresented groups (i.e., women) in acoustics, be more visible and accessible to not just people in acoustics but to everyone. The team at UKAN+ hope this will be engaging for listeners and allow people to find some relatability and feel included within the network. We are excited to see this flourish, with the potential of speaking to other underrepresented groups (i.e., neurodiverse, ethnic minorities etc.). Watch this space...



*Prof. Eleanor Stride*



*Ms Angela Lamacraft*



*Ms Helen Sheldon*



*Dr Hasina Begum – co-host*