

From “ghost writer” to author: An autobiography of the grant- writing technician

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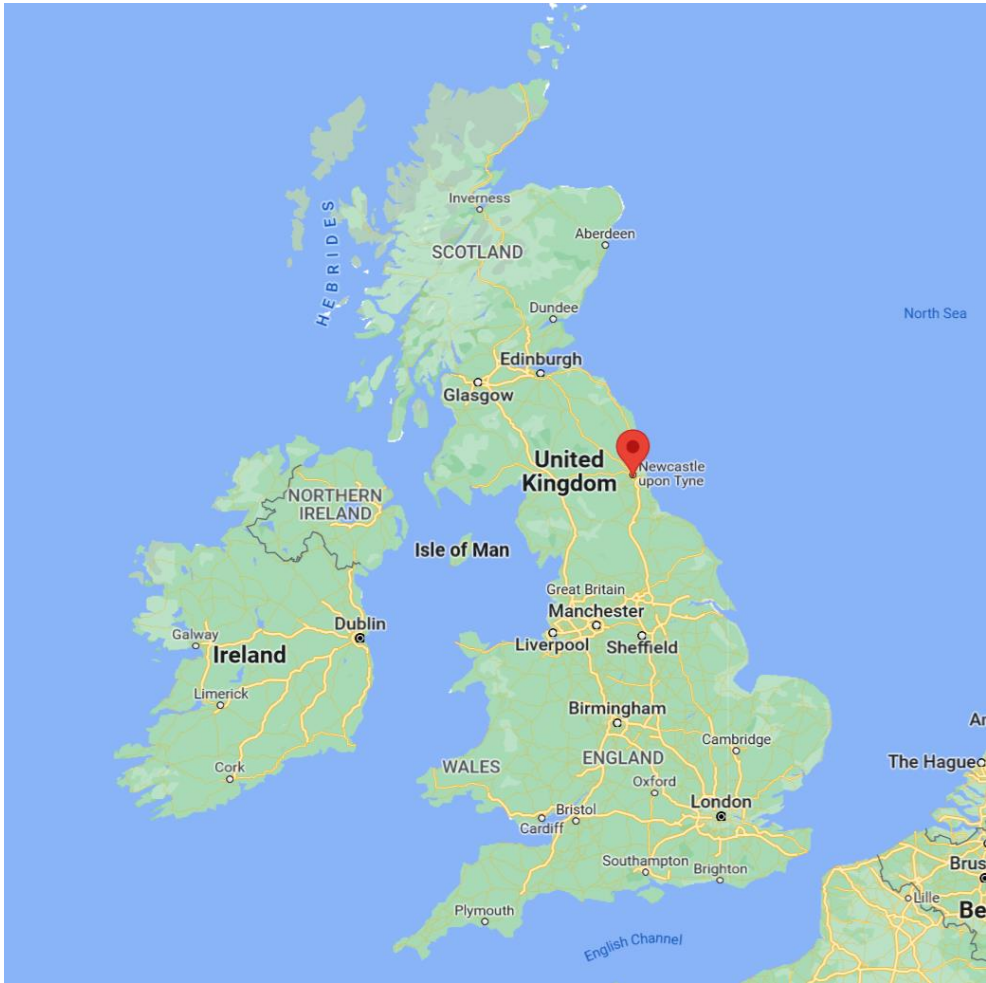
THE “Outstanding Technician of the Year” 2021



“From NU technologists and methodologists...for the world”



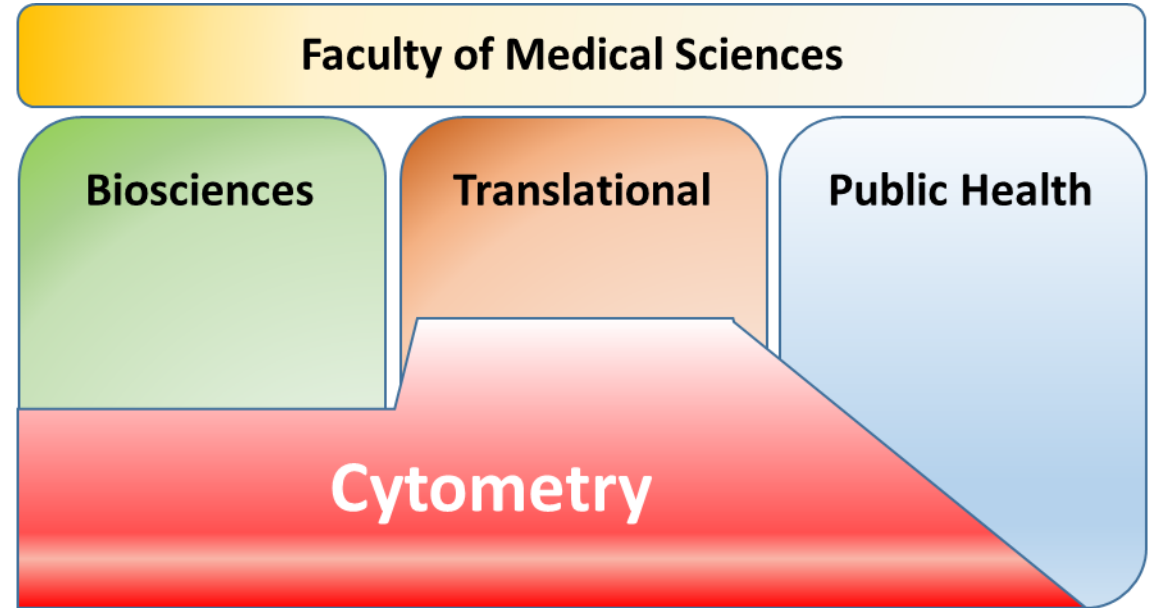
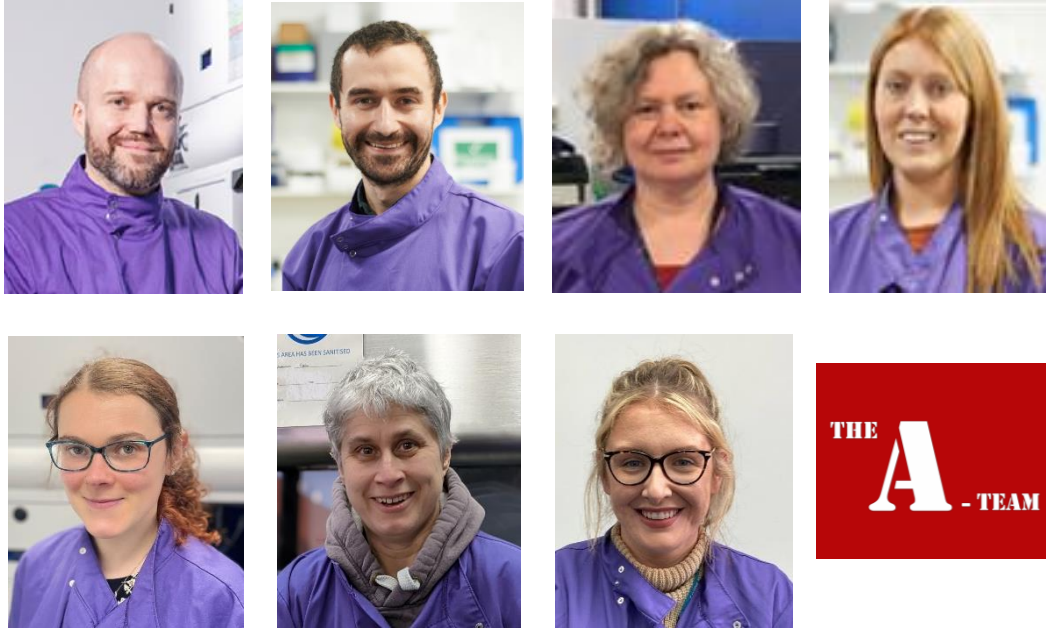
Where is our story set?



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Meet the characters and their skill sets



- Collaborating with 300+ scientists from different disciplines/institutes
- External collaborations all over the world plus Industry partners

- A highly skilled set of **TECHNICIANS** who are world-leading experts in a **FUNDAMENTAL** area of enabling technology (Cytometry aka Single cell Analysis)



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Our story begins back in 2015...



- Move from dedicated research institute (CRUK) to academia
- Quite a culture shock..
- Aged overnight...

- VERY different funding model for driving research
- GRANTS, GRANTS and more GRANTS
- Very much seen as an academics “right of passage” and a “badge of honour”
- **Too much about the individual and not enough about the team**



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Where can you go for funding?

- Internal sources (institutional)
- Research Councils (UKRI)
- Large Charities (Wellcome Trust)
- Medium charities (BHF)
- Small charities (local/regional)
- Philanthropic donations
- Seems to be lot's of options BUT question of suitability
- And of course **ELIGIBILITY..**

Last resort.....



Grant writing began with “ghost writing” ...

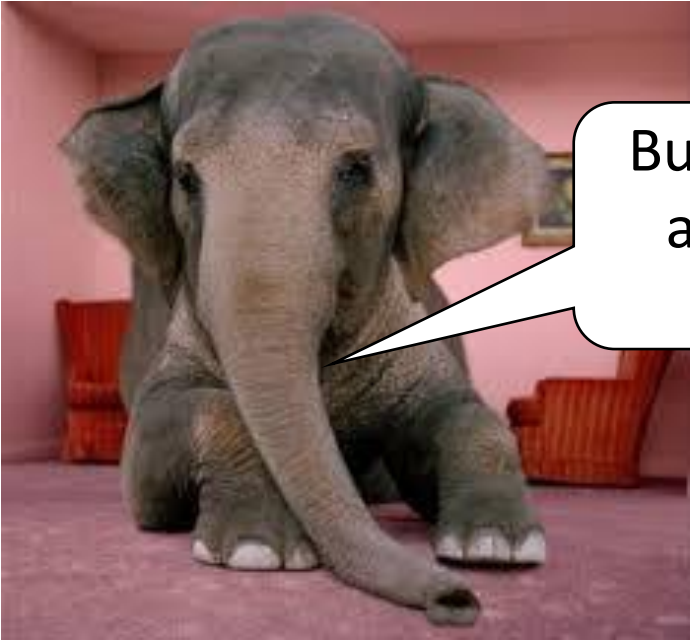
- What Is a Ghost writer?
- **A freelance writer who pens a text that is credited to someone else.**



- A lot of writing/editing whole sections of others grants
- Making sure costings for facility use were right
- Writing LoS for grants in “generic” manner
- REALLY started to make me think.....

Why couldn't I write my own story..or at least get credit?

Some common quotes:



But you are not
an academic
..are you?

“Go ahead and write it/co-ordinate it but Professor X will lead it as he/she has the reputation/track record in X”

“The University doesn't allow non-academic staff to be PIs on grants”

“The bid won't be competitive without Professor X on-board, leading it”

“The funding agency won't be impressed if we don't have an established academic leading the bid”

“It is all about great science so how can you lead as a technician”?

But with their interests and pressures...is an academic the author the best choice?

Why stop anyone who want to write a grant..?



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“Shy bairns get nowt”: digging under or climbing over the wall



Multi-User Equipment Grant



**2017 – Asked to “ghost write” bid to WT MUEG
Told couldn’t be the PI or named CO-I
“Might get a mention somewhere”
UNSUCCESSFUL (not even past round 1..)**

“Shy bairns get nowt”: digging under or climbing over the wall



Multi-User Equipment Grant



2019 – Started to be asked to be expert reviewer for WT MUEG panel (NOT panel member though)

“Shy bairns get nowt”: digging under or climbing over the wall



Multi-User Equipment Grant



**2019 – Invited to become full panel member!
Speaking direct to funding agency..
Made sure my employers knew this...
Attitudes started to change overnight..**

“Shy bairns get nowt”: digging under or climbing over the wall



Multi-User Equipment Grant

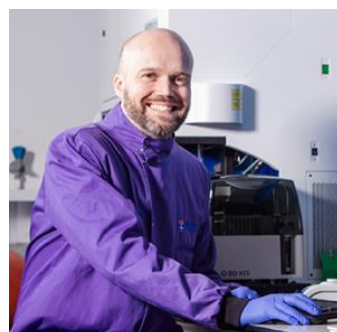
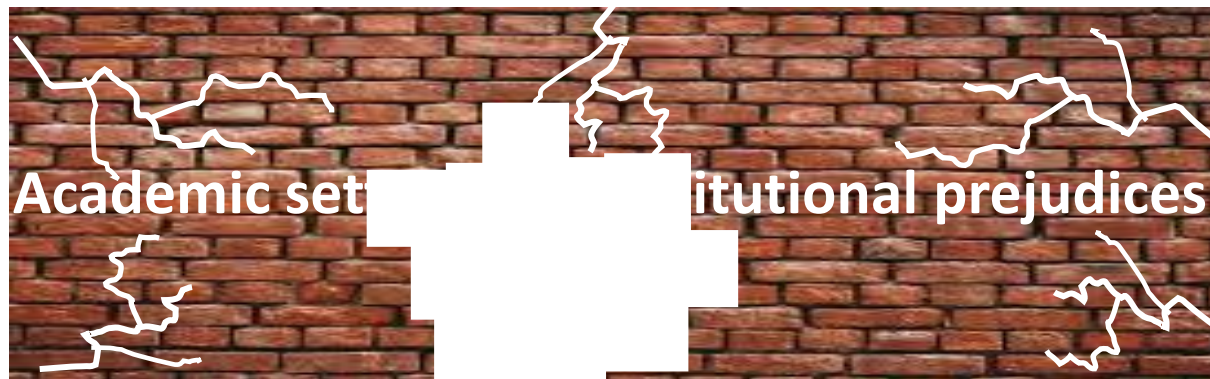


2020 – Argued to lead my own bid to MUEG
Team science and inclusive
Led by world-leading experts in technology
Successful (£500,000)

“Shy bairns get nowt”: digging under or climbing over the wall



Medical
Research
Council



2021 – Only non academic CO-I on UKRI-CIC grant

Worth ~£6 million and awarded £300,000

2021 – Invited to sit on MRC mid-level equipment panel

2022 – **Led successful bid to above (£550,000)**



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The moral of the story is...

- Emphasised strengths my job role (big myself up..)
- Focused on my team of experts and benefits of this (big the team up)
- Highlighted strengths of core facility model and reputation
- Brought together group of CO-Is with strong research needs/linked funding
- Got support from national and international collaborators (academic/industry)
- Secured faculty match (10-20% of costs)
- GANTT chart for implementation of new technology
- Accurate recharging rate calculation
- Vision beyond the grant (sustainability)
- **Didn't accept the status quo**

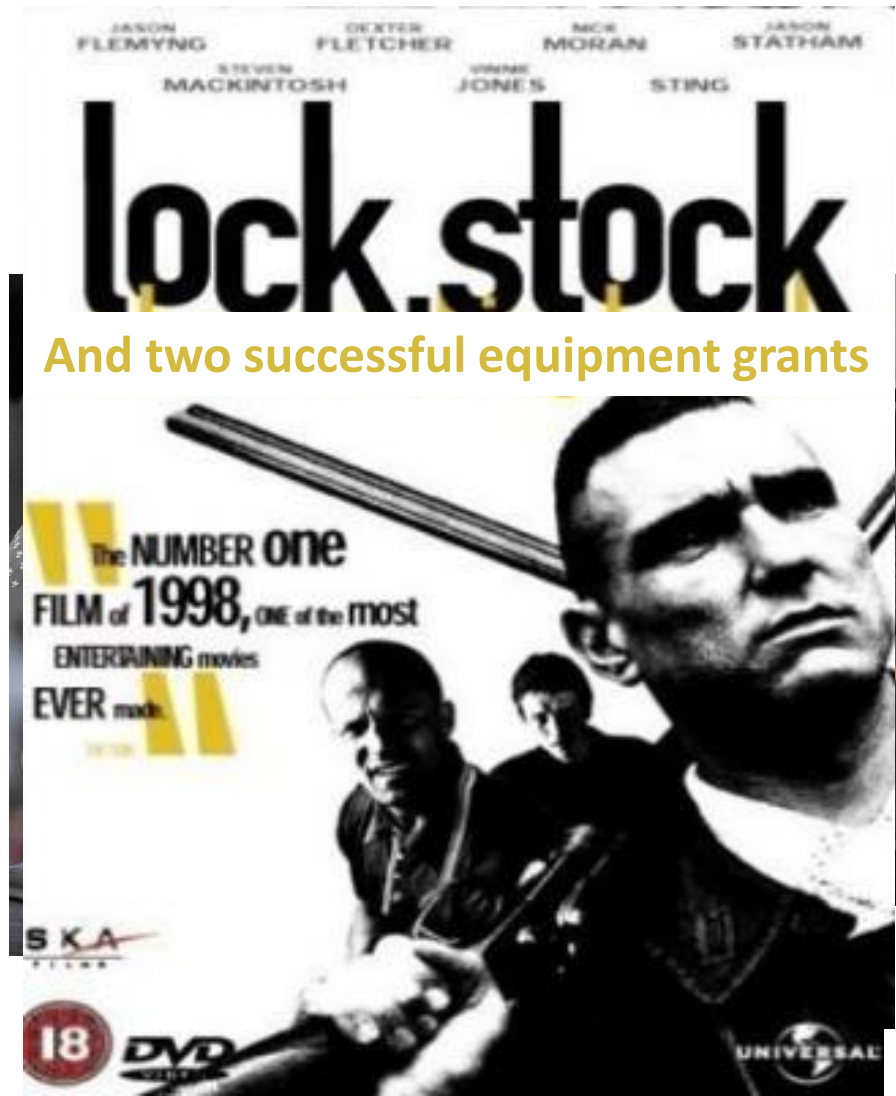
Plot twist....the story isn't over and the battle not won



There may be a hole in the wall and cracks growing
But WALL is still there.....and gap needs widening to let more technicians go through it.

It is time to write our/your own story!

A bit about the author.....



Technician **Commitment**



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Acknowledgments: The cast of 100s



Alex Laude



**Director of
FMS
Facilities**

Gwen Averley



RFDM FMS

David Burn



FMS PVC

Derek Mann



**FMS Dean of R&I
Till 2020**



MUEG - co-Applicants:

Sophie Hambleton
Matthew Collin
Mathias Trost

Gary Reynolds
Chris Duncan
Caroline Wilson
Muzlifah Haniffa
Arthur Pratt
Daniel Rico



MRC MLEG - co-Applicants:

Andrew Fisher
Alex Laude

Jim Shaw
Kelly Coffey
Amy Vincent
Muzlifah Haniffa
Deborah Henderson
Catharien Hilkens
Chris Lamb
Derek Mann
Suzanne Madgwick
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