



british interactive group

Big Event 2007 Report

July 25-27, 2007

Magna Science Adventure Centre

Submitted to the British Interactive Group Executive
September 12th, 2007
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1. 0. Introduction

The 2007 BIG Event was held at the Magna Science Adventure with a total of 88 delegates over 3 days.

1.1. Role of the BIG Event Coordinator and BIG Event Assistant

Submitted internally to the BIG Exec. Please email event@big.uk.com for further details.

2.0. Evaluation Summary

A questionnaire was provided in the delegate pack provided on arrival. A box was provided for responses from mid morning on the second day, and verbal reminders were made during the AGM and informally to delegates to return the evaluation forms. The response rate for the questionnaires was 44 responses of 88 delegates (50%). Many responders left one or more numerical questions blank, but all responders offered at least one written comment to supplement the written work.

3.0. Venue

3.1. Staff

Savita Custead coordinated the conference on behalf on the British Interactive Group. Nicola Holland organised the conference services side of the Event on behalf of Magna (nswinden@magnatrust.co.uk) after taking over from Kerrie Hudson who left the post 3 months prior to the Event. Helen Johnson acted as liaison between the British Interactive Group and Magna. During the Event the British Interactive Group Executive acted as convenors for each of the conference sessions, liaising with conference session speakers and troubleshooting technical, logistical and content related problems. Jane Morrey-Jones, an explainer at the Science Museum, acted as the BIG Event assistant.

3.2. Rooms and Space

Four areas of Magna were used during the conference. These spaces were provided free of charge by the centre.

1. The BIG hall was divided into three areas. The Hall is an extremely large room (2000 m²) and was divided into three divided areas with curtains. Area 1 served as the main plenary area with a stage with laptop and projector as well as housing the registration desk, notice board, and Finance/Membership area. Area 2 had large round tables and was used for catering (lunches/coffees/teas). A display area was also set up in this space. Area 3 was used on the first day as a set-up area for a large star dome. Area 2 and 3 were used together for the BIG Event Speed dating event. The spaces were not used concurrently due to noise concerns
2. Breakout room 1 (Hadfield and Huntsfield) was used for event sessions on all three days
3. Breakout room 2 (Bessemer and Brearley) was used for event sessions on all three days



- 4. The Fuel restaurant was used as an evening social space on the first evening. Thursday morning delegates were also given open access to the Magna exhibit areas.

3.3. Marketplace

A small marketplace was created during the Event, with 6x2 foot table available for free to any delegate. Only four tables were used (similar to previous years) indicating that either a marketplace was not necessary or better promotion could be made of the opportunity.

3.4. On-site Assistance

Throughout the Event the conference team at Magna were available for assistance. A different duty manager was present on the Wednesday which affected the continuity of the event. A dedicated technical support team was brought in to manage the Event although overall the session requirements were quite low.

3.5. Equipment

Each of the session spaces was provided with a laptop, data projector, flip chart with paper and markers. Speakers were seated at a non-raised front table and were encouraged to move the room around to suit their own purposes. The laptops provided were PC based, and presentations were loaded by CD-Rom or by USB memory stick. Wireless internet was not available.

3.6. Participant's evaluation of the venue

The overall participant evaluation of the BIG Event Site was extremely positive as shown:

Please rate the BIG Event site from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor):

5 (excellent)	25	4	17	3	2	2		1 (poor)	
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Participants offered the following comments:

- A really enjoyable and interesting conference attended by a great bunch of people
- Only let down by cold, dark, depressing venue
- Friendliest conference I've ever been to
- Was really well organised event, great discussions loads of like minded people, relaxed informative
- Venue too dark
- The bars are expensive
- Great fun and useful as always
- Great venue, great talks
- Very useful talks
- Very friendly – lots of ideas to go away with
- Felt a bit isolated at first as it was my first event but great rapport by the third day



- I love BIG. Friendly as always.

The second evaluation question regarding the food and facilities also showed a positive response:

Please rate the food and facilities from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor):

5 (excell	6	4	21	3	14	2	3	1 (poor)
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Participants offered the following comments:

- Food lovely, but main hall a bit cold
- Lack of daylight and public transport an issue
- Suffering from daylight deprivation
- Lunch was limited in range and amount especially on first day
- Nice location, Magna excellent food, perhaps ideally more local cheap hotels
- Food a bit mediocre, facilities very good
- Not enough – portions too small
- Cold and dark
- Food at Magna was badly organised, some fruit would have been nice
- Rooms too hot/cold. Environment not well controlled. Food (lunch) nice, but could have had fruit available too.
- Food/coffee excellent, Magna staff a bit uninspiring
- Cold, average food poorly distributed. More fruit/veggies, which takes less time to actually get!
- Food was lovely, except on first night as service was slow, coffee and tea were plentiful
- Lighting and temperature could be improved
- Magna dinner was a bit confused, but food okay. Party was great
- Let down by food on Wednesday night!
- First evening meal very slow to arrive, excellent evening in football club
- Even though there was lots of us the food provided wasn't very varied
- Food: magna evening meal 0/10. Lucnch 3/10 not enough veggie stuff. No greens! Dinner 9/10.
- Some maps would be helpful
- The organisation of Magna catering staff for Wednesday meal was dreadful. The football club food school-dinnery
- Shame about food on Wednesday night but fantastic otherwise
- More water and tea please

4.0. Marketing

The marketing effort for the Event began on January 18th, 2007 with the call for session proposals. A number of marketing approaches were made as detailed. In future years there is great opportunity for the BIG Event coordinator to work closer with the BIG Administrator to achieve greater awareness of the Event.

4.1 Postal marketing

The core of the postal marketing effort was an A6 postcard that was circulated. The postcard was designed by Martin Glancy, and included images of the inside of the science centre as provided by the marketing department at Magna.

The postal marketing campaign over 2005-2007 does not appear to have yielded great results and may be best discontinued.

4.2. e-marketing

Marketing emails were sent to various distributing email lists, primarily BIG-chat, PSCI-Com, GEM-list, PCST

The following marketing emails were sent: (each prefaced with BIG Event 2007)

Date of Distribution	Topic of Email
18/01/2007	Call for Session Proposals
25/01/2007	1 Week Left for Session Proposals!
19/02/2007	BIG Event Assistant
09/05/2007	Find out more on our website!
12/05/2007	Book your accommodation before it's gone!
06/06/2007	Accommodation Update
27/06/2007	Online payment options

A total of 8 other public emails were sent by BIG members advertising sessions or seeking speakers. The Event Coordinator encouraged this to all speakers looking for more speakers as a way of finding new people and also publicising the event.

5.0. Social Events

5.1 Wednesday Social

A pre-event social was planned for the Wednesday evening of the Event and held in the Fuel Restaurant inside Magna. Food was available from a set menu at an average price of £8-12. The rest of Magna (ie exhibitions) were not open and available. The majority of delegates stayed for the evening occasion. The bar was available immediately following the last session and the restaurant closed at 10:30pm.



A serious health and safety matter arose during the Wednesday event when the first BIG member to order a draught beer was served beer pump cleaning fluid. Poison control services were contacted, although the member did not go to the hospital. The incident was discussed in full with the Magna staff. For further details of this matter please contact event@big.uk.com

5.2 Evening Event

The Thursday evening event was held at Sheffield United Football Club. Delegates were transported from Magna by two coaches to the centre of Sheffield. The Event Coordinator arrived 30 minutes prior to manage last minute details with the centre. Dinner was pre-selected by the Coordinator and served in three courses. Wine was given upon arrival and the meal was served at 7:30pm. Trevor’s Fetish Ceildh band was hired to come to the venue at 7:00pm for set up.

The Evening Event concluded at 11:45pm.

Please rate Thursday’s Evening Event from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor):

5 (excell)	29	4	9	3	6	2		1 (poor)	
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Participants offered the following comments:

- But could it start a bit later to give more time to go back to accommodation and get changed?
- Great venue, food and music
- Josh would have been proud of it!
- Meal was pretty poor compared to last year
- Well organised, great fun, good length, long enough to be fun, not so long I couldn’t get up the next morning
- Great, fab event
- Wot a larf!
- Great night, odd venue
- Could have been on first night
- Good choice of venue and entertainment but as not keen on menu choice for main course. Many people at my table didn’t like fish. But I guess you can’t please everyone.
- Ceildh was good for mixing people and to give a break from talking
- I wouldn’t have chosen fish as a main course, but I did enjoy it
- Far better than academic conferences
- Odd choice of food. Buses back should have been arranged
- No bus back? Good food, excellent band
- The Ceildh was good fun
- Nice ceidh, very sociable evening, thank you
- Excellent choice of format, content etc although venue a bit nondescript
- Great mix, everyone could have a go at the dancing with Noel
- Really good and I really enjoyed myself. It’s such a nice relaxed event to go to. Thank you for organising.
- I won’t forget this! The best conference social I have ever attended
- A fitting tribute, Josh would have been a happy man last night.
- Music and dancing and company brilliant – food iffy
- Comfortable networking environment is important. Rather concerned about the



- poisoned cider in the bar.
- Bar too expensive – but otherwise excellent
- Good band – shame about the injuries!
- Friendly, great meal
- Party great
- The meal was okay but not sure it was worth £40

6.0 Sessions

6.1. Proposal Process

The conference sessions at the BIG Event were selected by the BIG executive from a number of proposed sessions submitted by the science communication community. A call for session proposals was circulated throughout the community by way of email distribution lists, and an approximate deadline of three weeks was given. The general criteria for selection of proposals was (not inclusive):

- Relevance to the BIG community
- Uniqueness – examining if the topic had been presented at recent BIG or other conferences
- Requirements – feasibility of providing required equipment/space/human resources to run the session

Proposals were submitted to the BIG Event coordinator by post or by email, and were then discussed in detail in person by the British Interactive Group executive. All those who submitted proposals were contacted by email to discuss if their proposals were successful or not.

Speakers were subsequently contacted with the details of the fees to be paid by presenters attending for one or two days, and were given forms to fill out detailing equipment requirements and risk assessments.

For the 2007 Event, a total of 22 session proposals were received. The majority were received after the published deadline date, and were solicited. A further nine sessions were directly commissioned by the Event Coordinator. An attempt was made to separate sessions into target groups to give participants maximum choice in attending relevant sessions.

6.2. Conference Session Feedback

Please rate the conference sessions from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor):

5 (excellent)	19	4	18	3	5	2	1	1 (poor)	
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- Participants offered the following comments:
- On the whole good but more practical activities and interactive delivery styles
 - Very science centre oriented, would be good to have sessions for freelancers and those without premises for public/schools



- No duff ones at all!
- Really interesting and a range of areas. Loved demo dating, fantastic ice breaker
- Brill – all that I attended
- Excellent variety and perhaps unsurprisingly, well presented
- Mixed quality, but most very good, thoughtful
- Brilliant variety
- Some excellent, some poor: ill prepared, facilitated
- Great, good balance of sessions
- Focus was on communicating – interaction between people – could include interaction with exhibits
- Something for everyone, felt that some could have been held for more than 1 hour

6.3. Keynote Speaker

The Keynote Speaker at the Event was Linda Conlon, Director of the Centre for Life and outgoing chair of Ecsite-UK. Suggestions for a keynote speaker were collected during the BIG Executive members. The Event Coordinator approached and confirmed with Linda.

The evaluation question on the keynote speech to the participants yielded the following results and comments:

Please rate the keynote speaker from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor):

5 (excell	6	4	16	3	3	2		1 (poor)	
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- Participants offered the following comments:
- Again, very science centre oriented. Not very representative of “interactive”
 - A bit too tired to follow all of it
 - Very interesting, relevant, topical
 - Very timely
 - Interesting speaker, nice to get someone so high up in sci comm
 - Identified the major challenges, honest with a direct message that I could take back
 -

6.4. BIG AGM

The Annual General Meeting for the British Interactive Group was held at 10:30 am on July 27th in the BIG Hall at Magna. There was no cost to attend the session, and the announcement of the meeting was made to all British Interactive Group members.

The AGM was attended by nearly all of the BIG Event participants, with no attending BIG members who were not participants at the Event.

BIG Event participants were provided with the following reports on the BIG website:

- President’s Report



- Treasurer’s Report
- Secretary’s Report (AGM minutes 2007)
- Membership Secretary’s Report

Those who attended the BIG AGM gave the following evaluation.

Please rate the BIG AGM from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor):

5 (excell	10	4	17	3	3	2	1	1 (poor)	1
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Participants offered the following comments:

- Short and to the point!
- Efficient
- Get things done as efficiently and quickly as possible
- Ensure reports are available and brought to attention prior to event
- (1) seemed quite disorganised and there should be anonymous voting
- Quick and comprehensive
- Need more time if there’s discussions, needed planning
- (2) rather too vague and disorganised there should be a secretary master file and things like voting should be routine
- Nice to see enthusiastic volunteers

6.5. Best Demo Competition

The Best Demo Competition was held on the afternoon of July 27th, with a total of 8 entries. The overall winner of the 2007 Best Demo competition was Ben Craven. The Best Demo competition was not evaluated separately. Informal feedback suggested that it would be helpful to distribute/publish separate information for new members attending the event as the majority of participants would need to prepare ahead of time.

6.6. BIG Bursary Summary

Helen Featherstone gave a summary of her BIG Bursary at the beginning of the conference for approximately 40 minutes. Helen attended a workshop in England hosted by Forkbeard Theatre. The talk was moved to the beginning of the session due to a scheduling change where the keynote speaker was moved to the last day. Rachel Mason provided information on the details and objectives of the award, as well as how to apply for it during the year.

7.0 Participants

7.1. Registration Process

For the first time, registration was available through an online system. This proved to be a superior system to the paper-based one of previous years as it eliminated problems with forms being lost and managing the length of the form.



Participants were asked to fill out the form detailing personal information as well as dietary and access requirements. Invoices were sent to the majority of delegates, although the option to pay by cheque was available. Mid-way through the registration process the BIG Exec made PAYPAL available to members, and a number of payments were received in this way. It is expected this will be a far more utilised system in future.

7.2. Delegate Packs

Upon arrival at the BIG Event delegates were provided with a delegate pack and asked to verify the details provided on the initial form (including participation in the Best Demo competition, dietary requirements, and requested sessions)

Participant delegate packs included the following documentation

- A name badge with first and last name and organisation
- A full programme for the Event
- Location information for each of the Event Sessions
- BIG Event 2007 Evaluation Form

Maps were requested and printed on the day – both for the centre layout, and to outside events. It is recommended these be included in future packs.

7.3 Participant Profile

A total of 88 participants attended the Event, breaking down in the following way:

- **60 attending for 3 days, 2 attending for 2 days, 18 attending for 1 day**
- **49 organisations represented**
- **11 representing academics, 3 representing exhibition organisations, 3 freelance, 2 science festivals, 6 representing museums, 5 representing supporting organisations, 3 representing professional bodies, 49 representing SDC's**
- **32 men, 56 women**
- **85 UK based, 3 international**

In the Event evaluation, participants were asked about their motivations for attending: (note that many participants chose more than one answer)

Venue/City Location	4	Cost	2
Speakers	14	Session Content	13
Networking	35	Best Demo	4

Participants offered the following comments:

- To present on behalf of my centre
- Highlight of the year – I always come
- Was speaking about some of my centres work



- Professional development
- Personal development
- Joined in speaking in a number of sessions
- Recommended by employer
- Invited to speak in SCEAG session
- Asked to attend
- I came back from holiday and found I was booked to come here

8.0. Overall Participant Evaluation

At the conclusion of the evaluation form, participants were asked to give their overall views on the conference, and encouraged to give substantive comments on the successes of the 2007 Event and suggestions for the 2008 Event.

How did the BIG Event 2007 meet your expectations?

Very Well	23	Well	18	Neutral	1	Some what		Not at all	
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- Participants offered the following comments:
- A really positive, relaxed forum for the sharing of ideas
 - Great event
 - Really enjoyed it, learned things, met very nice people
 - Really found it useful and enjoyed it much more than expected. Not only useful for work, it is nice to know so many people share similar passions
 - Exceeded
 - I didn't know what it was, but now I do love it
 - networking
 - Some of the sessions could have had more content to complement the discussion
 - First timer, didn't quite know what to expect
 - It's my first conference so it was a new experience

What did you find most useful about this year's BIG Event?

- Participants offered the following comments:
- Workshops on evaluation and special week priorities
 - BIG website
 - Meeting people working in similar field
 - Talking to people
 - Getting to see Magna, lots of good food for thought and tips and tricks to put into practice
 - Networking
 - Networking and sharing ideas. Discussions were superb
 - Really interesting and generous sharing of work and ideas. Especially special needs, paul mccrory talk



- Meeting people
- Meeting people, possible collaborations finding out what everyone else is doing
- Generally meeting people, the format and ambience of the event makes this much easier than at most conferences
- Seeing how other people present and the props that they use
- First night good
- Feeling part of a larger community
- It's just science communicators talking about their specific field. The main sessions I enjoyed were creating shows, maths is magic, exploratory behaviour
- Talking to Ian Russell, Ben Craven and Dominik of Phaeno – finding like minds helped me realise what I am doing at work is a good way to go. Also they gave me leads either how to work them or places to go where I'd see relevant stuff
- Looking at what is going on in the science communication field, new ideas and meeting new people
- That you can take ideas away to use them
- Informal conversations
- As always, networking and making new friends/seeing old ones
- Opportunity to put a lot of faces to names, excellent range of sessions
- Networking
- Networking, chance to pick people's brains
- Most of the sessions were very related to what I do
- Meeting similar minded people and sharing ideas and knowledge
- Networking
- Meeting new people and fantastic ideas – sharing. Speed dating
- Meeting lots of really useful people – useful in the best sense, with lots of ideas and tips freely swapped. Wide mix of talks etc. Speed dating a great idea.
- Sessions were great and meeting all in the trade was very important
- Meeting people – making contacts and sharing ideas
- The speed dating was a really good introduction. The creativity workshop by Paul McCrory was excellent! I loved the opportunity to meet with so many interesting people from centres all over the country
- Networking, personal development. Essential when you work pretty much on your own.
- Networking, Ian's show, copyright session, festivals
- Networking
- Networking, as ever.
- Meeting people
- Keynote speech. Market place – found a prop I was looking for!
- Networking and the chance to tune in anew to the reservoir of enthusiasm that is BIG!
- Sold two props!

What could be improved or changed for next year's BIG Event?

- Participants offered the following comments:
- Any chance of cheap accommodation within walking distance of venue?
 - Venue with closer accommodation
 - More on exhibits
 - Bit disappointed by some of sessions some bit vague and didn't achieve much, perhaps strive to achieve more specific aims from sessions
 - Start the Friday sessions a bit later
 - A more central location. Also Magna was cold and dark.
 - Easier access venue and accommodation



- Food
- Have tables with discussion topics and we go on them and discuss that topic, like “how do you develop a show” and we share experiences
- Possibly longer gap between end of day and conference meal
- Interactives outside science centre – museums, zoos, aquaria, environmental/outdoor education.
- Standardised convening (some were excellent, some almost non-existent) Indicators in the programme as to the type of session ie website's conference programme with symbols to indicate workshop/panel discussion
- I think on last day the event should finish a bit earlier as people have long journey home
- Better map directions for those travelling by car if events are held away from the centre
- More interactive approaches to the delivery of sessions –as this is what we're all about! I imagine it would be hard to change this but the conference is so expensive and therefore a barrier to people attending.
- Access to natural light. Accommodation on site to increase time to network.
- Warmer venue
- It was difficult to arrive on time on the first day and as was talking hard to get room set up in time.
- Multiculturalism, more visitor oriented stuff and (don't hate me) less demos
- The option of having the BIG info pack on coloured paper for people who suffer from dyslexia
- Can we go to Herstmonceux now? Or at least somewhere with windows?
- Perhaps more time in the schedule for exploring the host science centre
- Warmer room – perhaps with windows so we know what time of day it is
- A warmer, cosier venue
- Not a lot – Savita did a great job – with all the other help
- Not a lot! Huge venue is excellent, don't go smaller!
- Drama session
- Could it include more about science centres rather than outreach/shows etc
- It was expensive, especially as I stayed at the holiday inn
- More comfortable venue
- Best Demo not at the end. Have it in Scotland!
- More non-science centre sessions
- Can the rooms be warmer?
- More to do with non-science interactives if possible. And a venue with accommodation so that it's not sure us in our camper van – it would just be more fun!

**Please submit any questions or corrections to
event@big.uk.com**