



british interactive group

BIG Event 2008
July 23-25
Techniquest@NEWI

BIG Event 2008 Programme of Events

Updated 08.04.08 – Further details to follow

Wednesday, July 23rd, 2008

12:00 - 1:00

Registration

1:00 - 2:00

Keynote presentation – Steve Pizzey

2:00 - 3:00

Demo fair speed dating

Bring your favourite demo, or something to represent your work, and meet all of the other delegates in this fun and fast “meet and greet” session!

3:00 - 3:30

Coffee break



3:30 - 4:30 - Parallel sessions

Measuring impacts

In light of the recent House of Commons report into the funding of Science Discovery Centres which called for more research into the impacts of interactive and hands-on experiences this session will give some practical advice on how to use evaluation to feed into wider impact studies. Experts in museum studies and the Visitor Studies Group, along with an ECSITE-UK representative, will help identify key questions that need answers and appropriate techniques for finding the answers. This will be a discussion event which could feed into future funding proposals for research into the impacts of Science Discovery Centres.

Helen Featherstone, UWE

Further speakers TBC.

Training presenters

They say you don't really learn to drive until after you pass your test, is the same applicable to presenter training? Can anyone be trained to be a good presenter? Can too much training be counter-productive? What is the most effective way to train presenters or learn new shows? This facilitated discussion session on the theory behind presenter training will be a chance to reflect on these and other questions with others working in the field.

Jo Harris, Techniquest

Clara Cromar, Sensation: Dundee science centre

Jo Harris, Centre for Life

A rough guide to engineering

What is Engineering? Where can you find it? Come along on a journey around the world and find out all about what engineers do, and how they do it! Discover how engineers build bridges that span vast valleys, build structures that can survive earthquakes, and cook food by using only Mirrors!

A Rough Guide can show you how Engineering has changed our lives, and with the interactive voting system, you can become an Engineer too! So, join in and make the world a better place!

Huw James, Engineering Explained



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4:30 - 5:30 - Parallel sessions

Planet SciCast Update

This science web video project was more-or-less announced at the BIG Event in 2006. Twenty-four months later, it's recently finished its first year. This session will try to make sense of that, and will also explore lessons learned, the tricky transition from startup to ongoing project; the difficulties of small-scale partnerships; spin-offs and inspired projects; what happens when you hit BBC news; and the pitfalls of getting teachers to do your delivery for you. Also: how Sir David Attenborough ended up getting roped in. For real.

Jonathan Sanderson

Using generic learning outcomes or How to prove that science centres make a difference

Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) were developed to measure learning. UK museums have used them extensively but they are used less in science centres. This session will show you how to introduce GLOs to your organisation, how GLOs will help you understand your visitors better, how they can help improve what you do and how you can use them to show managers and funders that your programmes and exhibits really do help people learn.

Dr Sue Cavell, Head of Research and Evaluation, Techniquiest, Cardiff

Emmie Kell, Emmie Kell Consulting

Suzanne Spicer, Learning Manager, Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester

Dealing with ID

With Darwin Year 2009 on the horizon, it is inevitable we will encounter people pushing the idea of Intelligent Design with a higher profile, and probably a good few Creationists as well. How can we deal effectively with their challenges without appearing to be avoiding the issue? This session will be an opportunity to discuss what we've learned from our own encounters with these people and to look at some successful strategies for defusing their claims to have scientific backing for their position?

Ian Simmons, LIFE

Sun Dome workshop

The Sun Dome is an exciting activity that comprises movies and interactive role play, using a portable inflatable dome. The activity introduces the science that occurs inside the Sun and the work of scientists to produce fusion power for electricity in the future. We have seen 4000 children in primary schools with very positive feedback.

Joana Silva, Culham Science Centre

Further speakers TBC.



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Thursday, July 24th

8:30 - 9:00

Registration

9:00 - 10:30 - Parallel Sessions

Facilitation workshop

This 1.5 hour course covers a number of different topics designed to help you recognise the skills you already have in facilitation (even if you didn't know it!) and learn some new skills. Some of the major topics include:

- Different facilitation styles, and when you might decide to use these
- Strategies for working with difficult participants and leading discussions on difficult topics
- Using questioning skills, body language and other techniques for engaging a group
- Theories about groups and how they work together – and how you can use this to your advantage as a facilitator
- Recording discussions clearly and effectively to assist a group

Marieke Navin, Museum of Science and Industry

Toni Hamill, LIFE

Presenting a science show – the next step

So you have a science show - a list a demos that includes everything from alkazelsa rockets to an electromagnet. Add a title and a theme and your ready to go. But is that enough? How do we get to that next step? How do we make a show entertaining, unforgettable, life changing? We need your input at this interactive session.

Natasha Verniquet, Science Oxford

Further speakers TBC.

Practical Exhibit Design

Details to follow.

Ian Russell

10:00 - 10:30

Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:00 – Parallel Sessions

Build a storyteller

After developing an Early Years programme, Our Dynamic Earth brings you techniques, hints and tips to engage and enthuse young scientists.

You will:

- Develop skills required to tell stories using picture books, props, and oral storytelling traditions
- Develop ways to engage with very young children using story, song and rhyme
- Gain hints and tips on fostering a storytelling environment
- Gain sufficient understanding to increase your confidence when telling stories
- Most importantly...have fun!

Conor Hull, Our Dynamic Earth

Cameron Robinson, Our Dynamic Earth



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Medicine through time: opening your doors to a new audience

In February 2007 Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum, ran its first Medicine Through Time day. It was fully booked within a month, with a waiting list of schools eager to take part. The day was a huge success, taking the history topic of medicine through time and adding in our expertise of creating interactive shows, workshops and tours to bring the past back to life. This year we have expanded on the event to reach more schools, and have four fully booked days. This workshop will use Thinktank's Medicine Through Time days as an example of attracting new audiences, working with teenagers and using external providers. It will also show how having cross-curricula events benefits both your audience and your organisation. We will look at the planning of the event, have a go at some of the activities and talk about how we used our own skills and expertise to interpret a recognised subject in a fun and interactive way.

Laurence Butler - Thinktank

Further speakers TBC.

How to argue with weirdos

What should science communicators do when we encounter people who hold the science we're trying to communicate to be incompatible with their beliefs? Should we challenge them with arguments and evidence, or does confrontation simply entrench their position and put them off science forever? How open-minded can we be without our brains falling out? Dr Mark Lewney will offer his thoughts before opening the debate to the floor.

Mark Lewney – Freelance Science Presenter

It's only water – or is it?

It's Only Water!... or is it? is an exciting, interactive science show that explores all the amazing properties of water. The show will be brought to you in the form of a trick and quiz show that involves students and teachers. The show investigates all the things water can do. Can we turn water into wine? Make it explode, or even use it to crush an object? We will also look at ways to save water and at the importance of water in the global environment. Prepare to get wet!

Curriculum Links: Key stage 2

Ideas and Evidence in Science

- Thinking creatively
- Testing ideas using evidence from observation and measurement

Forces and Motion

- Gravity, friction, air resistance and equal and opposite reaction
- Materials and their properties
- How solid objects retain their shape

Becky Holmes, science made simple

12:00 – 1:00 – Parallel sessions

A first-time for everyone – mentoring volunteer educators

What do a database technician, an NHS manager and a librarian have in common? They have all developed and delivered interactive family activities for the Oxford University Museums in the last year. We look at the challenges and benefits of supporting volunteers or staff with little or no experience of education to share their passion with visitors, and consider how and why you might like to do it too.

Joy Todd, Oxford University Museum

Further speakers TBC.



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Public engagement discussion

What was once "public understanding of science" has now become "public engagement with STEM" (science, technology, engineering & mathematics). It's even got to the point that many funding bodies won't consider a project unless it contains "dialogue", public debate and/or societal implications. Has the pendulum swung too far? Has anything really changed? Come and have your say about the direction of "public engagement" according to BIG.

Karen Bultitude, UWE

Paul McCrory

1:00 – 2:00

Lunch and the BIG AGM

BIG AGM

Your chance to have a say! The outgoing BIG Executive will present a summary of their efforts over the previous year, and all members will have the opportunity to comment on where BIG should head in the future. The meeting will conclude with the election of the 2008/09 Executive.

2:00 – 3:00

Model making and the history of science

Over the last four years the Museum of the History of Science has developed a comprehensive programme of workshops and taught sessions addressing various elements of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Chris Parkin, Education Officer at the Museum, will outline an approach to learning experiences based on model-making activities that draw on aspects of the history of science reflected through historic scientific instruments.

Come prepared to stick and paste!

Chris Parkin, Museum of the History of Science

Dialogue events

The Public Programmes Team at Nowgen, a Centre for Genetics in Healthcare, regularly organises dialogue events for the general public about topical themes in genetics and health. In a recent event exploring addictive behaviour, we felt the format, audience questions, speakers and chair all fitted together well to make it a stimulating and enjoyable experience. In this workshop we will share our story and involve others in discussing their experiences.

Kate Mathieson, NOWGEN

Further speakers TBC.

Targeting the audience

A short history of projectile weapons. Unsuitable for those with a nervous disposition. The audience is advised to remain fully alert and attentive throughout this show.

Ian Russell

3:00 – 3:30

Coffee Break

3:30 – 4:30

Feature presentation

Details to follow.

4:30 – 5:30

Outside demos



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Many of us have favourite exhibits / demonstrations that just aren't possible to perform indoors. Whether it's squelchy, messy, noisy, dangerous or simply takes up too much space, this is your chance! We're making the most of NEWI's outdoor areas to bring these well-deserved favourites to light. If you want to contribute to the session please contact Karen Bultitude (karen.bultitude@uwe.ac.uk) in advance. Nothing illegal or MoD restricted please - risk assessments will be required!

*Karen Bultitude, UWE
Ben Craven*

What is the secret to creating successful partnerships?

The panel recently tackled this question during the development of Inside DNA, a new Wellcome Trust funded travelling exhibition. Examining the key factors they faced and encouraging active audience participation, by the end of the session there will be a useful list of tips and pitfalls, which will prove indispensable to those attempting to address the needs of different stakeholders.

*Ian Tsang -At-Bristol
Bronwyn Terrill - Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute
Louise Webb, Ecsite-uk
Further speakers TBC.*

Friday, July 25th

8:30 - 9:00
Registration

9:00 – 10:30 – Parallel Sessions

Non-Science Engagement

Ideas about interactive learning are not confined to the communication of science. BIG delegates from all backgrounds are invited to join a discussion ranging from play and children's museums, through history, world cultures, art and design. Do the same interactive learning techniques work for all subjects? Or does each topic lend itself best to its own traditional methods of interactive interpretation. Can we come up with something really innovative and engaging if we swap ideas and techniques between sectors?

*Lyndsey Clark – National Museums Scotland
Liz Smallman - Eureka
Further speakers TBC.*

Engaging with engineering

Science and Engineering are cousins, not siblings. This session will explore the key differences between science and engineering, and reflect on how these differences condition approaches to engineering, rather than science, communication. The session will commence with an overview of the relationship between science and engineering, focussing on the communication challenges these differences bring, and will conclude with two case-studies of current engineering communication activities.

*Richard Ellam, LM Interactives
Huw James, engineering explained
Further speakers TBC.*

Filming Demos

A boiled-down, stripped-out, lean-mean-video-machine version of the sold-out day-long BIG Video workshop. What sorts of demos work well on camera, what do you lose from the 'live' experience, and when is video completely pointless? In a group practical exercise (featuring the famed 'most boring demo in the world') we'll explore different shooting styles, and the key role played by the editing process. Also: pointers to smart choices of equipment, an overview of copyright and licensing issues,



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and embarrassing clips of well-known BIG regulars. Jonathan's made more than a thousand short science films; come and see how badly he messes up the next one.

Jonathan Sanderson

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee break

11:00 – 12:00 - Parallel Sessions

Working with experts

"It's never five minutes with this public engagement thing" – genuine quote from a UK 'expert'
Do we really need to work with experts? If we get experts to communicate, what happens to the science communicators? What benefits and challenges do experts bring?

This session will share experiences and draw up some best practice guidelines and top tips on working with experts and help us get the most out of each other.

Kenny Webster, Thinktank

Mark Neal, Aberyswyth University

Olympia Brown, The Royal Institution

Claire Rocks, UWE

Using Puppets

We use puppets to encourage visitors (especially younger children) to engage with our exhibits. This has proved to be very successful in making science more accessible to our audiences. We would like to share strategies, skills and experiences on this subject.

Susan Meikleham, Glasgow Science Centre

Further speakers TBC.

The BIG career plan

The great thing about this field is that people are paid to do amazingly interesting and cool jobs. How do they get there, and are they in the job they expected? In this session we will explore the career paths of a number of speakers and look to see what, if any, lessons there are for people at the start of their careers. We will take questions from the floor and try to offer advice – however unhelpful or wildly conflicting it may turn out to be. The session is suitable for students, people in the first 2 or three years of their career, anyone looking to change career and the nosey.

Andy Lloyd, LIFE

Further speakers TBC.

Rock Guitar in 11 Dimensions

Mark Lewney performs this year's Institute of Physics Schools Lecture, explaining the sound of rock music and how the physics of guitar strings might lead to a Theory of Everything (or Nothing!), and recreating the largest experiment ever built: The Large Hadron Collider which opens later this year. Learn how to explain the Higgs thingy with a brick on a rope, and receive a free stress ball!

Mark Lewney

12:00 – 1:00 – Parallel Sessions

Busking demos

Why wait around for an audience to turn up when you can take the show to them? Science busking takes live demonstrations and interpretations to people who may never have thought of stepping foot in a science centre or museum. It also presents some unique challenges - weather, stray dogs, audiences voting with their feet. It's very live, very interactive and can be very rewarding. The aim of this session is to share tips and tricks by watching some different approaches to engaging the public, in public!

David Price, science made simple



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Debbie Syrop, science made simple
Gerd Hombrecher
Elizabeth Jeavans, Institute of Physics
Bubblz maths clown
Marcus Weber

Social Inclusion what, why, for who, how and other questions

What is social inclusion, who are 'potentially excluded socio-cultural groups', why is it important and what does it mean for science communication practitioners? Whether you work in a science centre, museum, school or freelance, this session will discuss the issues raised by social inclusion for science communicators. We will talk through peoples previous experiences of working with different socio-cultural groups and using practical examples we will workshop ideas on the tools that can address social inclusion in science communication."

Emily Dawson – University of the West of England
Clara Cromar - Sensation: Dundee science centre

You're All Rubbish!

Here in the comfy echo-chamber of the PEST world, we're often rather proud of our gaffer-tape-and-string approach. But does it really stack up against the competition we face for the public's attention? Should we be slicker and more professional? Should we join other fields in striving for excellence - or do we do that already? Television producer Jonathan Sanderson and reluctant guru Paul McCrory contrast the atmosphere of BIG with other industries, and wonder if we should be evolving. If so - evolving *how*? What, collectively and individually, are we good at? If we can work that out, perhaps we can do more of it.

Jonathan Sanderson
Paul McCrory

1:00 – 2:00

Lunch

Q+A with the BIG Exec

Find out all about the BIG Bursary in this informal discussion over lunch. Information about how to apply, what kind of projects are funded, and the conditions of the grant.

2:00 – 3:00 - Parallel Sessions

Bubble with Enthusiasm

Catch up with the evolving Exploratory Bubble Show with Mike Coles. All the original best bits, some new bits and lots of combusive and explosive chemistry in suspended, floating, sinking and foggy bubbles.

Bubblz will demonstrate techniques that inspire students and teachers alike in measurement and shapes using soap film and giant bubbles. The demonstration will cover foundation to year 6 curriculums, although the techniques can be applied to any age group by altering the vocabulary.

Mike Coles, ExplorerDome
Bubblz, Bubblz the Maths Clown

Data capture in the exhibition

Intech installed sensors in approximately 20 exhibits, so that, in addition to using the exhibit and watching or listening to what happens, practical experiments can be performed. The activities include measuring forces, sound, infra-red and speed. Using Dataharvest sensors and dataloggers with laptops pupils can obtain, record and analyse data which can be taken back to school on memory sticks. This session will examine the activity, the practicalities and the outcomes of the project.



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Angela Ryde-Weller, Intech
Further speakers TBC.

Drama in science communication

Laura Strieth and Emily Dawson from the Science Communication Unit will facilitate a workshop-discussion on the use of drama as a medium for science communication. 3-5 'speakers', with significant experience in the field, will contribute learning outcomes, techniques and food for thought. The workshop will instigate discussion on the pros and cons of using drama and its impact and allow participants to delve into the creative process of drama projects and best practice.

Laura Streith, UWE
Emily Dawson, UWE

Wikis and Twitters and Blogs, Oh My!

It seems like every week brings the launch of another web media platform, and a new way of engaging audiences. From Twitter to Pownce, Blip.tv to Seismic, WordPress to Movable Type - there's never been so much choice. Nor so much potential for confusion. Bring a laptop - or huddle around one of ours - and get your hands dirty on this guided tour of the systems available, and the types of interaction they enable.

Jonathan Sanderson

3:00 – 3:30
Coffee Break

3:30 – 5:30

Best Demo

The international institution that is Best Demo! The world's best battle it out for this coveted award.