Scientists in Person: Live Science Events

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Live science events: scientists and audiences

- Scientists’ and science communicators’ perceptions and drivers
- Audience needs
- Recommendations for future education outreach and engagement
Live science events in a digital age
People need people!
Public engagement
Live public science events

Durant, John; Buckley, Nicola; Comerford, Dane; Fogg-Rogers, Laura; Fooshee, Julie; Lewenstein, Bruce; and Wiehe, Ben. (2016) Science Live: surveying the landscape of public science events.

https://livescienceevents.org/
Live public science events

1. Live events are as relevant as ever.
2. Every year in the US and UK millions of people enjoy science experiences at a huge range of live events.
3. Public science events constitute a distinct category of activity.
4. Events are ideally suited for generating new relationships with audiences.
5. Public science events are reshaping institutional involvement in science communication.
7. Public science events produce meaningful outcomes, some of which are unique.
8. Public science events offer opportunities for novel research.
9. Public science events represent an incredible set of opportunities as a sector, but require special kinds of support.
10. There is an emerging community dedicated to public science events.
Scientists choose live events

Scientists’ perceptions of outreach

Rated importance of impacts where 1=Not at all important and 5=Very Imp

- Pre-training response
- Post-training response

- Increased enjoyment of STEM
- Increased involvement in STEM extra-curricular activities
- Improved confidence studying STEM
- Improved understanding of the research process
- Improved knowledge of your research area
- Improved understanding of societal views on your research area
- Improved confidence in your research area
- Improved understanding of school grades in STEM
- Improved aspirations to continue studying STEM for a career
- Changes to behaviour discussed in the outreach activity (e.g. experiments)
- Increased involvement in STEM extra-curricular activities
Scientists’ perceptions of outreach

• Not everyone can become a scientist, but we need people who have an understanding of what science is, what scientists do, the scientific way of thinking.

• My main interest is that children learn the advantages in understanding STEM - or the scientific method, and decide that sticking with STEM will help them navigate day-to-day life in the future.

• My ultimate aim is to get across the idea that science is for everyone who is interested in it. So to break down the barriers that this is an elite subject, or it’s something that girls don’t do, or it’s something that you have to go to a private school to do, or any of those stereotypes that people might have.

Auckland Brain Day
Audience communication needs

Which format attracted you to the festival?

Percentage of age group

- 0-18 years
- 19-34 years
- 35-49 years
- 50-64 years
- 65+ years

Most attractive format:

- Lecture
- Discussions
- Expo
- Labs
- Dayout
Audience communication needs

Non-formal learning – learning as a leisure activity

Interested in learning

(33% of responses)
Afflicted with curiosity.
Male, age 59, NZ European
Acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Female,
(age not given), European
I'm interested in learning.
Male, age 16, NZ European
I find the lectures very interesting and on topics that I haven’t learnt about in previous education. Also think the lectures are not only informative but also entertaining.
Female, age 45, NZ European

Research and expert opinion

(20% of responses)
Opportunity to hear lecturers on topics they are passionate about and they talk with knowledge and enthusiasm.
Female, age 54, Asian
The quality of speakers/professors available was too good an opportunity to miss. I think their research is absolutely amazing and fascinating.
Female, age 35, Pacific Peoples
Because of the variety of choice available, free to the public, marvellous opportunity to learn new/latest research without cost.
Female, age 64, NZ European
Non-traditional audiences

Paired Peer Learning

Paired Peer Learning

BUT perceptions of worth differ

- I think the problem tends to be that it’s [engagement] not really regarded as something that counts towards your CV by the University. It’s very clear that the money you bring in and the papers you get out are going to be more important until the Government decides to base something on outreach, and how it funds [research].

- Education outreach should be supported more openly and concretely by universities (time should be allowed and support funds provided).

- I think the most important thing for the Royal Society is that they can influence the policy makers. I know in America every researcher has to do outreach, but the UK has an optional one [system].

Factors which help engagement…

• The impact agenda?

• A coordinator to facilitate connections and organise events

• Leaders who also undertake engagement
Scientists in Person

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