

## Summer Science Exhibition and Soirées 2013: review for exhibitors

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The 2013 Summer Science Exhibition took place between Monday 1 and Sunday 7 July. The exhibition featured 26 exhibits including an exhibit from Boroughbridge High School, who were funded through the Royal Society's Partnership Grants Scheme. Two additional exhibits were also produced by Royal Society Centre for History of Science, *Fossils: the evolution of an idea* and *Scientists*. A further two exhibits were produced by the Society, *The story of the Royal Society*, giving background to visitors of the history of the Society, and *Picturing science*, a pictorial celebration of the science of the Society's funded researchers. In addition to the exhibits a number of additional talks and events were held during the Exhibition week, including panel discussions, Café Scientifique events and family workshops at the weekend.

### Analysis of visitors

The Exhibition continues to attract large and diverse audiences, with a total audience of 12,530 visitors. The weekend opening of the Exhibition was once again extremely popular with 3,708 members of the public attending on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 July.

	Students	Teachers	Public	Media	Subtotal (public, schools and media)	Private evening events	TOTAL
Total 2013	2,358	260	8,745	25	11,388	1,142	12,530

### Analysis of public visitors

8745 members of the general public attended the Exhibition. A self completion questionnaire, containing basic information on gender, age, ethnic origin and occupation as well as feedback about the Exhibition, was completed by 10% (882) of public visitors.

Overall public visitor profile:

- 14% were aged under 16, 57% were aged under 40, 10% were aged over 60
- 57% of respondents were female
- The respondents to the self-completion survey were predominantly White, 80% (84% in 2012), while 12% came from Asian/Asian British backgrounds. 2% of visitors came from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic backgrounds and 6% of visitors were from mixed/multiple ethnic groups.
- 42% of the respondents in the self-completion survey were in full or part-time education while 42% were in full or part-time employment. 16% of visitors were not in education or employment; 9% being retired, 3% unemployed and 3% looking after home/family.

- A large proportion of visitors in the self-completion survey had formal qualifications in science, technology, engineering or maths beyond GCSE or O' level. Among visitors responding to the online survey 49% had graduate or post-graduate qualifications in science, technology, engineering or maths. 14% of adult visitors had no formal qualification in a STEM subject and 18% to O-level or equivalent.
- 71% were first time visitors to the Summer Science Exhibition. Of those who have attended an Exhibition before, on average they have attended 3 previous exhibitions.
- This year the exhibition offered a preview night on Monday evening, aimed at an adult audience. 10% of the public visitors attended on that evening. 16% of public visitors attended on the other late openings (Tuesday, Friday and Saturday evenings).

#### *Analysis of school visitors (students and teachers)*

##### Student visitor profile:

- 76% of schools were non-independent
- The majority of schools attending were from London and neighbouring counties, however schools did travel from Wales, Scotland Sheffield, Newcastle and Manchester to attend.
- 60% of attendees were aged 16-18 (AS and A-Level), 40% were aged 13-15 (Key stage 3 and 4)
- 47% of respondents were female
- 57% of the students were from white ethnic backgrounds compared to 80% of the general visitors. 20% of the students were from Asian ethnic backgrounds, 8% were from Black Caribbean or Black African backgrounds.

Students' responses to the exhibition were positive and the exhibition continues to succeed in interesting students in science, and providing them with an opportunity to find out more about STEM from the exhibiting scientists:

- 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed talking to the scientists
- 59% of students felt that the Exhibition had made them more interested in science, and more interested in the possibility of a science-based career.

#### *Supporting programme of events*

- The supporting programme of events at the Exhibition offers a different pace of experience for exhibition visitors. Marketing a discrete event is also more straightforward than marketing the Exhibition itself, allowing access to audiences not normally inclined to attend the Summer Science Exhibition. A wide ranging programme of additional events was developed, and held during the public opening times of the Summer Science Exhibition. The events consisted of three evening panel discussions with high profile speakers, six Café Scientifique events, two interactive talks, six exhibitor show and tell events, weekend family workshops and an in conversation event, attracting 3458 attendees in total.

## Promotion and Media coverage

### *Exhibition promotion*

In addition to our normal marketing channels, including postal and email campaigns and online listings, the exhibition was advertised in national newspapers and in high volume on the London Underground.

### *Media coverage*

The Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition achieved excellent media coverage this year with news pieces appearing in a number of national newspapers including: The Times, The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph and The Independent. A story about running shoes incorporating mattress springs which came out of the Engineering the Champions exhibit was particularly popular with the media.

In early June the Foreign Secretary did an excellent interview trailing the Exhibition on BBC Local Radio's Mark Forest Show. The programme is broadcast on all of the BBC's 20+ local radio stations on a Friday night and has an audience of about 1.2 million.

As in previous years, the Exhibition received very good broadcast coverage. The Pinch of Salt exhibit was featured on evening and breakfast television news programmes on BBC 1 East and BBC 1 South – including a live broadcast from the Exhibition. The BBC World Service radio programme Health Check did an entire programme focussing on health related exhibits at the Exhibition. BBC World Service's Science in Action programme also featured the Exhibition.

BBC News Online did a very good slideshow of images from the Prehistoric Colours exhibit on their BBC Nature pages. Reporters from The Guardian's Science Weekly Podcast attended the exhibition, interviewing the Foreign Secretary and featuring a number of exhibits. The Nature Podcast featured an interview with Dr Matthew Aylett about his Café Scientifique event "I, Robot": emotional androids?

Five press releases were issued by the Royal Society press office focusing on exhibits that had particular media appeal including Engineering the Champions: the Science of Sporting Success; The Scarred Liver; Quantum Revolution; Biology Builders: 3D printing stem cells; and Solving the Energy Crisis from Ancient to Future Solar Fuels.

The Royal Society Press Office encouraged all exhibitors to work with their institution press offices to prepare their own press releases for local, regional and national press. This year 11 exhibitors issued their own press releases which led to significant pick-up in the regional newspapers.

Events surrounding the Summer Science Exhibition also attracted media attention. The Game Jam received good media coverage in the games developer press and was featured online on The Guardian. Twilight Science was featured in the London edition of Metro. The event was also listed in BBC Focus Magazine and The Londonist.

As usual, the Press Office ran a press preview the afternoon before the exhibition opened and this was well attended by the broadcast media. The Press Office also hosted a press conference for print media the week before the exhibition. The exhibitors gave short presentations on the science behind their exhibits and journalists were then able to ask questions and do one-on-one interviews.

The website for the 2013 Exhibition was developed to provide an enhanced visitor experience as a closer replication of a visit to the physical exhibition.

➤ 113,630 Visits, from 83,099 Absolute Unique Visitors resulting in 296,606 Page Views

A large proportion of traffic reached the exhibition website via referring sites, including timeout.com, facebook.com, bbc.co.uk and twitter.com, (46%), with direct traffic and search engines the other main sources of visitors (19% and 31% respectively). The website was designed with mobile device compatibility in mind, 17% of visitors to the site did so with a mobile phone or tablet.

We repeated the 'Ask the scientist' feature included online over the last couple of years, again with one month for questions to be posted and answered, including the exhibition week (from 3 June – 7 July). Using an embedded discussion platform on the exhibit pages of all the exhibits, visitors to the site were able to post a question to the scientists behind the exhibit, and receive an answer from the scientist within a day. The feature was announced via twitter and email newsletters on the day it launched. A competition was also run for schools on our Associate Schools programme, allowing their students to submit questions in order to win a visit from a scientist to their school to be interviewed. Over 50 questions were asked through this feature in total, with answers provided by the exhibitors throughout the period.