GRADnews

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH EAST ENGLAND PHYSICS GRADUATE SCHOOL

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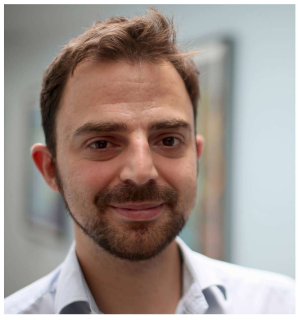
Public Engagement

Welcome to the latest GRADnews newsletter. In this issue we'll be highlighting Public Engagement based on research. If this is the first time you've heard the term, don't panic! Public Engagement describes the many ways you can take your research and share it with the public. It's a two-way process with many benefits to both you the researcher, and the public.

Benefits to you include improving skills which are in high demand both in industry and in academia such as leadership, communication, listening, partnership working, and project management.

It also allows you to think about your research from a different perspective resulting in clearer thoughts and new ideas. Plus, if you can share your research with your Grandmother, you can explain it in your viva!
Examples include, but very much not limited to, public talks, blog posts, discussion events, art / science collaborations, stand-up comedy in pubs, growing a public garden, and simply standing on a box in a street corner.

This issue gives examples of some projects carried across the different partners at SEPnet. We hope this inspires you to think about what you could do with your research and who you could share this with! For more information, along with more details about how SEPnet can help, check out www.sepnet.ac.uk/public-engagement



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Reflecting Photonics

A garden show may not be the obvious place to introduce photonics to the general public. The adventure started when the Royal Horticultural Society announced that the 2015 International Year of Light would be celebrated with a special garden category in its annual Tatton Park Show.

Elks-Smith Garden Design, an award-winning Hampshire landscape designer, took up the gauntlet and approached the University of Southampton's Optoelectronics Research Centre (ORC) to make a garden worthy of the challenge.

A masterplan was drawn up to share with the public the ORC's world-leading research into light-transmitting optical fibers. Fiber optic glass drops were set into the floor and a waveform path echoed light reflection along the fiber. The trees and plants were in cool shades, building to a vibrant spectrum. On the day, my team's role was to guide the visitors and unravel the intricacies and the deeper significance of the abstract photonic features of the garden.

Over the festival's five days, the IYL gardens at Tatton Park were on show to over 70,000 visitors, most of whom knew little about optical-fibers beforehand!

Our green fingered adventure featured on local and national news, press and television, including the BBC's Gardeners' World, introducing photonics to an estimated three million spectators. The undertaking was well appreciated and perceived;