



Name: Toby Shannon

Current Job: Public Programmes Manager at the Institute of Physics

Scientific Discipline/Field: Public engagement with physics

University: I graduated from the University of Surrey in 2009

Country: UK

Pick some letters (L,G,B,T,Q,+, etc.): G,Q

Twitter or other social media handle (if applicable)?

@ClangyAndJammy at [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) (come for the GIFs, stay for the poorly-taken photos of my various craft projects!)

What does your job involve?

I'm the Public Programmes Manager for the IOP and my job is to manage a wide range of projects that aim to bring people and physics together in creative, exciting ways. I work with lots of different partners to make this happen from community groups to music festivals and institutions like the Tate Modern and the Royal Opera House.

How did you get to this job (education etc.)?

I studied Physics with Nuclear Astrophysics at the University of Surrey where, over the course of my degree, I became more and more interested in the stories behind physics and how those stories can be shared with all kinds of audiences. I went on a Year in Industry as part of my degree and spent it at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory where I ran their exhibition space, led tours for school groups and represented the lab at science festivals; this experience made me certain that I wanted to work in public engagement with physics. After finishing my undergrad, I did an MSc in Science Communication at the University of the West of England and then moved to London to begin my first job with the British Science Association where I was Science in Society Officer for 4 years. I started in the IOP as the UK Coordinator for the International Year of Light in 2014 where I gained a wide range experience in running projects that bring together physics and culture in all sorts of unexpected ways which has led to my current role.

Do you feel being LGBT has affected your career decisions?

In a way, yes. I have been really fortunate in that I have had loads of amazing role models and colleagues (LGBT+ and otherwise) in the roles I have worked in and this has made me feel that this is an inclusive, diverse field to work in and one that I feel at home and included in. So, whilst it hasn't impacted on my decision to choose this type of work, it has definitely helped in terms of how I see my career developing and I want to be a strong, queer role model for others, if possible!

Have you had any reactions from colleagues about being LGBT, either good or bad?

After the terrorist attack at Pulse in Orlando in 2016, I started wearing my nail varnish full-time (previously only for weekends and parties), including to work which I had been too scared to do before this point. I do this because I like the colours but also as a way to make my queerness more visible and, in doing this, make a statement to the world about myself in memory of the people that died that day – in a world where things like this happen, I want to stand up and be counted as a proud member of the LGBT+ family, including as my professional self at work. Reactions to this were exclusively good and I get a lot of positive comments which often throws me a bit! I get some looks on the tube but my colleagues have always been really supportive, which is absolutely lovely.



Did you have any role models growing up (LGBT, STEM, totally unrelated...)?

Donatello from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Captain Janeway from Star Trek: Voyager, the Spice Girls, Eddie Izzard and Cher, in no particular order.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to continue to work in public engagement with science in all sorts of creative, experimental ways and make my work more exciting, delightful and inclusive than ever before. All whilst keeping true to my queer self and wearing ever-more FIERCE nail varnish. Watch this space.