

# Public Engagement with Research Seed Fund 2017-2018



The University's Public Engagement with Research Seed Fund is an internal grant scheme for academics and researchers to:

- Develop or pilot new Public Engagement with Research projects or;
- Improve existing Public Engagement with Research activity;
- Evaluate and gather evidence of the impact of the activities.

The fund is supported by the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF).

The following twelve projects have been funded (ranging from £1200 to £4000) in response to the 2017-18 call for proposals:

1. [Dr Sallie Burrough](#)  
[Trapnell Research Fellow in African Environments](#)  
[School of Geography and the Environment](#)

Megalakes and Stone Age Humans: Telling the Story of the Makgadikgadi



Between 2016 and 2019 the first systematic analysis of Stone Age archaeology in the Makgadikgadi basin is being undertaken as part of a collaborative project funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The Makgadikgadi salt pans, formerly one of Africa's largest lakes, withholds a remarkable Stone Age record of human history including some of the largest hand-axes in the world.

The excavations, geochemical and environmental analyses being undertaken are revealing a fascinating story of ancient human use of the desert landscape that has previously remained untold. This project seeks to engage with the Botswanan public to share these findings and to ensure our knowledge of the landscape and its use by our ancestors is not merely the privilege of the academic community.



Through a series of local community Kgotla meetings, public lectures and articles in the national and international press we hope to engage with the public on a number of levels. To ensure the longevity of our efforts we will design and install a number of Public Information Boards in and around the Makgadikgadi basin.

We hope that empowered with this information, community leaders, in partnership with the tourist industry and government, will be inspired to seek out greater recognition and protection for human origins sites within Botswana.

2. Dr Peter Hommel  
Postdoctoral Research Assistant  
School of Archaeology



(re)made: from mines to metals and beyond...

(Re)made takes families and young adults on an intriguing journeys through the physical and social transformations that surround the production of metal. Linking up with the ERC-funded project - FLOW of Ancient Metals Across Eurasia (FLAME) project in the School of Archaeology (see [flame.arch.ox.ac.uk](http://flame.arch.ox.ac.uk)), it will deliver a day of metallurgy, a visually 'magnetic' display and an opportunity for active involvement in the semi-magical transformation of dull rock into ringing metal.

From ores to objects, participants will explore the social context of making and remaking metal, and how the perception of different metals was shaped both by their properties and the technologies used to produce them. Within the museum, they will follow trails to explore different traditions of production and, through contact with ancient metal artefacts, they will explore the ways in which archaeologists in Oxford are using metals to better understand the pattern of the past!

As evening falls, the events will shift their focus as we explore other aspects of the metallurgical process, engaging with cross-cultural studies of craft production and exploring some of the remarkable and fascinating rituals that so often accompany these dramatic acts of production and reproduction.



3. Professor Katrin Kohl  
Lecturer in German  
Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages



Multilingual Performances in Schools

The seed funding will serve to launch a Multilingual Performance project for schools that is designed to demonstrate the benefits of involving performative creativity in language learning. It will help to make community languages more visible and enhance their perceived value by connecting them with Modern Foreign Languages and performance.

Two interconnected events, each with a preparatory and follow-up phase, will take the research to parts of the country that are distinct from the Oxford context and seek to engage groups that are harder to reach, incl. BAME. They will influence how we implement our Multilingual Performance project and help to establish a robust basis for evaluating the impact of research that is investigating the interconnection between creativity and linguistic diversity.

Workshops in the context of these events will help secondary school teachers of Modern Foreign Languages to build skills and confidence to develop a more creative approach to their teaching practice as they implement the new GCSE and A level syllabuses that are being taught for first examination in 2018.

The events will provide a legacy of resources designed to aid dissemination of the Multilingual Performance Project on a national scale between 2018 and June 2020.

4. Dr Emma Palmer-Cooper  
SPCR Research Fellow  
Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health  
Sciences



The Yarnfulness Project

There has been a great deal of media coverage claiming that craft-based hobbies are good for mental health and general wellbeing. Recent reports have compared these activities to mindfulness and meditation, due to the repetitive and focused nature of many crafts. However, the evidence is largely subjective,



and studies rarely used experimentally derived methods or peer-reviewed reporting.

The Yarnfulness Project aims to engage with local and online communities who practice yarn-based crafts, in order to understand their opinions of mindfulness practice, as well as the widely reported benefits of yarn-based craft.

We would use this information together with the assistance of local contributors to design a pilot study to objectively and empirically investigate the impact of yarnbased craft on health and wellbeing.

The project will be public facing, and progress will be reported using an open access, web-based blog.

5. [Dr Sean Elias](#)  
[Nuffield Department of Medicine](#)

Researcher Board Game Café'



At the 'Board Game Café' events, members of the public can come and play short, themed board games each hosted by a different researcher who uses the game to highlight their academic research. The experience is designed to be immersive with members of the public being faced with real research problems or challenges that they have to navigate with the help of the resident researcher. These games have been developed specifically for this event, either adapted from commercially available games or originally designed.

Workshops will be held to allow researchers to develop their games for events and develop interdisciplinary collaborations with other researchers. Our events will target different age groups including children and adults and be hosted across the city at venues and times that suit the target audience. Our aim is to encourage board games as a wide ranging, fun tool for communicating research for the public and researchers alike.

We will make resources available online to allow our games to be played at home as well as encourage the public and researchers to design their own games either for their own enjoyment or as a public engagement tool.



6. Dr Julia Viebach  
Leverhulme Early Career Fellow  
Faculty of Law



Kwibuka Rwanda

*Kwibuka Rwanda* is a photographic exhibition that introduces the world of Rwanda's genocide memorials to the public. *Kwibuka Rwanda* delves into the world of survivors working at memorials who have pledged their lives to care, clean and preserve the human remains often displayed at such sites. Through artistic-visual form it reveals the meaning of memorials for survivors and shares their attempts to remake their world and be closer to their loved ones.

*Kwibuka Rwanda* is accompanied by a commemorative launch event #Memory4theFuture that discusses the importance of various forms of commemoration with practitioners, experts and Rwandan survivors.

*Kwibuka Rwanda* also engages in educational work by offering guided tours for school children, including the opportunity to discuss the exhibition with Rwandan survivors and the curator.

To help audiences make sense of these practices and place them in context, *Kwibuka Rwanda* draws upon Julia Viebach's ongoing fieldwork since 2011, in which visual research methods are applied to capture the nature, narratives and the materiality of Rwanda's genocide commemoration.

7. Dr Jieun Kiaer  
Young Bin Min-KF Associate Professor of Korean  
Language and Linguistics  
Faculty of Oriental Studies



Let's Cook and Learn

We believe that it is important that language learning is fun and enjoyable for everyone, and that understanding and competence in Asian languages and cultures is essential not only for community integration and cohesion, but also the future of global trade in a post-Brexit world.



We will run hands-on language learning through cooking sessions for six Asian languages (Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, Turkish and Persian) in the Blackbird Leys Community Centre, targeting youth from socially deprived areas. In a final seventh session, we will encourage participants to bring food from their own cultures to cook with the group.

By running these positive, informal sessions whose practice is rooted in the Task-Based Language teaching model, we aim to make learning Asian languages fun, and raise awareness of different cultures, promoting understanding and respect between communities.

8. Dr Cedric Tan  
Postdoctoral Researcher  
WildCRU, Department of Zoology



Every cloud has a silver lining: an interactive theatre about the clouded leopard

Conservation of endangered species in Southeast Asia is a multi-faceted issue which lacks awareness, particularly in developed countries which are at the demand end of the supply chain. We intend to create an interactive theatre that explores these sensitive issues, in particular, the vulnerable clouded leopard and the broader forces behind its population decline. During the play, the audience will be involved in role-playing as characters, making decisions for the authors and providing suggestions for the final conundrum.

Our piece will be delivered live at science festivals and filmed for YouTube users. Altogether, these data will be used to examine the difference in perceptions across different countries and age groups and generate new ideas for difficult conservation problems.

The performance will educate and engage the audience, in hope that it will shape perceptions and behaviour through affective learning. Our findings can help improve the delivery of theatre-based science communication and contribute to the generation of new conservation approaches in the tropics.





9. Dr Elizabeth Tunbridge  
Royal Society Research Fellow  
Department of Psychiatry



Our genes, our selves

Understanding the links between genes and illness is challenging in all areas of medicine but is arguably even more so in the field of mental health, since these disorders are uniquely human and their symptoms are intertwined with the facets of our personality that make us individuals. Most people have experience with mental health issues – either directly or by knowing others who are affected – and so this topic generates a large amount of public interest. However, psychiatric genetics has a murky history that can make people suspicious as to the motives and concerned about the implications of research in this area.

This project aims to address these concerns head-on and to promote discussion of the ethical dimensions of my research and its implications for wider society. This project will fund the creation of a specific artwork, which we hope will promote consideration of the role of genetics in mental health, and how this is intertwined with our unique personalities. However, we see this piece as the first in a longer-term collaboration, designed to communicate the wonder and beauty of neuroscience at multiple levels (molecular, cellular, systems, whole human), and how ourselves are shaped by our genetics and environment.

10. Professor Chris Lintott  
Professor of Astrophysics  
Department of Physics



Sing-song Physics: science stories, told by you

Catchy songs are a sure-fire way of getting a message stuck in your head, but can we use song to enthuse young people about science – and what if they're the ones writing the songs?

At a series of local events this summer, researchers will be teaming up with a songwriter and local residents to create brand new songs based on current



physics research at the University, including galaxy evolution, planetary science and particle physics.

A new workshop will be developed that introduces young people to the science and research behind the projects through fun and inspiring activities and demos before inviting them to help the researchers write songs that will be performed at the local events by geek-pop performer and former teacher, Jonny Berliner. Finally, the songs will be shared and credited to all those who participated and shared widely online. This will allow young people the chance to see and hear science as never-before, meet researchers face-to-face and explore fascinating science projects.

The project is aiming to pilot crowd-generated song-writing as a way of introducing and involving young people and their influencers to science, as well as developing the researchers' communication skills.

11. Dr Holly Reeve  
Project Manager – HydRegen  
Department of Chemistry

What can Chemists learn from Nature?



This project builds a comprehensive engagement package for secondary school students, focusing on the area of nature-inspired science. In particular, the project will increase students' awareness of how biological systems are used by chemists, in labs, to produce chemicals they use every day – for example in their cosmetics, medicines and food. This allows school students to explore how knowledge from one science (biology) can be applied in another setting (chemistry) and prepare them for a world in which bio-based / bio-inspired technologies are tackling global food, energy and health demands.

We have already piloted a live experiment where we raced enzymes to create foam explosions! We engaged the public by racing familiar biological systems (a potato, yeast and an enzyme) to see how fast they can make coloured foam, and used this to explain how chemists can harness the power of biology in the lab. Here, the activities will be developed for school visits. Alongside these 'in-person' activities, we will enlist specialists to create an interactive online platform and an integrated engagement evaluation system. By building an interactive online platform we will produce a flexible and sustainable engagement strategy and will reach a larger audience in the future.





12. Dr Tara Stubbs  
Associate Professor  
Oxford University Department of Continuing  
Education; Faculty of English



Poetry and Structure Workshops: reading, writing, and building

How many people still read poetry every day? What does poetry have to say about the world beyond books, and beyond the Academy?

Poetry needn't be inaccessible, or have nothing relevant to say. In this collaboration, between an Oxford-based Lecturer in poetry and poetics and an Oxford-based visual artist, we want to show that if you can turn a poem into a piece of artwork, or into a 3D shape, then you can begin to see how it might interact with the everyday world.

We will run a series of workshops with local groups in Oxfordshire to show the possibilities of poetry. Each workshop will begin with a poem and use it as a springboard to think about connections between the internal structure of a poem and structures in the outside world. What is the relationship between the two, and what can we build from this understanding? Participants will be encouraged to come up with their own designs, poems or other responses and therefore to think more deeply about the ways in which poetry might interact with the world beyond the page.

