



The Vice-Chancellor's  
**Public Engagement  
with Research Awards**  
2016



At the University of Oxford we believe that public engagement enriches research and society and are committed to enabling our researchers to inspire, consult and collaborate with the public.

Our vision is to embed high-quality and innovative public engagement as an integral part of research culture and practice at Oxford, enhancing our position as a world-leading research institution.



## Foreword from the Vice-Chancellor

I am delighted to introduce these awards to recognise and celebrate excellence in Public Engagement with Research from across the University.

It has been exciting and reassuring to see the myriad ways in which people have been engaged with the extraordinary research here at Oxford. Of the 84 entries we received to the 2016 Awards, we have shortlisted 12 across the three categories – Projects, Early Career Researchers, and Building Capacity. The range of activities showcased demonstrate the many outstanding examples of public engagement with research activity across the breadth of our Divisional and museum communities, but there is great potential to do even more.

We want to create a climate in which we can embed public engagement even more deeply into our research practices, and I am very grateful to Professor Sarah Whatmore, the University's Academic Champion for Public Engagement for spearheading this work. Our aim is to ensure that Oxford acquires a reputation for engaging the public that equals our reputation for research.

I encourage you to take inspiration from the inaugural winners of the University's Public Engagement Awards and reflect on opportunities to engage the public with your own research.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Louise Richardson'.

**Professor Louise Richardson**

## Archeox: East Oxford – One history or many? Collaboration

### Professor David Griffiths

Department for Continuing Education

#### What did you do?

From 2010–15 Continuing Education has hosted an archaeological and historical research project on the landscape and historic environment of East Oxford, through community engagement. Excavations have taken place at prehistoric and medieval sites including those of national importance for which little information was known before, and new data has been gathered about life and death, pathology, diet, economy, and topography.

Led by a core team of 4 and equipped through Heritage Lottery Funding support, Archeox has passed on skills and techniques to its public participants including landscape archaeology, excavation, geophysics, GIS, museum collections research, together with IT, project management, writing and teamwork.



#### Who did the project reach?

Over 650 volunteers participated in the project with 6,000+ volunteer-days recorded. The programme particularly wanted to engage harder to reach audiences and worked with charities focused on homelessness, mental health and Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) pupils. An atmosphere of shared enthusiasm, non-hierarchy and mutual support was cultivated; volunteers acted as mentors to the less experienced. A sense of shared ownership of the project was carefully nurtured and volunteers were able to influence the research direction of the project.

#### What was the impact of the project?

Archeox has generated significant research outcomes and had a demonstrable impact in advancing the city's archaeology research agenda, which now includes a strong community-based theme. The experience of working with volunteers has been transformative for the academics involved, leading to a wholesale positive reappraisal of the potential of public participation in university-based archaeology and heritage research. The training programme embedded in the project connected volunteers to other study opportunities, professional accreditation, and the NVQ Scheme in Archaeological Practice. The project is currently being written up as a case study for use in the next Research Excellence Framework.



## Learning from the Masters: the Great Box Project Collaboration

### Professor Laura Peers

Pitt Rivers Museum & School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography

#### What did you do?

The project tested an innovative way to allow ethnographic collections to be accessible to their communities of origin, by replicating one key object. The Pitt Rivers Museums holds a collection of materials from the Haida Nation in British Columbia, Canada. In 2009, brothers and professional artists Gwaai and Jaalen Edenshaw studied the 'Great Box', an 1860s Haida masterpiece in the museum. In September 2014, they returned with carving tools and a blank box of the original dimensions. Working with the historic box, they replicated each carving stroke, learning how it was created.



#### Who did the project reach?

To share knowledge the artists held open studio sessions with University staff and public, and Oxfordshire carvers and furniture makers. Videography documented the process for a project website. The new Great Box then went home to Haida Gwaii and was used in secondary-school art classes, public discussions and a Haida Gwaii Museum exhibit.

#### What was the impact of the project?

Haida people regard the 'repatriation' of the Great Box as very significant. Marnie (Haida Secondary School assistant): "... We can see it in books, but to actually come up and see it and feel it and examine it—it can only benefit our community and our people. Having direct access to this will continue to inspire and challenge." Inspired by the project, the artists are developing a new Haida language art vocabulary, a significant outcome for an endangered Indigenous language for which art terms had not been preserved.



## Using co-design principles to inform the design of assisted living technologies for older people with complex needs

Collaboration

### Professor Trisha Greenhalgh

Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences



#### What did you do?

The project identified and addressed barriers to the use of assisted living technologies by older people with chronic illness and their carers through a co-design approach. There has been much investment in technological innovations to help people maintain independence and self-manage chronic illnesses and progressive frailty. However, uptake of these remain low and if installed they are often abandoned or deliberately disabled by the people they are intended to help.

#### Who did the project reach?

Participants in the original study included 40 older people with complex needs. The team focused on those under-represented in previous co-design studies (e.g. diverse ethnic groups, non-English speakers and those with dementia).

#### What was the impact of the project?

The team gained many insights from working with the 'housebound' elderly who are hidden from society in general and researchers in particular. We learnt to undertake ethnographic research in the home – a research field that is relatively new and we also had to develop new ways of engaging people with cognitive impairments in the

co-design process. In a second study (ongoing), we are supporting organisations to adapt their work processes to allow greater personalisation of technologies. Participants in the project had revisions made to their own care packages and/or technologies provided as a result of the co-design process.

The work fed directly into the ongoing technology and service design work of industry and public sector partners, several of whom have changed the way they assess people for assisted living technologies and provide ongoing support.

The programme has attracted much interest from UK and abroad. Success in the initial study helped us gain a programme grant from the Wellcome Trust to explore organisational aspects of technology co-design. We are also part of an EU-wide collaboration that is planning a Horizon 2020 bid to extend this co-design work.

## Refugee Economies: Forced Displacement and Development (part of the Humanitarian Innovation Project - HIP)

Collaboration

### Professor Alexander Betts

Refugee Studies Centre, Department of International Development



#### What did you do?

The project aimed to challenge the dominant framing of refugees as passive victims in need of humanitarian assistance by exploring the economic lives of refugees in Uganda.

Central to this project was the training of 42 refugees as peer researchers and enumerators, enabling them to become co-creators of the research.

#### Why did you do it?

There is an urgent need to rethink refugee assistance. Refugees are frequently thought of as a 'burden' on host states but they have the potential to contribute economically as well as socio-culturally. Even under the most constrained circumstances, refugees engage in significant economic activity, and in doing so often create opportunities for themselves and others – turning refugee dependency into refugee self-reliance.

#### Who did the project reach?

As well as working with the refugee peer researchers, we also built relationships with refugee communities, including holding launch events in the refugee settlements. Other collaborators included the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Government of Uganda, and colleagues at Makerere University.

#### What was the impact of the project?

The research was enhanced significantly through its participatory approach as the use of refugees as peer researchers secured significant access to the refugee communities. UNHCR's former Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees noted that "[their] work has been path-breaking; and it has fundamentally altered the debate on the impact of refugees in countries of asylum, demonstrating the capacity of refugees for self-reliance and their ability to contribute to hosting societies". The research was featured in over 50 media interviews and in a TED talk viewed 600,000 times, helping to provide a stronger evidence-base for public debate on the issue. The team also shared the collected data openly with UNHCR resulting in a policy change in its own refugee livelihoods programming. Several of the refugee researchers have gone onto use their skills in finding subsequent employment or educational opportunities.

## The Ordered Universe: Engaging with Medieval and Modern Science through the Radical Interdisciplinarity

### Communication

#### Professor Hannah Smithson

Department of Experimental Psychology

#### What did you do?

The Ordered Universe Project brings together scientists, humanities scholars and the public to explore the scientific writings of the remarkable English thinker Robert Grosseteste (c. 1170-1253) and to challenge commonly held misconceptions about the categorisation of scientists v. non-scientists and the sophistication of medieval scientific thinking.

Engagement platforms have included science and arts festivals, hands-on demonstrations of experiments and reading of medieval texts. We worked with artists on *The World Machine* for the Durham Lumière Festival 2015 (audience of c. 400,000) and are working with the National Glass Centre on a joint exhibition related to colour and rainbows. We are also developing visualisations of our research, piloted with a 5-minute film on Grosseteste's treatise on light.



#### Who did the project reach?

We endeavoured to engage as broad a section of the public as possible in the programme including 15-19 year olds and local community groups such as 'Pint of Science' and Cathedral congregations.

#### What was the impact of the project?

Each Ordered Universe team member contributes to the programme and in so doing we are pioneering new ways of working across and between disciplines and with the public. Our project has been showcased by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as a model of transformative practice in humanities research and was shortlisted for Times Higher Education Research Project of the Year 2014.

Engaging the public with the research teaches us a lot: explaining ideas to new audiences sharpens the ideas themselves; questions from audiences inspire new ways of thinking about the material; and the experience of giving to others our sense of wonder at our subjects generates energy for further study. Through creative collaborations we have also been challenged to think more deeply about the implications of Grosseteste's hypotheses and the reciprocal relationship between understanding the present and the past.

## Pikin to Pikin Tok': communicating with children in Sierra Leone about Ebola vaccines

### Communication

#### Dr Matthew Snape

Oxford Vaccine Group, Department of Paediatrics



#### What did you do?

Together with producer Penny Boreham we created a 30 minute long 'Ebola Vaccine Special Broadcast' in Sierra Leone that addressed questions about immunisation and Ebola vaccines raised by 12 year old Abibatu. The radio programme, part of the Pikin to Pikin Tok (Child to Child talk) project, was a collaboration between the UK human rights agency Child to Child, their partner in Sierra Leone (the Pikin to Pikin movement) and the Oxford Vaccine Group, part of the Department of Paediatrics. Content was prepared by Penny Boreham and Dr Snape (translated into the local language Krio and delivered by storyteller Usifu Jalloh).

#### Who did the project reach?

The broadcast was aimed at children aged 10 – 18 years, and also to their adult carers, in the Kailahun region, the area where Ebola first took hold in Sierra Leone and is the most impoverished area of the country. The radio station on which the programme was broadcast has over 520,000 listeners in Sierra Leone, with further listeners over the border in Liberia and Guinea.

#### What was the impact of the project?

The format of the programme, in which we addressed questions arising from an interview between local journalist (Keziah Gbondo) and Abibatu, a 12 year old girl living in

the midst of an Ebola disease outbreak, provided us with a fascinating and important insight into what information is most relevant to local children. Insightful questions included the vaccine ingredients and whether the vaccine has been tested in children.

The purpose of producing the broadcast programme was to increase awareness and understanding of the progress towards vaccines against Ebola virus in school aged children in Sierra Leone. We hope that this awareness and understanding will engender more confidence in immunisation programmes in general and, should it be required, any Ebola disease immunisation campaign.



## Dr Chrystalina Antoniadou

Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences



### How have you engaged the public in your research?

My research involves using visual perception to study neurodegenerative disorders, such as Parkinson's disease. Over the last two years I have developed a collaboration with the Ashmolean Museum, exploring the use of artefacts to understand how people's perception is influenced by viewing a 2 dimensional representation on a screen compared with the real life 3 dimensional artefact.

I developed and delivered a series of events to highlight the neurobiological relationship between visual perception and art including most recently, for Brain Awareness Week 2016 – 'Brain Hunt' was a 4 day event reaching a total audience of over 1500 people. As well as talks, the programme included interactive activities for children and adults such as making brains with coloured modelling clay to encourage people to think about how regions of the brain have different roles in perception. The event attracted significant media attention and was mentioned on BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 4 and BBC2 TV.

### How have you supported the development of a culture of engaging the public with research?

I have organised a public engagement workshop for the Department at which researchers met to share their experiences and examples of best practice and I was instrumental in proposing a scheme of small public engagement awards to support early career researchers that has now been adopted.

### What have been the benefits of engaging the public in your research?

Taking part in these activities has given me a different perspective on my research and helped me understand better how it relates to the lives of the wider public. I always invite local members of the patients and carers organisations that I work with e.g. Parkinson's UK to the events that I have organised. Through working with these groups I have been able to not just inform and educate but also to consult with them on the issues surrounding neurodegenerative disorders that are of the most importance to patients and their families.

## Dr Oliver Cox

The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH)



### How have you engaged the public in your research?

Since my appointment as a Knowledge Exchange Fellow in October 2013 I have developed a range of innovative public engagement with research activities designed to link audiences to archives. Projects having included developing a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with the National Trust, designed to crowd source academic content to engage their core 'Curious Mind' audience; being an adviser to, and presenter of, Stowe House Preservation Trust multimedia guide; and establishing the Thames Valley Country House Partnership, an initiative that creates sustainable relationships between country houses, heritage and tourism organisations and the University.

### What have been the benefits of engaging the public in your research?

The activities have benefitted my development as a researcher in a number of ways, including opening up previously neglected archive material; improving my communication skills through giving public talks; and providing new and different opportunities to share my research, for example through writing book reviews and working with organisations who are eager to develop more sustained partnerships with HEIs.

The public benefit of the project with the National Trust can be measured in the increased 'Visitor Experience' scores at the properties where I have worked, where the target audience stay longer and spend more thanks to the richer, nuanced and engaging content.

### How have you supported the development of a culture of engaging the public with research?

Since April 2014, I have worked to build capacity within the University for students and colleagues to collaborate with the heritage sector. For example I worked closely with the Humanities Division training officer to deliver three 'Working with Heritage' workshops, and provided 30 funded internships with my heritage partners via the Careers Service.

## Dr Elizabeth Tunbridge

Department of Psychiatry

### How have you engaged the public in your research?

I see public engagement as a core part of my research. I have been fortunate to present at numerous events, including the Cheltenham Science Festival, the Hay Festival, and at Café Scientifiques, most recently at the Royal Society. I developed an event – “The Neurococktail Bar” - for the Science Museum London Lates programme, which I will be running at the Oxfordshire Science Festival and the Royal Society’s Summer Exhibition in the coming months. This event has proved extremely popular and successful at stimulating dialogue between neuroscientists and a broad cross-section of the public. I also write for *The Conversation* on aspects of molecular psychiatry; my articles have been read over 38,000 times and have generated debate on social media, as well as coverage by the mainstream media.



### What have been the benefits of engaging the public in your research?

I love discussing my research and its implications with as wide an audience as possible. Doing so provides an opportunity to take a step back and consider its wider societal implications. Genetics-focused research, particularly in the area of mental health, has significant societal and ethical relevance, and I have found it to be of great interest to many people. Discussing these issues has helped me to clarify my own ideas and opinions, and made me a more considered and conscientious researcher. Discussing my research with non-specialists makes me, and my lab members, better at communicating complex scientific ideas in an accessible manner. This skill is invaluable in my day-to-day work, be it writing papers and grant applications, or preparing conference presentations. Finally, like most scientists, I love talking about my research and so I find public engagement events huge fun!

## Social Sciences Division and Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology

### What activities took place?

In May 2015, the Ashmolean Museum and the Social Sciences Division (SSD) joined forces to hold *LiveFriday: Social Animals*. The public were invited to get behind the scenes of the Division’s research through live music, immersive performances, interactive workshops, live mass experiments and lively talks. Over 4500 people attended the event, which was delivered by over 70 social scientists from across SSD.



participation, and explore how the public could feed into research. Feedback from researchers noted it was “*really fun and valuable to think of different ways to explain, show, convey why my subject matters*”.

Critically in terms of building public engagement capacity, the event enabled a cohort of over 70 researchers from all career stages and disciplines to develop new skills, including creativity, translation, listening, presenting, planning and collaborating. In terms of legacy, a number of training resources were created to support researchers in their preparation for the event; and many involved have since helped to train other researchers, acting as mentors and academic champions. Furthermore, this programme gave researchers the impetus to seek further public engagement training offered by the divisional Research and Impact team.

The enthusiasm of the audience to engage with the ‘serious’ research showcased has encouraged the Ashmolean to integrate more challenging researcher-led activities into future programmes. *Social Animals* has also encouraged researchers to explore working with public facing spaces and organisations elsewhere.

### How did this help to build capacity?

Strategic support and considerable time investment from senior leadership teams at the Ashmolean and SSD demonstrated the esteem placed on the event. By providing over 60 hours of tailored advice and guidance, the Divisional and Museum teams supported researchers to take risks with unique methods of engagement, inviting them to move beyond one-way dissemination and develop activities with a strong focus on active



Photos courtesy of Ian Wallman. IWPhotographic.com

## Museum of Natural History



### What activities took place?

In 2016 the Museum of Natural History developed Super Science Saturday, a new event which will run twice annually in the Museum. Nearly 5,000 people have taken part in the events so far. The focus is to engage with the science departments to encourage DPhil students and Postdoc Researchers to deliver activities based on their research. The event is targeted at a family audience and provides them with the opportunity to engage with some of the world-class research that goes on within the University. Super Science Saturday developed from a previous event that focused on engaging and exciting families about science in general, to one that was more related to the museum's collections and contemporary research from the University as well as providing an opportunity for families to meet researchers.

### How did this help to build capacity?

As part of the event, Museum staff supported and trained researchers to design activities based on their current research that are accessible for a family audience. Once developed, these activities can be delivered again at other events. As well as gaining practical experience, researchers also developed communication skills through delivering the activities. The ongoing programme of Super Science Saturdays provides a valuable platform for researchers to engage the public with their research in a supported way.

*"I've gained experience in communicating effectively with children of varying ages, modifying my explanations to suit their abilities. I've gained confidence in talking to members of the public about science."* Participating Postgraduate research student Fiona Jones



## Department of Physics



### What activities took place?

The Department of Physics has developed a highly active public outreach programme, engaging over 200,000 people in the last five years with activities including research talks, workshops, shows, festival stalls, tours and competitions. It is also host to the highly successful Zooniverse citizen science project, which has worldwide reach and impact.

### How did this help to build capacity?

In order to get to this stage, the department has had to build capacity by focusing resources in five key areas:

*Leading with strategy:* by developing a defined set of aims that are grounded in current data and research into engagement and aspirations within science.



*Applying structure:* Access and outreach is overseen by a specific committee, which reports in to the Department management committee. The department also relies on a network of graduate co-ordinators.

*Providing support:* through the Outreach Project Manager, who is able to offer advice and expertise on delivery and evaluation related to public engagement with research, as well as equipment for demonstrations, seed funding, and an award scheme.

*Creating opportunities:* The Department provides researchers with many central opportunities to engage with public audiences, including *Stargazing Oxford*; a work experience scheme; and *Flash Talk Physics* an online platform for researchers to give short talks about their research.

*Enhancing communication:* The Department seeks out new ways to share updates, best practice and foster collaboration across research groups.



*“The endeavour to widen engagement with society pervades Oxford’s activities, informing research, enhancing teaching and learning, and increasing our impact on society.”*

Strategic Plan, University of Oxford, 2013-2018

