Evaluation Summary Report

Oxford's European Researchers' Night 2017 – *Curiosity Carnival*

Key Findings: Public Engagement

1.0 Introduction

Curiosity Carnival took place in 2017 and was the first time that the University of Oxford had participated in *European Researchers' Night* and was its biggest Public Engagement with Research event to date.

Following an intensive period of planning and development and the 6 month digital and engagement campaign leading up to the main event, *Curiosity Carnival* took place on Friday, 29 September 2017, alongside *European Researchers' Night* events in over 300 cities in 30 countries across Europe.

The event was a huge festival of Public Engagement with Research, a city-wide programme of researcher-led activities across the University's museums, libraries, gardens and woods and also via street activities on Broad Street. Over 500 academics, researchers and DPhil students delivered over 150 activities covering a diverse array of formats, including interactive games, performances, talks, 'demos' and live experiments, across the eight venues. This large-scale event was organised by over a hundred of staff from across the University and in partnership with two external stakeholders, Oxford Brookes University and MRC Harwell.

This report is the first of several evaluation summary reports[1] that will be shared with the participants of *Curiosity Carnival* and other key stakeholders.

This report shares the key evaluation findings with regard to Public Engagement including the numbers and demographics of those that engaged and the outcomes and impacts on the visitors that attended the main event on 29th September 2017. The findings are reported against the objectives and goals that were set at the project's initiation.

This *European Researchers' Night* project was funded by the European Commission under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions.

2.0 Key Evaluation Findings

- **42,496 people** engaged with the live activities of *Curiosity Carnival* either as visitors to the events or remotely via online means.

- *Curiosity Carnival* successfully **increased participation rates of the two most disadvantaged socio-economic groups** of residents in Oxfordshire ('Financially Stretched' and 'Urban Adversity') from the baseline levels seen at Oxford University Museums, to levels in line with the population.

- **280,175 online/ digital active engagements** took place during: the 6-month digital and engagement campaign; the main event and post-event activity via social media (such as Twitter posts; retweeting; Facebook posts etc) and other online engagements (such as views of the *Oxford Sparks* animation).

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[1] For example: Evaluation summary report re: Researchers' Experiences, Outcomes and Impacts; Evaluation of Activities.

– *Curiosity Carnival* was **successful in delivering an inspiring, high-quality event**. Almost all of the feedback on the content and presentation of the activities was positive, and in most cases, very positive; 9 in 10 of the visitors surveyed (89%) reported they had an excellent to good overall experience at *Curiosity Carnival*; 95% found the event and the activities interesting and 91% that the activities were fun.

– Although in the minority, there were some issues expressed in relation to the **lack of an overall programme** and the **logistics on the day**.

– *Curiosity Carnival* was **successful in generating demonstrable outcomes and impact** on the visitors including: enjoyment and inspiration; increased understanding of research and/or changes in perceptions and opinions; 83% of visitors surveyed strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I learnt about research".

– The results of the assessment activities described in this report have demonstrated that *Curiosity Carnival* achieved each one of the objectives and goals that were set re: Public Engagement.

3.0 Methodology

The visitor numbers and demographics were gathered from ticket bookings and 'wristband' collections (for *Curiosity Carnival* venues) and via observation (for the street activities and pre-*Curiosity Carnival* events); digital engagements were gathered utilising online analytics; reach was measured using online analytics and other sources such a publication circulation figures.

The visitor experience evaluation comprised a post-event online visitor survey and a programme of different methods used on the day and night itself of the main event on 29th September 2017.

The post-event online survey was emailed in early October 2017 to the 1,140 people that had booked tickets for *Curiosity Carnival* and also gave permission to be contacted for evaluation purposes; the survey received 299 responses (26%).

The programme of 'on-the-night' methods gathered venue-wide feedback and evaluated a sample of the different Public Engagement with Research activities taking place.

The findings in this report focus on those regarding the overall visitor numbers, experiences, outcomes and impacts. The findings of the evaluation of specific activities will be shared in a forthcoming supplementary report. Unless otherwise stated, the findings are extracted from the *Curiosity Carnival* Impact 'Deliverables' Report submitted to the European Commission in January 2018 as part of the reporting requirements.

4.0 Evaluation Findings

Curiosity Carnival Goal 1: Engage at least 10,000+ people directly via the live activities

1. An estimated total of 42,496 young people and adults engaged with the live activities that formed part of *Curiosity Carnival* either as visitors to the events or remotely via online means:

Total number of visitors on the day/ night (29 Sept)– *Curiosity Carnival*	9,400
Total number of online views of live events on the day/night (29 Sept) - *Curiosity Carnival* (eg via Facebook Live)	29,000[2]
Total number of visitors/ engagements in the pre– *Curiosity Carnival* events and online activities	4,096
TOTAL	42,496

2. The number of visitors to the main event by venue is provided below:

Museums of History of Science (pub quiz)	32
Wytham Woods	232
Botanic Gardens	791
Curiosity Explorer (also see table below)	3844
Broad Street Activities	4,500
Total	9,400

3. The Curiosity Explorer ticket enabled entry to four venues – the number of visits for each is provided below. Many of those with Curiosity Explorer tickets went to more than one venue, hence the total visits below is greater than the total visitor number above.

Ashmolean Museum	3,494
Museum of Natural History / Pitt Rivers Museum (single entrance)	2,380
Weston Library	1,377
Total	7,251

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[2] Data from the Awareness Report submitted to the European Commission (October 2017)

4. In addition to engagement of the main event, approximately 4,096 people engaged in the pre-*Curiosity Carnival* live engagement activities that took place in the lead up to the main event, which included events in target community areas and online activities.

Cowley Road Carnival	80
Mini *Curiosity Carnival* – Templars Square, Cowley	300
Barton Community Fair	30
Oxford Sparks Facebook Live Events	3370
I'm a Researcher, Get Me Out Of Here	316
Total	4,096

Curiosity Carnival Goal 2: Engage 250,000+ people via digital and media engagement campaign

5. There was an estimated total of 280,175 online/ digital 'active' engagements[3] as part of the 6 month digital and engagement campaign; on the day/night itself (29th September) and post-event activity via social media (such as Twitter posts; Facebook posts; retweeting; likes etc) and other online engagements (eg unique website views; Facebook Live; *I'm a Researcher Get Me Out of Here* and *Oxford Sparks* animation). #CuriosityCarnival also trended across UK Twitter on the night itself.

6. The potential reach of the Communications, Marketing and Awareness campaign was estimated at nearly 45 million people (including Twitter impressions; print and online newspaper and magazine articles; radio adverts; leaflet distribution; social media; website hits; internal communications). It was not possible to correct for duplications in this figure (hence the actual reach will be a smaller figure than this).

Curiosity Carnival Goal 3: Increase participation of audience groups under-represented in university and museum events.

7. *Curiosity Carnival* attracted a greater proportion of 'Financially Stretched' and 'Urban Adversity' participants (ACORN categorisation) than the baseline for Oxford University Museums (OUM), and in a proportion that matches that of the population:

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[3] Facebook Live: on the night (29,000); I'm A Researcher Get Me Out of Here (316); Oxford Sparks animation (27,900); Facebook Live: in the lead-up to the main event (3,370); Unique page views – *Curiosity Carnival* (53,740); 'Active' Social Media Engagements – posts, retweets etc. (166,165). Total =   280,175

ACORN category	OUM 2017 (OX postcodes)	Population (Oxfordshire)	*Curiosity Carnival*
Affluent Achievers	51%	40%	38%
Rising Prosperity	10%	10%	21%
Comfortable Communities	26%	29%	19%
Financially Stretched	11%	17%	17%
Urban Adversity	2%	4%	5%

8. The ACORN demographic data was gathered from the postcode details of those who booked tickets - it is recognised that this is an imperfect proxy. However, this indicative evidence that *Curiosity Carnival* attracted under-represented groups is supported by the results of the post-event visitor survey (below) that shows that at least 28% had not attended an event organised by the University of Oxford before. The original target for reaching new audiences that had not previously engaged with the University was 20%.


As far as you are aware, have you attended an event organised by the University of Oxford before?

No 28%
Not sure 7%
Yes 65%
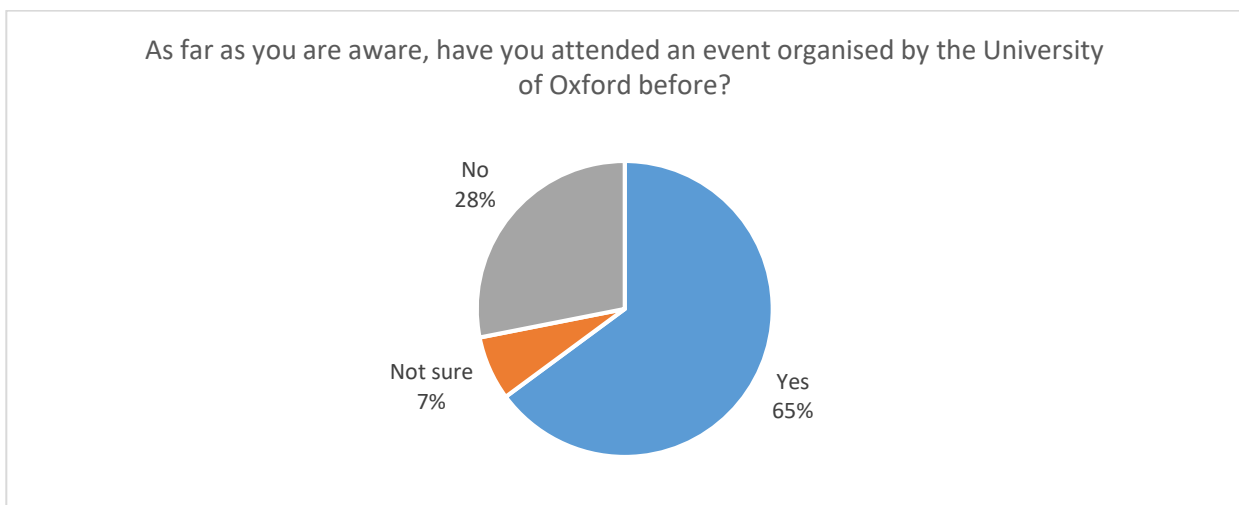
Curiosity Carnival Goal 4: Deliver an inspirational, high-quality, and large-scale 'public engagement with research' event.

9. A summary of the findings from the post-event online visitor survey and the evaluation that took place on-the–night regarding public engagement, visitor experiences, outcomes and impacts is below. Almost all of the feedback on the content and presentation of the activities was positive, and in most cases, very positive. Where there were issues expressed, these tended to relate to the organisation of the event and the logistics on the day.

10. The quantitative and qualitative responses from the on-the-night and post-event evaluations were coded and categorised into the following key themes:

Theme 1: It was a great event!

11. 9 in 10 post-event online survey respondents (89%) reported that they had an excellent to good overall experience at *Curiosity Carnival*.
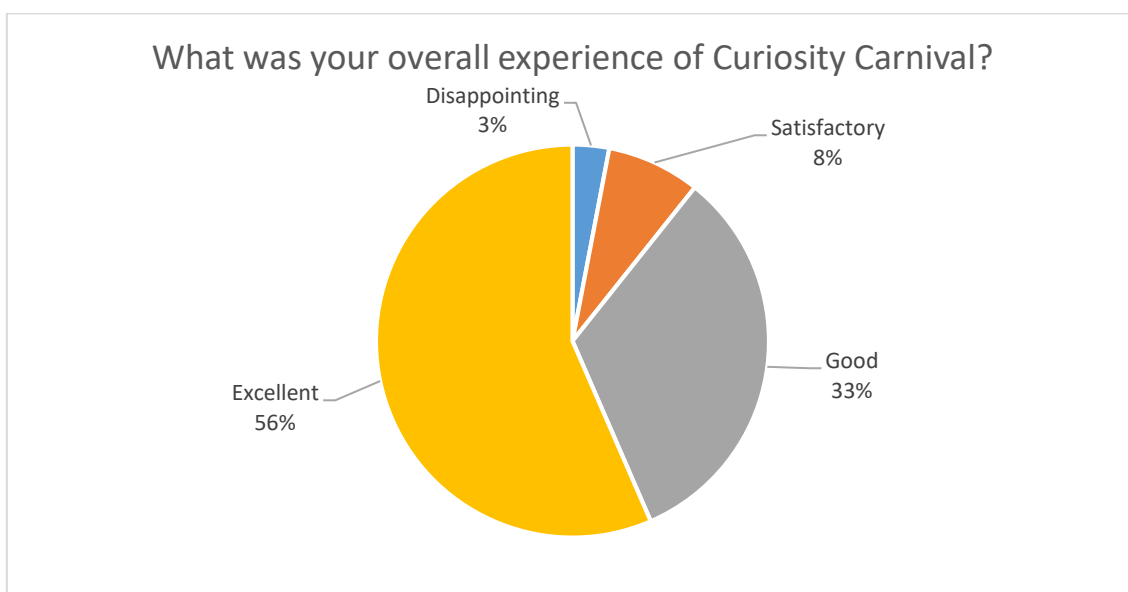
Post-event visitor survey respondents' views re: overall experience (299 responses)

12. In addition to the closed survey question responses, 198 additional comments were also provided by the survey respondents in reply to the open question for any other feedback and comments. These open responses provided further strong evidence that attendees had extremely positive overall experiences and perceptions of the event.

13. 65% of the comments (128/198) were categorised to this theme. A selection of the adjectives used in the comments to describe the event are provided below alongside some of the quotes received:

"Absolutely mind bogglingly brilliant!"

*"Thank you for providing such a wonderful event!"*

"All in all, it was a marvellous experience that my son and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole thing."

"Great event. Please repeat! My six year old daughter and friend loved it."

"Brilliant brilliant brilliant. Loved it."

"It was fantastic."

14. The post-event online survey results were echoed by the on-the-night evaluation with the live audiences. From the 405 comments collected from the visitors to *Curiosity Carnival*, a word categorisation analysis was conducted. The results (see below) demonstrate that 16 out of the 17 most popular words mentioned by visitors are positive with a clear majority reflecting a mixture of genuine engagement, inspiration, and wonder around the event. Just one – 'time' – has both positive and negative connotations. This refers to the lack of time that some visitors felt they had to see everything they wanted to.
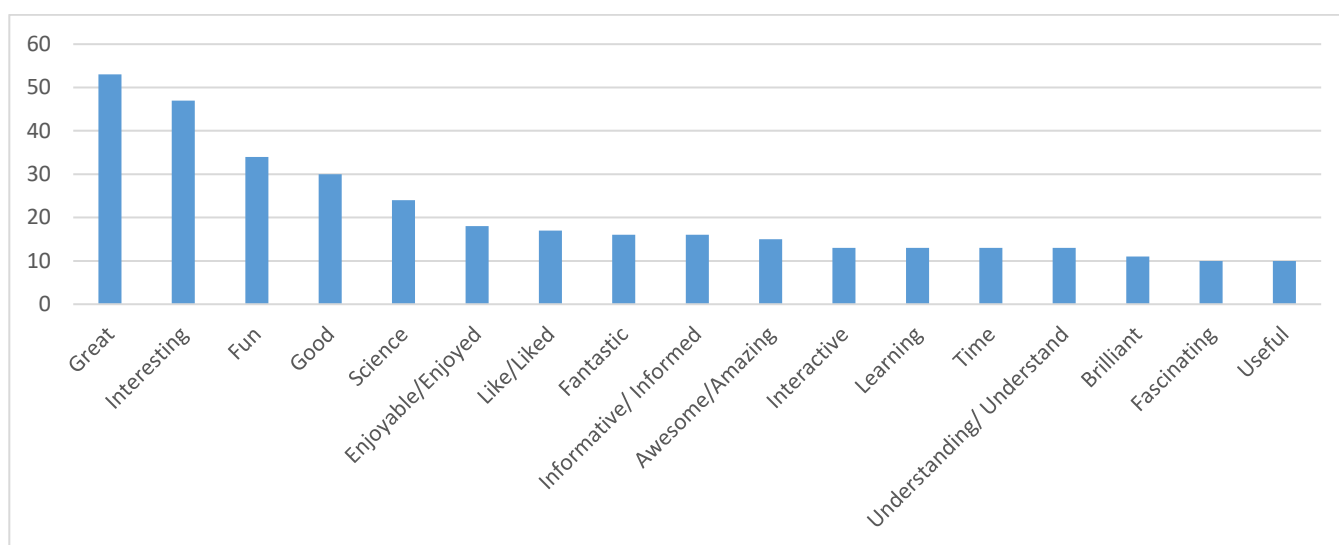
Most Popular Words used in on-the-Night feedback (y-axis: numbers)

15. The issue of time also came up in the post-event visitor survey. Around one in five of the open comments (18%) referred to the fact that there was just 'too much' to see in one day/ evening and that the event should have gone on for longer. This feedback has a positive bent, as from the comments it provides more evidence for how much of the content and programming was deemed to be very engaging and that attendees wanted to see as much as possible. That said, it did lead to some people commentating that they felt a bit frustrated on the night.

"Really enjoyed the event, just wished we had more time as there was so much to see!"

"I loved it, if I had any criticism it would be that there was so much going on in so many places I couldn't see it all!"

"Everything I did was wonderful, but I wish I could have a chance to go to some of the other venues and see some of the other stalls and events too."

"Because there was so much to see and do it was a bit overwhelming."

Theme 2: The event and the activities were interesting and fun

16. 95% of online survey respondents found the event and the activities interesting, corresponding to the converse question where 94% of respondents disagreed with the statement "I found it boring".
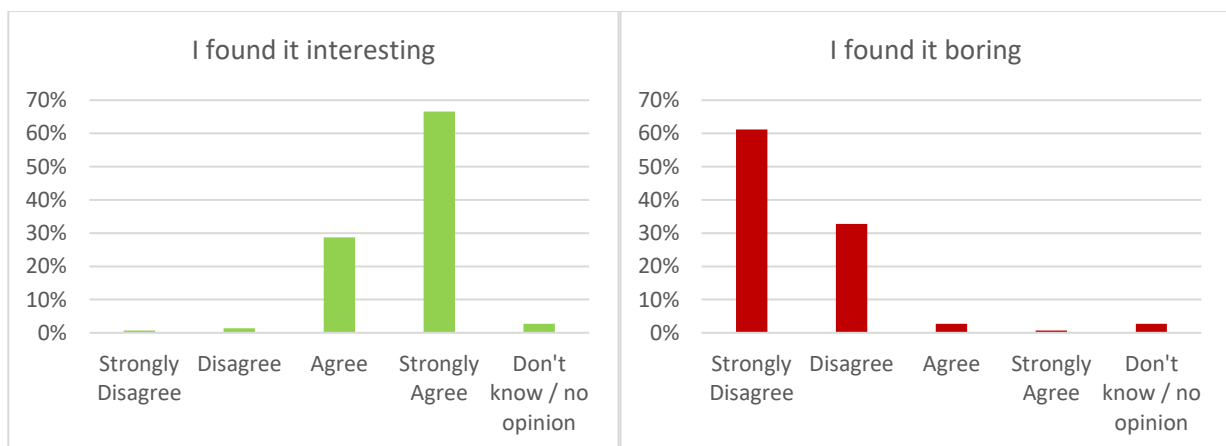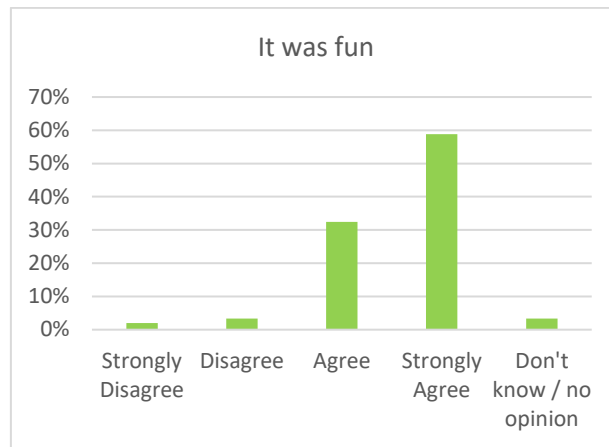

Respondents were asked to state if they agreed or disagreed with the statements "I found it interesting" and "I found it boring" (299 responses).

"I thoroughly enjoyed the Curiosity Carnival (and so did all my friends who attended the event as well), and it was very interesting to meeting the researchers and hearing more about their work and research interests. Hoping that the Carnival will return to Oxford in the near future, so we can celebrate European Researchers' Night again and again. Thanks for a great afternoon/evening out in Oxford!"

"The Curiosity Carnival was a great day out. Superb event and very interesting. Well done to all involved with putting it on."

17. 9 in 10 respondents (91%) strongly agreed/ agreed that the event and the activities were fun:

Respondents were asked to state if they agreed or disagreed with the statement "It was fun" (299 responses).

"We would like to congratulate all involved in making this event so interesting & fun"

"It was a really well organised, fun evening. The kind of thing that should happen more! Well done to all."

Theme 3: Age-appropriateness

18. Around 1 in 5 comments in the online post-event visitor survey made a reference to the age-appropriateness of the activities.

19. Many comments were positive and respondents felt that the activities worked extremely well for all adults and children alike and across all age groups.

20. Others felt that the activities were either too-child orientated or too-adult orientated and/or would have liked much clearer information on which activities were appropriate for which types of audiences.

"The children LOVED the interactive stuff, and there was lots to keep everyone of all educational levels happy."

"Amazing event that the whole family enjoyed and learnt from. Needs to be longer and please repeat again next year. This totally inspired my children"

"There were genuinely things going on for all ages and areas of interest. Hope it happens again - thank you."

"I simply felt the event was catered too much for children- I completely understand but would have been nice to have some activities that weren't just aimed at children."

"More children focused exhibits would be good as some topics went right over the heads on our boys. Anything to get children interested in science, research and further education is good."

Theme 4: Atmosphere and Busyness

21. Two-thirds of the survey respondents disagreed with the statement "It was too busy/ crowded" and about a third of the respondents agreed that it was.

It was too busy / crowded
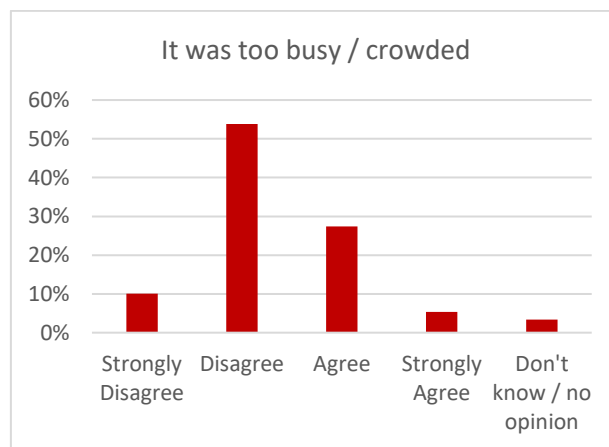
22. The free-text comments indicate that those that disagreed with the statement noted that there were lots of people but this added to the 'buzz', 'atmosphere' and 'vibrancy' of the event:

"The amount of people attending was 'spot-on' busy - vibrant but you could access things. A great atmosphere."

"Loved the ambience in Oxford. It was buzzing."

23. While those that agreed with this statement noted that it was sometimes difficult to access the activities or that you could not hear the presenters or performances due to the crowds and the background noise.

"Only [dis]appointment of the evening was not speaking to more researchers as it was very busy."

"It was hard to hear the researcher giving a small-group talk as there was so much background noise"

Theme 5: Information

24. About 1 in 7 of those that left comments made a reference to being confused over certain aspects and the need for better information, before or during the event.

25. The most common reason was that attendees felt unsure how to best 'navigate' and engage with the event; several respondents mentioned that an overall and in-depth programme of the whole night would have been really helpful either beforehand (to help plan better) or on the day/ night itself with better signage to the different activities in the venues.

26. Some respondents also mentioned that the ticketing booking system, wristband pick-up and venue entry process was confusing.

"Didn't seem to be one clear plan of all the various activities (didn't know about some until the day)"

"It would have been helpful to have a programme which had all buildings and the events timings so you could make informed decisions so you didn't miss out."

"The [venue] admission procedures needed to be better organised."

"The website ticket booking was the worst thing about it, it was very confusing."

Curiosity Carnival Goal 5: Assess the impact of the event, including changes in the visitors' perception of researchers and their work

Theme 6: Engaging researchers and increased understanding of research

27. 9 in 10 attendees enjoyed meeting researchers face-to-face and 8 in 10 were comfortable asking questions:

I enjoyed meeting researchers face-to-face

I felt uncomfortable asking questions
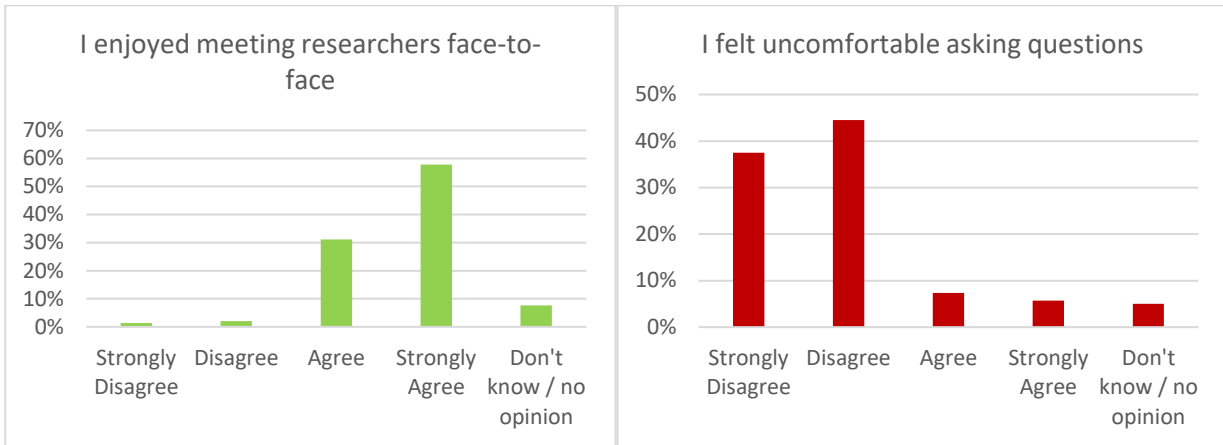
The post-event online survey explored whether attendees enjoyed meeting researchers and how comfortable, or not, they felt asking questions. (299 responses).

"A brilliant event. Talking to researchers about their research was incredible. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"I loved the opportunity to talk to a researcher. I could have talked for hours, she was so well informed about her subject. Please do it again!"

"My home university is very much along the lines of print a poster - hope someone cares. I hadn't even realised that it could be done so differently. I was delighted to see how well even very complex topics had been made extremely approachable."

"Very inspiring; great for the kids to meet 'real' and massively enthusiastic researchers. Thanks very much. We look forward to the next one!"

28. 83% of survey respondents strongly agreed/ agreed with the statement "I learnt about research" and 91% strongly disagreed/ disagreed with the statement "I didn't learn anything new".

I learnt about research

I didn't learn anything new
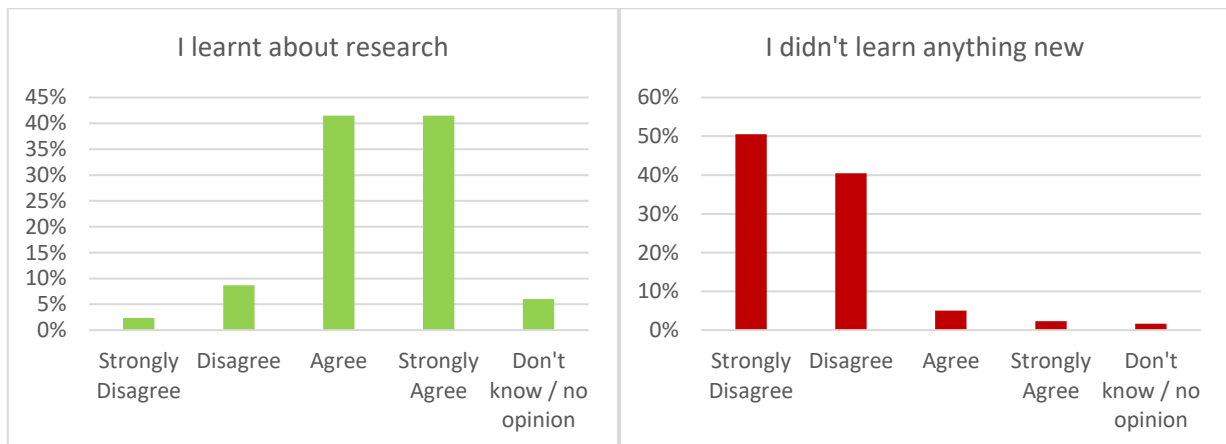
Respondents were asked to state if they agreed or disagreed with the statements "I learnt about research" and "I didn't learn anything new" (299 responses).

"Amazing event that the whole family enjoyed and learnt from. Needs to be longer and please repeat again next year. This totally inspired my children."

"Engaging, welcoming, learnt so much met some wonderful people and heard such great stories."

29. The post-event visitor survey data re: visitors that 'learnt about research' is backed up by two venue-based 'before' and 'after' polls that assessed the impact of the activities at those venues on the night.

In both cases these evaluation activities provide evidence that *Curiosity Carnival* changed participants' opinions – broadening their conceptualisation from their original perception that 'research equals science' and also talking more frequently about researchers as people.

30. One 'before and after' poll was performed at the Ashmolean through word associations with individuals entering or leaving the museum who were asked to respond to the word "Researcher"

There were a number of other words that were more frequent on exit including 'Fun', 'Important', 'Knowledge' and 'Learning'. Furthermore, there were twice as many words associated with research staff being quoted at the exit compared to the entrance, reflecting the impact of visitor contact with researchers during the visit.

31. The second poll took place at the Museum of Natural History / Pitt Rivers Museum, where visitors were given a card and asked to describe on one side and in a sentence their understanding of the value/use of research. Individuals kept the card and, on leaving the venue were asked if they wanted to add anything more on the value/use of research based on what they had seen. There were 200 cards handed out at the entrance but only 36 returned at the end and only 15 of these had both 'before' and 'after' comments. Despite this low response, there was an indication that visitors that did take part in the evaluation identified clear benefits from their visit:

"I still think research is valuable but what I liked and found especially enlightening was how the research was made understandable and accessible to everyone (even kids!)."

"I always thought it was important but I now know that it's a real career and not just something for the very brainy."

"The value of this evening is that it has opened our minds to research I never knew was there."

"I wouldn't mind my children choosing to be researchers (not that I would have any choice!)"

Theme 7: Visitor experiences, outcomes and impacts – specific activities

32. Evaluations of the individual activities 'on-the-night' echo those of the post-event online visitor survey and the venue-wide feedback with the vast majority of activities demonstrating their success in engaging the public and/or eliciting at least one of more of the following outcomes and impacts on the visitors:

– Enjoyment; Inspiration; Fun; Fascination;

– Increased learning/ understanding of the topic/ research;

– Changed perceptions/ opinions.

Further information on the evaluation of these specific activities will be provided in a forthcoming supplementary report.

5.0 Appendix: Post-event online visitor survey (SurveyMonkey)

Curiosity Carnival

Curiosity Carnival feedback

* 1. What was your overall experience of Curiosity Carnival?

Disappointing	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
☆	☆	☆	☆

* 2. Why did you give the above star rating?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know / no opinion
It was too busy / crowded	○	○	○	○	○
I learnt about research	○	○	○	○	○
I found it boring	○	○	○	○	○
I felt uncomfortable asking questions	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoyed meeting researchers face-to-face	○	○	○	○	○
I found it interesting	○	○	○	○	○
It was fun	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't learn anything new	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

* 3. Which venue(s) did you visit (select all that apply)

- ☐ Ashmolean Museum
- ☐ Botanic Garden
- ☐ Museum of Natural History
- ☐ Museum of the History of Science
- ☐ Pitt Rivers Museum
- ☐ Street activities on Broad Street
- ☐ Weston Library
- ☐ Wytham Woods
- ☐ Not sure

* 4. How did you hear about Curiosity Carnival (select all that apply)

- ☐ Leaflet / Flyer
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Poster

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Word of mouth / recommendation
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Eventbrite
- ☐ Don't know

* 5. As far as you are aware, have you attended an event organised by the University of Oxford before?

[▲▼]

6. Any other comments or feedback you would like to leave?

[   ]