Presentation by

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Unkindest Cut

Engaged in busy work - practitioner development at science festivals

UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

SCU | science communication unit

Unkindest Cut top line metric

Festivals	• 6 Festivals • 48 performances • 18 workshops
Participants	• 881 audience • 165 workshop
Evaluation	• 16 focus groups – 68 participants • 305 questionnaires

SCIENCE LIVE

Surveying the landscape of live public science events

Durant, J., Buckley, N., Comerford, D., Fogg-Rogers, L. A., Fooshee, J., Lewenstein, B. and Wiehe, B. (2016)*Science live: Surveying the landscape of live public science events.* Project Report. MIT, Cambridge, USA. Available from: http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/29112

WELCOME TO

Science Live

Connecting event organisers, volunteers and speakers to put on live science events.
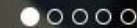
FIND AN EVENT NEAR YOU →

Upcoming events

Malvern Festival of Innovation 2019

📅 6pm, Monday 7th October, 2019

📍 Malvern

VIEW THIS EVENT →

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Home   Wanted   Offered   What's on   How this works

🔍 Search for...   EVENTS ▾   **SEARCH**

Plan an event

Contribute to an event

Attend an event

Science communicators do not communicate well to each other!

Inv9 – I mean the academic literature is often useless [laughs]. If I'm honest, it's hard to find time to be able to engage with it, both academic published literature and more evaluations like ours.

Fogg-Rogers, L; Weihe, B; Comerford, D; Fooshee, J; Durant, J. (2019) Science Live – a qualitative analysis of perceptions of science event practitioners in the USA and UK. *Submitted to Science Communication.*

Science Live showed that professional practice is recognised as important...

Focus group D participant - Evaluation-wise, it's very focused on how's the event gone and how have our audience enjoyed it, and what should we change for next year. I would like it to be more about has it changed perceptions and influenced people, and are they doing things differently as a result of coming to the event. But convincing the funders that that is valuable is not very easy, because they're more interested in how many people came to your event and that's seen as the measure of success, which it's not.

But we mainly learn 'on the job'

Inv4 - The way that we kind of get information from what other places are doing, is just by going to stuff ourselves. You know, it's having that experience of being an audience member and thinking about 'How does this feel?' or 'What's this space that I'm in here?'

Inv5 - It would be nice to have a community of ambitious practitioners who want to make excellent work and a way of connecting those practitioners and kind of allowing that community to be inspired by each other and to be peers and mentors for each other.

Paired peer reflections

Unkindest Cut Evaluation Tools

- **Organiser self-reflection form**

- **Paired peer organiser observation forms**

- **Focus groups before and after the project**

- **Interviews after the festival exchanges**

Audience engagement with artworks:

☐ High engagement ☐ Average engagement ☐ Low engagement

Notes:

Interaction between audience members:

Notes:

Identify anything that was particularly interesting/good:

Identify anything that was particularly challenging/difficult:

How could the event be improved at the festival you are observing?

What will you take away as learning for your own festival?

Festival organiser reflections

Project management
- Lights/sounds issues for audiences
- More information about logistics and to promote the events
- More liaison to organise shipping container e.g. site visits beforehand
- More notice to book in their exchange visit with the festivals
- Conflicting messages from the evaluation and the arts
- Some said the project was too time consuming for the return for the festival

Festival discussion between organisers
- More opportunities to talk to each other
- Longer-term learning and development

Building relationships takes time…

We struggled with making the contacts in the local community, in the mental health networks. [They had] said they were keen, but I couldn't raise any action out of them. So whether they were actually genuinely keen or whether they were just being polite, I don't know. I think if we'd had a bit more time to build on relationships like that, it takes time and you don't really want to parachute in with something.

Without it being a formal part of the programme it slips and you don't take the time to think. You don't do the reflective time because you're so busy, unless it's in the schedule it's very easy.

It might have been better to have spread them out a little bit over a year, or even two years, so that you get that time for reflection. That would have allowed for more reflection and development and learning between the festivals, because people could go to one that was at a different time, or maybe they'd have the opportunity to go to more than one or to connect in different ways.

But the appetite is there.

I think what really grabbed my attention right at the beginning was the chance to work with other festivals and share learning and experience between festivals, so even with very different scaled festivals and different age festivals, there's lots of things you can learn.

So the problem is saying we're all time pressured, money pressured, resource limited and so it seems there's no point re-inventing wheels for things so actually we have this network and perhaps as part of the network, we share some of the results from this with other members and develop things together.

I think that there's lots of scope and potential for groups of festivals to come together to plan a touring content, whether that's in the arts or some other aspect of community engagement or public engagement through science or STEAM or however you want to define it. I think there's lots of scope for say four or five festivals to come together to make a bid.

Questions for the future

Interpreting art in a science festival
- Differences in cultural practice - self-interpretation of art vs art as a lens to deeper meaning
- So how can we enable artistically literate audiences into deeper connections with science festival content?
- And how can we connect audiences used to science festival formats into performance art forms?

Sharing learning between festivals
- How to connect organisers with different levels of funding and time availability?
- How to connect time-pressured practitioners?

Workshop

Practitioner development time

Ability to develop longer-term projects or seek funding

Constantly moving from one project to another

Workshop

Event programme control

Self-organising for content

Run with external/pre-existing programmes

Workshop

1) Generate topics which have longer-term national interest for cross-festival development

2) Identify professional development practices which need to be enhanced in science communication

3) Identify the infrastructure which will help make projects or professional development easier