Imperial Festival 2012

Summative evaluation
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Summative evaluation collated June 2012 by Ben Gammon Consulting
1. Key findings

- Feedback from visitors, alumni, Imperial staff, Members of Court and researchers running exhibition stands was overwhelmingly positive. There was strong support for Imperial running Festivals again.
- The Festival attracted an audience that was predominantly: Imperial staff and their families; current or potential Imperial students and their relatives; alumni and their families.
- General public visitors wanted more hands-on activities; alumni wanted more opportunities to explore the campus and meet former lecturers and colleagues; staff wanted more opportunity to attend events and more events that brought together different departments.
- Two thirds were visiting with friends or relatives; 11% were under 18; 28% were aged 18-24; 38% were aged 25-34; 23% were aged 35 or over.
- Members of the public mostly found out about the Festival via word of mouth; alumni via email; and Imperial staff via email, posters and word of mouth.
- The Festival web pages seem to have been predominantly used to access the programme and campus map.
- The mix of 'meet-the-researcher', lectures, workshops, demonstrations, music and dance events was very appealing to the different audiences.
- The Research Zone was the most popular aspect of the Festival especially the hands-on activities and demonstrations.
- Alumni, Imperial staff and members of the public found the researchers to be friendly, welcoming, enthusiastic and skillful in explaining their work.
- Researchers found talking to the public to be a positive and rewarding experience and were surprised by the level of interest in their work.
- Researchers also valued the opportunity to network and to find out about other department’s work.
- The Festival was successful in portraying Imperial as an accessibly university that is engaged in innovative research.
- The main criticism was the perceived low level of publicity and advertising for the Festival.
- Some of the researchers staffing exhibit stands in the Research Zone felt that they needed more time to prepare for the Festival and/or more space for their display.
- Visitors, staff and alumni also wanted future Festivals expanded with more activities over a longer period of time.
Word clouds for each audience group:
The following are key words picked out from written responses to perceived Festival highlights.

I. Word clouds from **visitors** on the day

II. Word cloud from the **staff** survey
III. Word clouds from the alumni survey

IV. Word clouds from the Court survey
V. Word clouds from the researchers survey
2. Background

Imperial Festival is a new event celebrating the accomplishments of the Imperial College staff and students through hands-on demonstrations, lectures, debates, music, comedy, dancing, art and street performances. The Festival included special events for College VIPs, staff, and alumni and free public events ran across the campus.

The Festival was designed to achieve four key objectives:
- Showcase the work of Imperial and celebrate its achievements
- Empower key stakeholders - Imperial staff, students, researchers and Court
- Further public engagement across all departments and levels
- Generate a sense of pride from staff, students and the local community

Imperial’s Communications and Development Division commissioned this evaluation to assess the reach and impact upon all audiences and those involved in running the Festival. In addition there is interest in assessing the reaction of staff and students who were involved in running the Festival. The evaluation was also designed to establish a baseline for developing and assessing future events.

The evaluation with the general public and alumni aimed to cover:
1. The demographic profile of the audience including age, where they live, past history of visiting the site and past history of attending similar events
2. How they found out about the Festival
3. Why they decided to visit
4. What they found enjoyable, surprising, thought-provoking
5. What benefits they gained from attending
6. How they feel about their interaction with the staff and students that they met
7. Their overall impression of the event
8. What changes they would like to see in next year's Festival
9. What, if any, impact attending the Festival has had upon their impression of Imperial, its research and its staff

Evaluation with staff and students running individual events was designed to explore:
10. Experience in running public engagement activities
11. What skills and experience they gained from participating in this Festival as well as those they feel they lacked
12. Whether participating in this Festival has increased their motivation to participate in future public engagement activities
13. Their views on their interactions with members of the public
14. What they thought were the most and least successful aspects of the Festival
15. Lessons they feel should be learnt for future Festivals

Additionally the evaluation was designed to identify potential barriers to engagement between visitors, staff and students, such as:
- Physical – people cannot see, hear, find something
- Motivational – the experience fails to initially capture or hold their attention; the experience does not appeal or is not personally relevant
- Social – people feel awkward, unwelcome or out of place; lack of empathy between visitor and staff/students
• Cognitive – level of content is too advanced or too basic for visitors

3. Methodology
The 2012 Imperial Festival was evaluated using seven methods:
• In-depth qualitative interviews with people visiting the Festival – members of the public, students, staff and alumni
• In-depth qualitative interviews with researchers running stands in the Research Zone
• A quantitative survey of 64 visitors to the Festival
• Online survey of Imperial College staff
• Online survey of Court members
• An email survey of researchers who staffed the Research Zone exhibits
• Google Analytics assessment of usage of the Festival webpages

These methods are described in detail in the following sections.

3.1 Qualitative in-depth interviews with staff, students, members of the public and alumni
A sample of Festival visitors and alumni was recruited inside and immediately surrounding the Research Zone, the Food and Drink Zone, and the Sir Alexander Fleming Building. Interviews lasted 2–10 minutes and were audio recorded for later analysis.

59 in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted in total.
• Imperial staff / students – 28
• Members of the general public – 16
• Alumni – 15

3.2 Quantitative survey of Festival visitors
64 surveys were conducted with visitors to the Festival on both the Friday and Saturday in order to obtain an estimate of the audience profile. The survey was conducted as an interview by members of Imperial staff who recorded visitors’ answers using a structured questionnaire.

3.3 Qualitative interviews with researchers
A sample of 15 researchers running exhibit stands in the Research Zone was recruited for in-depth interviews. These interviews lasted 4–16 minutes. All of the interviews were digitally recorded for later analysis.
3.4 On-line survey of Court members
12 members of the Court completed an online questionnaire about the first meeting of the Court and the Festival. Their comments and ratings relating to the Festival are included in this report.

3.5 Online survey of Imperial staff¹
70 members of Imperial staff completed an online questionnaire about the Festival of whom 45 (66%) had actually attended the event. All of the staff had heard about the Festival prior to completing the online questionnaire.

Of the staff who completed the online survey:
- 81% non-academic staff
- 16% were academic staff
- 3% students
- 50% were aged 25-34
- 44% were aged 34+
- 3% were aged 21-24
- 1% were aged 18-21

3.6 Email survey of researchers
After the Festival an email questionnaire was sent to all of the researchers who had help to staff the exhibits in the Research Zone. 26 of the researchers returned completed questions.

3.7 Google analytics
Usage of the Festival webpages was assessed using Google Analytics in order to determine:
- How people found the webpages, which pages they visited and what they downloaded
- Number of unique visits to the web pages
- Average duration of visit
- Where people exited the site

¹ Following the completion of this report, 28 further comments were received from Imperial staff, bringing the total to 98, which can be seen in the full survey responses of Appendix II
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Type</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Imperial staff/students</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researchers in Research Zone</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative survey</td>
<td>Visitors to Imperial Festival</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online survey</td>
<td>Imperial staff</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researchers who ran exhibits in the Research Zone</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members of Court</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Findings

4.1 Profile of Festival visitors
From the quantitative survey of 64 people attending the event an approximate profile of visitors to the Festival can be deduced.

- 20% were visiting Imperial College London for the first time
- 28% were currently studying at Imperial
- 17% had previously studied at Imperial
- 35% had previous been on campus but had never studied at Imperial
- 31% lived or worked in the South Kensington area of London
- 86% were visiting with friends, relatives or work colleagues
- 33% of the visitors were aged 21 or younger
- 31% were aged 22-44
- 63% of the visitors were currently or had previously studied science, engineering or medicine at university or polytechnic
- 50% of those who had completed their full-time education were currently, or had previously, worked in an occupation related to science, engineering or medicine

The age profile and type of group are shown in figure 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: Age of Festival visitors
Figure 2: Who Festival visitors were accompanied by

![Pie chart showing the percentage of festival visitors accompanied by different groups.]

N = 64

4.2 Impact of marketing
Visitors in the quantitative survey were asked how they had found out about the Festival. Their responses are summarised in Table 2.

50% had found out about the Festival via ‘word-of-mouth’. The most frequently encountered marketing materials were email messages – 23%; and posters – 12%.

Just 8% found out about the Festival via the website, although more may have visited the site to view or download the programme of events or campus map. None of the visitors in the quantitative survey had come across any mention of the Festival on Twitter or Facebook.
Table 2: How did visitors find out about Imperial Festival?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of finding out about the Festival</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth from someone working/studying at Imperial</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email message</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth from someone else</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial College website</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came across event when passing through the area</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article or listing in a newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other website</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 64; visitors could choose two or more routes by which they could find out about the Festival so responses add to more than 100%

The 70 Imperial staff who completed the online survey had primarily heard about the Festival via: email messages, posters on campus, word of mouth, the Imperial website and leaflets (see Table 3 below). Only 9% of staff had seen the advertisements in the College print media (Reporter and Imperial magazine).

Table 3: How did Imperial staff find out about the Festival?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of finding out about the Festival</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email message – staff briefing</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster – around college</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email message – all staff email invite</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial College website</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial College homepage</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster – on London Underground</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in Reporter</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in Imperial magazine</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 70 respondents could choose two or more routes by which they could find out about the Festival so responses add to more than 100%
### 4.3 Use of the Festival web-pages

The Festival webpages received 25,775 unique visits from Dec 2011–May 2012: 40% from computers in the Imperial campus and 60% from computers located outside Imperial campus. Most visits were made between 18 April and 11 May 2012 with a peak in the week before the Festival (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Unique visits to the Festival web-pages Dec ‘11 – May ‘12**

The page '/Festival' was reached from 31 different sources the most frequent being:

- Google 37.6%
- Facebook.com 9.8%
- imperial.ac.uk/www1.imperial.ac.uk 4.8%
- t.co 3.8%
- now-here-this.timeout.com 1.7%
- campus 1.1%
- timeout.com 1.1%
- linkedin.com 1.0%

27.2% of visitors accessed the '/Festival' webpage directly.

The most heavily visited Festival pages are shown in Table 4. Visitors spent most time on the Festival programme pages with an average visit of 4 to 7 minutes.

#### Table 4: Most heavily visited web-pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unique page views</th>
<th>Total visits - including Imperial IP addresses</th>
<th>Number visits - excluding Imperial IP addresses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/Festival</td>
<td>15,095</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Festival/programme</td>
<td>4,105</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/files/downloads/.../programme</td>
<td>3,187</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/files/downloads ... /stkhencampus</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Festival/getinvolved</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Festival/spreadtheword</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Festival/contact</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Festival/alumnireunion</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As at 23 May 2012
- The Festival’s Youtube page had received 395 hits
- 490 copies of the programme were downloaded

4.4 Motivations for attending the Festival

General visitors
During the Friday evening event (aimed at adult audiences) most of the visitors interviewed in-depth were Imperial staff or students, often accompanied by friends or relatives. They had found out about the Festival mainly through word of mouth, posters around the campus or email messages. Some staff and students had seen the marquee being constructed and were intrigued to find out what was going on. A couple of members of the public had come across the Festival by chance as they walked along Exhibition Road.

During the Saturday daytime event (aimed primarily at families) most visitors interviewed were couples or family groups who had found out about the Festival through adverts, word of mouth or (for prospective students) email invitations by Imperial.

Current staff members were interested in finding out about the work of other research departments. Undergraduate students were often interested in finding out about opportunities for postgraduate or postdoctoral research at Imperial.

“I’m a PhD student here and it’s nice to come and just see what the various departments are up to... You don’t often get a chance to hear about what they’re up to.” (Current Imperial student)

“We saw this tent being put up a few days ago so we wanted to come check it out and see what it’s all about.” (Final year Imperial undergraduate student)

Members of the public and prospective students wanted to learn more about the research carried out at Imperial.

“I wanted to know the scientific implications [of Imperial’s research] that’s why I’m here to develop myself.” (Mother visiting with a daughter and two sons, one of whom is a prospective student)

Parents in family groups often said that they wanted to introduce their children to Imperial and provide them with an opportunity to learn about science. Other parents brought sons or daughters who were considering which universities to apply to or because they had already applied to Imperial.

“I have a young family, there is lots of science that’s interesting to them here.” (Member of Imperial staff visiting with their children)

“We came to get a general overview of Imperial… My children are at secondary school and I’d like them to come and see the university.” (Mother in family group with two secondary school age children)
“We live in the countryside and it’s a big wrench for my first daughter to go away into the big city. I’ve come here tonight and it’s made me as a parent very comfortable, it seems very safe.” (Father accompanying daughter who will be joining Imperial later in the year)

Children wanted to take part in hands-on activities

“I just love experiments.” (Daughter accompanying Imperial member of staff)

Several visitors commented that they were glad that the weather was so fine saying that if it had been cold and raining they might have considered not attending.

Alumni
Most alumni had heard about the Festival through emails sent by Imperial, although some noted that they only found out about it by chance, e.g. by checking the alumni website.

Alumni came to the Festival to gain an overview of Imperial’s latest research and, particularly for those who graduated several years ago, to find out how it has changed since they were students. Many had not visited Imperial since they had graduated and would not have done so, were it not for the Festival. Several alumni wanted to visit their old departments and/or meet with former lecturers and PhD supervisors and were disappointed if they had not been able to do so.

“I really wanted to see my department. I was hoping to meet some old colleagues and to walk around college. It’s not that I don’t already know it but it’s been ‘long time no see.’” (Alumnus visiting alone)

Around half the alumni interviewed were visiting with their children in order to show them around the college, engage them in science and encourage them to consider studying at Imperial.

“I’ve come today to see what Imperial is up to… I’ve not been back in 10 years and the Festival is a great opportunity to come and bring my son… I’d like him to come here too.” (Alumnus in family group with son of secondary school age)

4.5 Perceptions of the intended target audience for the Festival
Most visitors in the in-depth interviews believed that the Festival was aimed at people interested in studying at Imperial and/or members of the public with an interest in science.

While most visitors noted that the Festival would be interesting to some children – especially the activities in the Research Zone - children, and in particular those below the age of 10, were not felt to be the main target audience.

Some visitors felt that the Research Zone was aimed primarily at students rather than at the general public, perceiving it to be a sort of careers fair.
“It’s more of an insight or a walk-in prospectus for people who want to get into Imperial.” (Final year undergraduate student from Imperial)

“To be honest my impression that it was for the students so I didn’t feel it was appropriate for me to go in.” (Member of the public visiting the Festival)

Most alumni felt that the Festival was aimed mainly at past, current and prospective students because:
- A lot of the displays, particularly in the Research Zone, required some prior knowledge of basic science concepts
- The Festival was primarily marketed at past, current and prospective students
- The Festival was held on the same day as the alumni reunion

However half of the alumni felt that the Festival was also aimed at any members of the general public interested in Imperial and its work.

4.6 Reactions to the Festival
Across all of the surveys and interviews people’s response to the Festival was very positive. Alumni, staff, students and members of the public enjoyed meeting researchers, talking part in hands-on activities and demonstrations, attending lectures and musical event as well as partaking of the food and drink.

Visitors in the quantitative survey were asked to rated various aspects of their Festival experience. The results are shown in Table 5 below.

| Table 5: Visitors’ rating of the Festival experience |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                                 | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Missing data |
| It was easy to find my way around the Festival | 42% | 45% | 9% | 0% | 4% |
| The researchers I talked to provided clear explanations of their research | 34% | 47% | 2% | 2% | 15% |
| The researchers listened and responded to my questions | 38% | 41% | 3% | 0% | 18% |
| The Festival exceeded my expectations | 31% | 51% | 12% | 0% | 6% |
| The Festival increased my understanding of the research conducted at Imperial | 38% | 44% | 8% | 0% | 10% |
| I now want to find out more about the research carried out at Imperial | 27% | 61% | 5% | 2% | 5% |

N = 64

Over 80% of visitors in the quantitative survey felt that the Festival had exceeded their expectations, and had increased their understanding of, and interest in, Imperial’s research. 80% felt that the researchers they had talked to had clearly explained their work, listening and responding to their questions.
Visitors in the quantitative survey were asked to identify their favourite aspect of the Festival. Their responses are listed below.

- The Research Zone – 52%
- Music / dance events – 23%
- Pop-up Surgery – 16%
- Food and drink provided – 16%
- Lectures – 8%
- Reach Out Lab – 5%
- Actors – 3%
- Ambulance Demo – 3%

The 45 Imperial staff who completed the online survey and who had attended the Festival were likewise asked to rate various aspects of the event (see Table 6 below).

80% felt that the Festival had exceeded their expectations and had increased their interest in and understanding of the research carried out at Imperial. Over 80% of the staff felt that the researchers they spoke to had clearly explained their work, listening and responding to their questions.

The staff identified as their favourite aspects of the Festival:

- The Research Zone – 58%
- Music and dance events – 16%
- Pop-up surgery – 9%
- The general atmosphere – 7%
- Food and drink – 4%
- The lectures – 4%
- Sports activities – 4%
- Staff event – 2%

“I loved the Imperial orchestra but more importantly I was with two teenage girls, who loved the pop up surgery and they were very interested in all of the scientific events as they are currently studying this at school.” (Imperial member of staff)

“I thought it was a great idea to hold it. Finally Imperial appeared to be attempting to do some more organised interaction both internally and with the outside world.” (Imperial member of staff)

“Enthusiastic scientists talking passionately about their science without trying to sell it on a grant proposal.” (Imperial member of staff)

All of the Imperial staff who had attended the Festival said that they would consider attending next year’s event.
Table 6: Rating of the Festival experience by Imperial staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Missing data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was easy to find my way around the Festival</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researchers I talked to provided clear explanations of their research</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The researchers listened and responded to my questions</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Festival exceeded my expectations</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Festival increased my understanding of the research conducted at Imperial</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I now want to find out more about the research carried out at Imperial</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 45

Results from the in-depth interviews with visitors found that the Research Zone was the highlight for most people – being able to talk to real researchers and find out about their work. These visitors particularly enjoyed the interactive, hands-on activities and demonstrations at the event stands, often because of their appeal to children.

“For us the highlights were the interactive, hands-on things because they show you how science works and you can take part in it.” (Mother visiting in family groups with two primary school age children)

“The robot … it is quite funny that it recognises your face and smiles. I think that is quite cool.” (Member of the public visiting the Festival)

“They had a machine to increase the accuracy of the hip replacement. That was really amazing ... it was hands-on and they showed you how inaccurately you do it without the machine and then show you how accurately the machine does it.” (Sixth form student visiting Festival with her mother)

“They were fascinated by the mica they used to use in windows for aeroplanes.” (Mother visiting with two young children)

Visitors who work or study at Imperial said that they do not usually get an opportunity to find out about the diverse range of research carried out across the different departments at Imperial.
Although the Research Zone was the most frequently praised aspect of the Festival other events were also mentioned in the in-depth interviews:

- The ‘Pop-up surgery’
- The music and dance events
- The St John Ambulance display
- The show in the Haemo Globe Inn

Several visitors also commented on the overall relaxed atmosphere of the Festival.

“It’s happy and young and cheerful and lively … it’s very chilled and I like that there is no gate and you can just walk in, participate and wander around.”
(Member of the public Festival)

The in-depth interviews showed that highlight for alumni was to see that Imperial remains engaged in a diverse range of cutting edge research. Several alumni also noted that they were pleasantly surprised by the extent of Imperial’s outreach and public engagement work.

Other highlights mentioned by alumni were:

- Being able to speak to their fellow alumni and their former lecturers
- Being able to visit specific areas of Imperial – particularly the Queen’s Tower and their old departments
- The vintage cars and fire engine
- The music events

“The music was really, really, really good … but also there is a super-abundance of research.” (Alumnus visiting alone)

Members of Court surveyed online were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Festival and the opening reception. Of the 12 members of Court who responded: 7 were very satisfied with the Festival; 4 were satisfied; and 1 was neutral. None of them rated themselves as dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Festival. With regard to the Opening Reception, 4 members of Court were very satisfied; 5 were satisfied; 1 was neutral and 1 was dissatisfied (no reason was provided for this rating).

Seven members of Court provided more detailed feedback about their reactions to the Festival. Of these all but one was positive about the experience. Members of Court particularly liked:

- The opening reception
- The events provided during the Festival
- Talking to the students in the Research Zone
- Seeing the Outreach Lab in action

“Talking to Imperial staff and students realising the calibre of students.” (Member of Court)

“Festival activities were fantastic, informative, fun.” (Member of Court)

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2 This was not part of the Festival, but one of the induction activities earlier in the day
“It was very interesting to gain a grasp on how the wider part of Imperial College works. I thought the highlight of the day was Outreach lab and think the work it does with local schools is excellent.” (Member of Court)

4.7 Experience of talking to researchers
In the quantitative surveys 80% of the Festival visitors felt that the researchers they talked to had clearly explained their work, listening and responding to their questions.

In the in-depth interviews most of the alumni and general visitors said that they had talked with researchers – predominantly in the Research Zone and sometimes also with the Soap Box Scientists. All of them had found this to be an extremely positive experience. They felt that the researchers:

- Were friendly and approachable, smiling, inviting the public to ask them questions
- Were enthusiastic about their research and about communicating their it to the lay public including children
- Were able to talk about their research both to those who had extensive prior knowledge and those who did not
- Listened carefully to their questions and responded appropriately, pitching their answers to the visitors level of prior knowledge

“They were very enthusiastic about what they do and really welcoming.”
(Secondary school student visiting with her Father)

“Very engaging, very, very cheerful. The important thing is that they seemed to be so motivated about their research. They convey that love for their subject.”
(Final year undergraduate student from Imperial)

Researchers’ strategy for explaining their work seemed to be to start at a basic level and increase the complexity of their explanations in response to visitors’ questions. All of the visitors and alumni in the in-depth interviews said that the researchers had listened and responded appropriately to their questions.

“A few questions brought them [the researchers] down to the right level.”
(Mother visiting with two young children)

The alumni were particularly interested in talking to researchers working in areas related to their degree subject or field of work. Like other visitors alumni were impressed by the researchers’ skill and enthusiasm for talking about their research. Alumni visiting with their families often complimented the researchers on being able to effectively explain their work to children.

The alumni felt that researchers taking part in the Festival would gain interesting insights into the public’s perception of their work. Some also believed that researchers would benefit by:

- Developing their communication skills
- Being able to network with professionals and possible research funders
• Getting feedback on their research from people working in industry.

4.8 Researchers’ experience of talking to visitors and alumni

In the email survey researchers identified who had asked them to take part in the Festival.

- My department – 40%
- A colleague – 20%
- The Communications and Development Division – 20%
- Saw an advert requesting help – 12%
- My supervisor – 8%

Most researchers in the in-depth interviews said that they had been asked by their departments to take part in the Festival, their research being selected due to its perceived public interest and accessibility. Others had specifically volunteered because they expected to gain:

- Improved communication skills
- Experience in public engagement that would be useful for future funding applications, job applications and general career development
- Insights into what the public think about their research
- Opportunity to network with other researchers beyond their immediate research groups or departments
- Opportunity to inspire current and prospective students to study, or continue studying at Imperial.
- Showcase their own work and that of their department to others within and beyond Imperial

“I really enjoy talking to the public because you never know what stories they are going to have and what questions they are going to ask. Each one will come with different areas of interest. I had one from Latvia telling me about the bed-rock in Latvia and Sweden that I had no idea about.” (Researcher with a lot of prior experience of public engagement)

However in a minority of cases researchers had been told to take part in the Festival by a more senior member of their department and were noticeably less enthusiastic about the experience. Two of these researchers had been asked to talk about work that they had not been directly involved with. Both felt uncomfortable talking about this area of research.

The 15 researchers interviewed in-depth were also asked to describe their prior experience of public engagement varied considerably. Some had a lot of experience having taken part in school outreach programmes or previous public events. Others had never taken part in any public engagement activity. Unsurprisingly those with previous experience of public engagement felt more comfortable talking to the public.

All of the researchers in the in-depth interviews said that they had enjoyed talking to visitors. Several were pleasantly surprised by visitors’ level of interest in the research, even from those who had little prior knowledge of the science.
“I was positively surprised by the public’s level of interest… it’s certainly satisfying.” (Researcher with little previous experience of public engagement)

“The Festival was fun and interesting to me… I found out what people think of our work… I would definitely like to do this kind of thing again.” (Researcher with no prior experience of public engagement)

Around half of the researchers who were interviewed felt that talking to visitors would influence their future research, such as by gaining new ideas for research and focusing research on areas of public interest. Researchers also found that visitors’ enthusiasm and interest in their work was very motivating.

“When you start discussing things you end up with new questions yourself because you are thinking and reviewing your own ideas.” (Researcher with little previous experience of public engagement)

“When we see there is more interest from the public it makes us more enthusiastic.” (Researcher with little previous experience of public engagement)

“It motivates you that you are really doing something that the public cares about.” (Researcher with little previous experience of public engagement)

In the email survey researchers identified the following aspects of the Festival as their personal highlights.

- Talking to members of the public/children about my research – 10 researchers
- Seeing the other demonstrations in the Research Zone/learning about work of other departments – 6 researchers
- Meeting colleagues from other departments and building working relationships with them – 4 researchers
- The general atmosphere of the event – 3 researchers
- Meeting former students/colleagues – 2 researchers
- Meeting the Rector – 1 researcher
- Free drinks – 1 researcher
- Increased understanding of public’s knowledge of science – 1 researcher

“I really enjoyed helping on the second day when there were lots of children about. I was helping at the Reach out lab and it was good to be able to share some of my enthusiasm for science with them.” (Researcher who ran a stand in the Research Zone)

“The enthusiasm and curiosity of the audience: there was a genuine interest to understand the healthcare innovations, how they would benefit patients and samples flew off the table quicker than expected, so it was nice to see people wanted to get more information and start using the tools displayed.” (Researcher who ran a stand in the Research Zone)

Researchers answering the email survey were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements about the impact of the Festival on their public engagement knowledge and skills. Their responses are shown below in Table 7.
Table 7: Researchers’ assessment of the impact of the Festival on their public engagement skills and knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend taking part in the Festival to a colleague</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was surprised at the level of interest people showed in my work</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Festival has made me think differently about how I explain my work to people</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Festival has made me think differently about my work</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 26

77% of the researchers in the email survey were surprised at the level of interest people showed in their work; 50% felt that the Festival had made them think differently about how to explain their work to people. 92% agreed that they would recommend taking part in the Festival to a colleague.

However none of the researchers strongly agreed with the statement that the Festival had ‘made me feel differently about my work’. Only 19% agreed with this statement, while 46% disagreed (23% strongly disagreeing).

Researchers in the email survey were asked if participating in the Festival had led to any opportunities for collaboration with other departments, contacts with industry or other organisations, useful feedback on their research. Thirteen of the researchers mentioned network and/or potential collaborations with people they had met at the Festival.

“I have met a few researchers from different departments and shared some ideas, collaborations can be established. The Festival has been a very fruitful occasion for networking.” (Researcher who ran a stand in the Research Zone)

“Yes we have received a few leads as a result of this, from a company in civil engineering software design, as well as One Aviation. Our ask an expert competition generated lots of responses from guests.” (Researcher who ran a stand in the Research Zone)

“Yes, a member of staff at the adjacent stand has put us in touch with a company and a follow-up meeting is already scheduled.” (Researcher who ran a stand in the Research Zone)

Despite the overall positive experience the researchers identified several challenges that they encountered while talking to visitors:
• The allocation of space for exhibition stands varied considerably; some researchers felt that they had not been given enough
• Some of the researchers felt that they had not been given sufficient notice in order to prepare their stand and their demonstration activities
• Some struggled to avoid overly “dumbing down” their research while attempting to make it accessible for visitors with little prior knowledge
• Others noted the difficulty of simultaneously engaging parents and children
• A few of the researchers had had to deal with members of the public with strongly negative views about science

“Sometimes you forget how used to a project you are, so you start talking about stuff that they don’t understand … but some people do understand it and you don’t want to dumb it down too much.” (Researcher with little previous experience of public engagement)

“Keeping the kids and the parents engaged simultaneously. Giving information to the kids and letting them think about it while you give more advanced information to the adults.” (Researcher with a lot of experience of public engagement)

“I had one person come up to me and ask me what I thought of the argument between creationism and evolution but that was quite good fun though.” (Researcher with a lot of experience of public engagement)

Researchers in the in-depth interviews suggested several ways in which Imperial could support their future public engagement activities. The following were suggested by one or two of the researchers interviewed
• Imperial could provide more resources such as funds to develop posters, buy materials or pay for staff overtime
• Public engagement should be part of a regular training programme to ensure that all researchers are trained and receive up-to-date information
• More opportunities (and free time) to engage in public engagement, e.g. Festivals, outreach events, public lectures and activities for children
• Ask for volunteers to help run exhibition stands rather than instructing people to do so
• Only ask researchers to talk about work that they have been directly involved with

4.9 Suggestions for improving future Festivals
In the surveys, online questionnaires and in-depth interviews visitors, alumni, researchers and Imperial staff were asked for suggestions as to how next year’s Festival could be improved.

Visitors in the quantitative survey provided a range of suggested improvements for future Festivals predominantly better publicity for the event and more hands-on activities.
• More / better publicity (especially around South Kensington) – 25%
• More / better demos and hands-on activities in the Research Zone – 16%
Better signage / maps of the campus – 9%
More / better food and drink – 8%
More activities for children – 7%
More activities in general – 6%
More lectures – 6%
More music – 6%
Sell Imperial merchandise; T-shirts, badges – 5%
More freebies at the exhibit stands – 3%

Other suggestions mentioned by individual visitors included: more seating in the Research Zone; better ventilation in the Research Zone; combine the Festival and alumni reunion; run the Festival over an entire weekend; provide more tours of the Queen’s Tower; make the Research Zone look more appealing.

Apart from the request for better publicity and signage most of the suggestions were for more of the same type of activities provided in the 2012 Festival. When specifically asked what type of events Imperial should run in future visitors in the quantitative survey suggested more:

- Festivals
- Music events
- Lectures and debates
- Interactive hands-on activities
- Funfair, circus style events
- Topical science events
- Events for ‘Gifted and Talented’ students from primary school

For the majority of visitors who were interviewed in-depth no aspect of the Festival was disappointing.

“You’d think they [Imperial] had done it many times before. We can’t believe this was the first one.” (Father visiting with daughter)

As in the quantitative survey many people in the in-depth interviews commented on the low level of advertising for the event saying that they had friends, relatives or colleagues, who would have been interested in the Festival if they had known about it.

Other suggestions from the in-depth interviews for improving future Imperial Festivals were:

- Better promotion of the Festival including more advertising and signage around the Exhibition Road area
- Clearer communication of the Festival’s target audience – especially for the Research Zone
- More hands-on, interactive activities and demonstrations, particularly if the Festival includes families as a target audience; more sessions of popular events
- Make the inside of the Research Zone look more attractive for the general public, e.g. use more images and objects, and fewer text-heavy display boards; having dance, music or costumed actors inside the Research Zone
• Run the Festival over a longer period of time
• Run at a different period of time – not during exams

For most of the alumni who were interviewed no aspect of the Imperial Festival was disappointing although some were disappointed not to be able to visit Queen’s Tower due to there being a limited number of places available on these tours. Often these visitors were unaware that they needed to book a visit to the Tower in advance.

Alumni’s suggestions for improving future Imperial Festivals included:
• Better publicity about the Festival, e.g. advertising it on LinkedIn or via postal invitations
• More explicitly cover the achievements of alumni to highlight potential career paths for current and prospective students
• Include a more diverse range of researchers presenting their work – especially if these are from their old department
• More talks by researchers about their work
• Greater presence of senior members of staff

The 45 Imperial staff who attended the Festival and completed the online questionnaire suggested a range of improvements for next year’s Festival.
• More events in general
• More events aimed at Imperial staff
• Events timed so that Imperial staff can attend them
• Encourage more Imperial staff and departments to be involved
• More activities for families, e.g. hands-on activities or fun fair
• More music events
• More advertising / publicity
• Better signage around campus
• Better signage in the Research Zone
• Clearer target audience for the Festival
• Better food

When asked what other types of event they would like to see run at Imperial staff mentioned: more events that build cross department working relationships; more public engagement activities; more family events; more outdoor events, e.g. music, cinema.

Of the 12 members of Court who completed the online questionnaire, only two made negative comments about the Festival. One felt that attendance should have been higher, while another felt that the quality of displays did not do justice to the quality of Imperial’s research.

Most researchers in the in-depth interviews were very happy with the Festival overall and their involvement in it in particular. Nonetheless they suggested several improvements for future public engagement events:
• More clearly state the aims of the Festival and the anticipated audience so that researchers could pitch their presentations, activities and demonstrations at an appropriate level
- Have more notice to ensure sufficient preparation time, i.e. more than 2 or 3 weeks
- Have a rota for running the stalls in the research zone to ensure that researchers have sufficient breaks
- Researchers should only take part in the Festival if they want to and should not be asked to present research that they were not involved in
- Ensure new displays and activities are included each year to maintain motivation of presenters

Likewise in the email survey, researchers suggested a range of improvements to future Festivals:
- More hands-on activities for the public – 6 researchers
- A less linear/crowded layout of exhibit stands in the marquee – 4 researchers
- More / better signage and maps around the campus and marquee – 4 researchers
- Ensure that all departments have the opportunity to host an exhibit stand – 4 researchers
- Provide more notice so that researchers can plan and prepare better – 4 researchers
- More publicity – especially along Exhibition Road – 3 researchers
- Provide tours of departments for the public – 2 researchers

Other ideas, each suggested by one of the researchers, were:
- Better public announcement system
- Involve Imperial’s Science Communication Unit
- More public debates about science policy
- Take down the Research Zone on the Monday rather than the Saturday night
- More music events
- Move Soap Box Scientists to the entrance of the marquee
- Have Imperial staff on hand to talk to potential students and their parents
- Provide funding for teaching fellows to do more public engagement activities
- Ensure that departments change/update their exhibit stands each year
5. Addendum to Summative evaluation
Following the final Summative evaluation by external evaluator, Ben Gammon Consulting, additional feedback was received, including an update on YouTube hits, 28 further comments from the staff feedback form and the receipt of 19 responses to an online Alumni feedback form. This is a collation of these additional results as at 4 July 2012.

YouTube: Viewings as at 4/7/2012
- Teaser video – 442 hits
- Festival video – 472 hits
- Simulated heart attack – 73 hits
- Foam experiment – 37 hits
- Non-Newtonian fluid – 35 hits

Staff evaluations:
Total feedback: 98 staff rather than 70

A selected quote about the Festival highlights:

“The highlights were that this festival was designed to attract the general public. I think it’s a great idea that we have an event that encourages the public to meet the researchers who are carrying out work which will be of great benefit to them and industry.”

Alumni:
19 Alumni responses sent back an online feedback form available on the alumni website.

A selected quote about the Festival highlights:

“The Imperial College orchestra was brilliant and gave a lasting impression of how accomplished Imperial scientists really are. This was Imperial's own last night at the proms.”

6. Appendix
Please see the attached documents for full details of the following:

VI. Full results from visitors on the day
VII. Full results from the staff survey
VIII. Full results from the alumni survey
IX. Full results from the Court survey
X. Full results from the researchers survey
XI. Alumni quotes