



Festival Fun for All

(The FUTURES Festivals, 2018-2021)

[Themes]

Developing Skills
Promoting Research
Audience Connections

Festivals offer a first step to engagement, new ways to connect with audiences and opportunities to try out innovative ideas

[Aim & Approach] Festivals are a valuable opportunity for publicly showcasing university research. 'In-house' organisation allows a much greater level of curation, promotion, quality control and support than external events. Since [2018](#) the Public Engagement team at the University of Bristol has led on [FUTURES](#), an annual two-day Festival of Discovery taking place across the South-West of England. Events are open to researchers from all disciplines and attract large, diverse audiences.



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[Practical Details] FUTURES is funded by a large 'European Researchers Night' MSCA grant from the European Commission (ca. €706K between 2018 & 2021) which covers staffing, project management, awareness-raising & evaluation costs, plus training and resources for researchers.

[Key Partnerships] The FUTURES Consortium now includes the Universities of [Bath](#), [Exeter](#), [Plymouth](#) & [Bath Spa](#). We work closely with a range of key cultural partners like the [SS Great Britain](#), [Natural History Consortium](#), [We the Curious](#) & the [Holburne Museum](#)

[Activity & Outcomes] To date, more than 700 researchers from Bristol & the South-West have taken part in [FUTURES Festivals](#), directly sharing their research with over 55,000 children, young people and adults from all kinds of backgrounds. Activities have increased audiences' understanding of a wide variety of research topics, what researchers do, and how research benefits society & helps tackle future challenges. FUTURES comprises a huge range of high-quality [events](#) hosted at well-known venues and [online](#), including [talks](#), [research fairs](#), [workshops](#), exhibitions, [comedy](#), [radio](#), [storytelling](#), [walking tours](#), theatre collaborations, science busking, [social media](#) takeovers, schools' sessions and many more. Such varied activities provide supported opportunities for any researcher to engage, regardless of their level of experience. The programme also offers space for innovative or [creative](#) engagement which leads to genuine dialogue and interaction with communities.

[Support] The Public Engagement team leads the consortium: securing funding; facilitating collaboration; advising on evaluation; taking responsibility for overall project management and reporting. We curate, promote, deliver & evaluate Bristol's events and provide advice, individual support and a range of training for participating researchers.

[Impact] [Evaluation](#) shows that attendees enjoy their experiences and better appreciate the relevance of research to their own lives. Young people especially are [inspired](#) to be more curious about our world and to consider research as a career. Researchers develop their [communication](#) and digital skills, enjoy [sharing](#) their enthusiasm for research, and [discover new ways](#) of engaging with the public. As one researcher said in 2020:
"It was great to connect with audiences that we may not ordinarily have the opportunity to meet, aided by the promotion available through a bigger, recognised project."

Public Engagement

Strengthening research with conversations that count