Comic Quantum Connections

(QET Labs, Quantum Graphic Novel, 2018-2019)

[Themes]
Artistic Collaboration
Creative Engagement
Community Connections

A collaborative graphic novel illustrates complex concepts and sparks conversations about quantum futures…

[Aim & Approach] The Quantum Engineering Technology Labs (QET Labs) wanted to try innovative approaches for engaging the public with quantum engineering, which can be complex to explain and difficult for people to meaningfully connect with. Previous small-scale artistic collaborations had inspired the group to consider how else they could creatively engage people with the potential futures that quantum technologies may create.

[Practical Details] The team were awarded £14,975 from the EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA). This funded the artist's time; workshop & exhibition materials; and some community partner costs.

[Key Partnerships] Artist and historian Dr Milica Prokic and community partners Knowle West Media Centre, the Beehive Centre & North Bristol Community Project.

[Activity & Outcomes] The QET Labs group's first collaboration with artist and historian Dr Milica Prokic produced a set of illustrations capturing the quantum research taking place there. This larger project took that work further by engaging community groups in the design process. The QET Labs team and Milica ran interactive workshops in local community centres with a range of audiences, aged 7 to 75. Participants were introduced to concepts like quantum cryptography and quantum communication, then made drawings to illustrate these ideas and how they thought such technologies could be used in future. Milica used their pictures to develop a story which formed a comic-strip book: *Light Keys: A journey to quantum communication*. This graphic novel was shared widely and an exhibition at Hamilton House, *Quantum Phocomics*, was hosted to spark conversations between researchers and local people about the future development and possible impacts of quantum research. Participants said their understanding of complex quantum topics increased and they enjoyed exploring the future of quantum technology in a creative way.

[Support] Public Engagement colleagues helped the QET Labs team and Milica to identify funding; advised on the EPSRC IAA bid; and supported project development and delivery.

[Impact] This project demonstrated the value of illustration and imagery for engaging people with quantum research. Public Engagement is a key strand of QET Labs activity, and researchers have been developing their engagement practice over several years. It gave them a new way to think about and engage people with their work. They also got to see first-hand how different communities imagined future uses for quantum technology. *Light Keys* is still used in engagement activities, at festivals and at the Quantum Summer School. The collaboration with Milica Prokic has continued, and in 2020 QET Labs researcher Dr Imad Faruque won an EPSRC IAA ECR Kickstarter award to fund an illustrated card game called Entangled as a further engagement tool.

Public Engagement

Strengthening research with conversations that count