

Oxford University museums and libraries celebrate public engagement awards

Two University museums – the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Museum of the History of Science – and the Bodleian Libraries have all won awards in this year's Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards. The awards celebrate public engagement work across the University of Oxford.

The announcement was made at an awards ceremony on 28 June hosted by Oxford's Vice-Chancellor Professor Louise Richardson.

Award-winning projects

The Museum of Natural History won an award for its current exhibition, *Brain Diaries*, which was developed in partnership with Oxford Neuroscience and accompanied by a public event programme and digital resources (www.braindiaries.org). More than 150 research scientists were involved in the exhibition and public programme. *Brain Diaries* presents current understanding of the healthy brain from pre-birth to old age and enables visitors to take part in research studies and contribute new ideas for brain investigations. For blind and partially-sighted visitors, hands-on tours have been run using 3D-printed brains for a tactile experience. *Brain Diaries* is the latest and largest instalment of the museum's *Contemporary Science and Society* series, which helps University researchers engage with museum visitors and leverage the museum's experience in public engagement. Launched in March 2017, the programme has reached more than 45,000 people in its first two months of opening.

The Museum of the History of Science won an award for its exhibition *Back from the Dead – Demystifying Antibiotics*, which ran between November 2016 and May 2017. The exhibition, which was curated jointly by museum staff and researchers at the Oxford Martin School, celebrated the 75th anniversary of the first clinical trials of penicillin. It explored the complex history of antibiotic development, challenged common myths about antibiotics, addressed the global threat posed by antibiotic resistance and generated new research data by surveying public understanding of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance. The survey data will feed into a future Oxford policy paper, while the exhibition will leave a physical legacy in the form of a permanent display in the museum. Together with public events, gallery tours, workshops and a schools engagement programme, *Back from the Dead* attracted just under 50,000 visitors.

The Bodleian Libraries won an award for their **Printing Press** project, which helped build capacity for public engagement by opening up the library's hand-operated printing presses to researchers and the public. Since August 2015 over a dozen Oxford academics have run printing workshops that have attracted more than 2,000 members of the public. The workshops have provided academics with a useful forum for explaining their research in a non-academic setting. For example, Professor of Earth Sciences David Pyle, who curated the recent Bodleian exhibition *Volcanoes*, spoke with art teachers and members of the public about his research, which uses historical sources to improve our knowledge of past volcanic activity and shed light on what might happen in the future.

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Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards

The awards recognise academics, researchers and staff at Oxford University who undertake high-quality public engagement activities.

Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor, said: "I have been deeply impressed by the quality of the public engagement with research projects submitted for this year's awards. The breadth and diversity of the activities taking place show how seriously the University takes its commitment to public engagement."

NOTES TO EDITORS

Brain Diaries website	www.braindiaries.org
Brain Diaries Storify	https://storify.com/morethanadodo/brain-diaries
Back from the Dead website	www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/backfromthedead/exhibition/
Bodleian Bibliographical Press website	www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/csb/bibpress

About Oxford University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums

Ashmolean Museum	www.ashmolean.org
Bodleian Libraries	www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/whatson
Botanic Garden & Harcourt Arboretum	www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk
Museum of the History of Science	www.mhs.ox.ac.uk
Museum of Natural History	www.oum.ox.ac.uk
Pitt Rivers Museum	www.prm.ox.ac.uk

The Gardens, Libraries and Museums of the University of Oxford contain some of the world's most significant collections, covering the breadth and depth of the natural world and the majority of world cultures. Each institution serves as a centre of research, scholarly enquiry and teaching; collectively they represent the front door to the wealth of knowledge and research generated at Oxford and welcome just under 3 million visitors each year.

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