

Where science and society meet

University Museums Group and University Museums in Scotland joint conference

23-24th September 2015

Calman Learning Centre, Lower Mountjoy, University of Durham

There is no doubt that the public appetite for science is growing. The interface between science and culture continues to shift and is a constant point of excitement, interest and debate. Arguably science cannot be presented in isolation but as an integral part of our culture, intersecting with the arts and humanities, with museums providing ideal spaces to demonstrate and communicate this.

University museums are pioneering ways to engage audiences in the science research of universities and this conference will explore how these developments are more than advancing the public understanding of science. Instead they can engage audiences in current research agendas, the latest scientific breakthroughs and in the wider social and ethical issues connected to scientific research. Dynamic exhibitions and museum programming are increasingly creating a dialogue and sparking public debate. Such interventions in the gallery space facilitate knowledge exchange between the research community and our audiences, whilst also re-animating and challenging established perspectives of historical science and medical collections.

The conference will introduce delegates to the current science research landscape and will explore the intersection of science with arts and culture in a museum setting. Keynotes and panel discussions will address the challenge of combining these themes and linking collections in ways that inspire our visitors. Sessions will bring practitioners in the sciences and social sciences together with museum professionals and artists to talk about science engagement and reinvigorating science collections in museums.

Booking information

Conference fee is **£75**

This includes lunch, tea and coffee on both days as well as the optional museum tours on the second day. The evening drinks party is being supported by Durham University.

A reduced rate of **£45** is available for students (limited to 20 places).

Accommodation

City centre university accommodation is available within Durham Castle (University College) and neighbouring Hatfield College at a special conference rate. This can be booked online at the time of booking the conference. A range of single, double and twin accommodation is available, starting at £54.16 per person per night including a full English breakfast. Alternatively a range of hotels, guesthouses and B&B accommodation is available in Durham city centre.

Please book online.

To book your place at the conference and your accommodation visit:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/conference.booking/details/?id=464>

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Conference Programme

The conference is being held in the Calman Learning Centre on the Lower Mountjoy site

Wednesday 23rd September

13.00-14.00 **lunch and registration** (lunch provided)
Kingsley Barrett Room

14.00-14.15 **Welcome**
Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

Kate Arnold-Forster & Paul Smith, Co-Chairs UMG and Neil Curtis, Chair UMiS
Prof Claire Warwick, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research), Durham University

14.15-15.30 **Panel Session 1: Engaging with science research**
Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

What are the challenges to be faced when scientists and museum professionals collaborate to engage the public with scientific research? How can we find innovative ways to engage audiences with scientific breakthroughs and the wider social and ethical issues they raise? How can works of art or historic collections be used to communicate cutting edge science? What might the future look like for public engagement with science in museums and galleries?

Chair: Tonya Nelson, Head of Museums and Collections, UCL
Speakers: Chloe Sheppard, Researchers Engagement Manager, Wellcome Trust
Prof John Heath, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Estates and Infrastructure), University of Birmingham
Dr Steve Cross, Public Engagement Consultant
Dr Jennifer Downes, Curator (Exhibitions and Science) Aberdeen University

15.30-16.00 **Tea** Kingsley Barrett Room

16.00-16.30 **UMG AGM** Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

16.30-17.15 **Session 2: Keynote address**
“Science at Work. Studying the Material Culture of Scientific Rationality”
Prof Otto Sibum, University of Uppsala
Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

Chair: Prof David Gaimster, Director, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow

18.00-19.30 **Drinks Reception in the Great Hall, Durham Castle**
Sponsored by Durham University
Welcome by Dr Keith Bartlett, Director of Culture, Durham University

Thursday 24th September

09.30-10.45 **Panel Session 3: Communicating the controversial**

Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

Science can be controversial. Issues such as climate change or genetic research can arouse strong feelings among sections of the public. Should museums be engaging with difficult scientific questions? How can museums act as spaces for constructive debate on controversial subjects? Do museums need to put both sides of the argument, as honest brokers, or should they campaign in areas that are perceived to be of societal importance?

Chair: Prof Paul Smith, Director, Oxford University Museum of Natural History

Speakers: Ian Brunswick, Programme Manager, Science Gallery Dublin

Dr Rebekah Higgitt, University of Kent

Ling Lee, *Cravings* Project Leader, Contemporary Science, Science Museum

10.45-11.15 **Coffee** Kingsley Barrett Room

11.15-12.15 **Panel Session 4: Contemporary science in museums**

Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

Three different approaches to communicating science within university museums. What has worked, what hasn't worked and what could be done better next time? An opportunity to learn from current science engagement in university museums.

Chair: Prof Nick Thomas, Director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Speakers: Paul Voogt, Head of the Centre for Science Communication and Culture, University Museum, Utrecht

Dr Nicky Reeves, Curator of Scientific and Medical History Collections, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow

Paul Smith, Director, Oxford University Museum of Natural History

12.15-13.00 **Final discussion and summing up**

Rosemary Cramp Lecture Theatre

An opportunity for all delegates to contribute their thoughts and reactions to the conference themes

Introduction: Kate Arnold-Forster, Head of University Museums and Special Collections Services, University of Reading

Discussion: led by Prof Ludmilla Jordanova, Professor of History and Visual Culture, Durham University

13.00-14.00 **lunch** (lunch provided) Kingsley Barrett Room

Delegates will be able to leave luggage here securely for the afternoon.

14.00-15.30 **optional tours** of Durham University's museums. Delegates can chose from:

Durham Castle and Palace Green Library – this tour will be led by the Curator of Durham Castle and the Head of Access and Learning and will focus on the challenges and successes we have had using historic buildings, libraries and archives to support university teaching. The afternoon will begin in Bishops Cosin's library, which was opened in 1669 in a purpose-built building on the Palace Green between Durham Castle and Cathedral. The library still houses the Bishop's personal collection of more than 5000 volumes and is now a Designated Collection. The tour will include an opportunity to see how historic scientific texts from the library used today to support history of science teaching.

Oriental Museum - led by the museum's Curator and Collections Registrar, this tour will focus on the Oriental Museum's current redisplay programme. Opened in 1960 to support university teaching in the School of Oriental Studies the museums suffered from many of the issues facing university museums – a campus location, anonymous building and historic layouts and labelling ill-suited to modern audiences. Since 2009 the museum team have been working on a programme to completely redevelop the museum. Eight new galleries have now been completed, visitor numbers have almost doubled but so has support for university teaching with the museum now supporting almost 30 different modules right across the university at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. The tour will focus on how curators have worked to balance the needs of university and non-university audiences and to integrate university research into the displays.

Durham Observatory - built in 1839 as an astronomical and meteorological observatory for the Durham University, this grade II listed building is about to be converted into a site for public engagement with science with the university museums working in partnership with both internal and external partners. Durham University's Director of Cultural Engagement will show delegates around the spaces and discuss the ways in which these partnerships are being forged.

Conference Exhibition

Derman Christopherson Room and Kingsley Barrett Room

Stephen Livingstone – Leverhulme Artist in Residence at Durham University's School of Engineering and Computer Science

Stephen is a visual artist whose work deals with human impact upon landscapes and habitats. His work is principally project based and he specialises in working with historic sites and museum collections in a variety of media, in particular drawing and digital printmaking.

Stephen has developed work for numerous institutions including the British Library, the National Trust, Teikyo University of Japan, the Great North Museum, Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, Bede's World Jarrow, the Dorman Museum in Middlesbrough, Wirksworth Festival in Derbyshire, the Library of Birmingham, Durham University's Oriental Museum and Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and the Museum of Art and Design in New York.

Since September 2014 Stephen has been Leverhulme Artist in Residence at Durham University's School of Engineering and Computer Science working closely with Dr. Karen Johnson and her team of soil scientists exploring the potential of mineral pigments. The residency has enabled him to develop a number of experimental pieces in response to the research work he has shadowed which will culminate in four 10 metre-high drawings for the Earth Sciences building.

stephenlivingstone.wordpress.com

Access

Durham is a historic city centred on the 11th century Castle and Cathedral which now form the heart of Durham's World Heritage Site. While many of the university's buildings are modern and designed for accessibility, a number of the venues for this conference are historic, listed buildings where getting around is not always straightforward. In addition, due to the ancient layout of the city, travel between buildings can also create challenges for some visitors. Durham University strives to make all parts of the estate as accessible as possible within these constraints and we can advise individuals on accessibility as necessary.

Access information on all areas of the university can be found at:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/durham-university/main-2#VenueListing>

The main conference venue is the Calman Learning Centre at the heart of the university's science site. Detailed access information on this venue can be found at:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/access-guide/durham-university/calman-learning-centre>

Access information for the University's museums can be found on each venue's website:

Durham Castle

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/durham.castle/visit/accessandfacilities/>

Palace Green Library/Museum of Archaeology

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/palace.green/visit/access/>

Oriental Museum

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum/visit/access/>

Some of the conference accommodation is within Durham Castle (see above), the rest is at Hatfield College: <http://www.disabledgo.com/access-guide/durham-university/hatfield-college-james-barbar-house>

If you would like to speak to a member of university staff about access at Durham University please contact our conference team who will be able to direct you to the most appropriate member of staff to answer your questions. Event Durham can be contacted on 0800 289970 or event@durham.ac.uk