

The Presenter Network Conference 2018



The Presenter Network was set up in 2014 by the Royal Observatory Greenwich as a way for presenters to share best practice as well as watch others in action to develop their presenting style. Since then we run regular meet-ups in collaboration with other organisations and established hubs covering every aspect of presenting you could ever imagine: using comedy effectively, working with challenging audience members, how to look after your voice and everything in between.

The response to the first conference in 2017 was overwhelmingly positive, so back by popular demand, a second Presenter Network Conference was organised and it has now become a regular feature.

This special one-day event was held on **Thursday 13th September 2018** at the Royal Observatory Greenwich in London. The day was jam-packed with sessions facilitated by members of the network with plenty of time to network and share best practice too.

Frequently asked questions:

- Who was this event for? This network is created by presenters, for presenters so whether you are just starting out or want to freshen up your skills there will always be plenty to suit. If you are not actively involved in presenting, then I am afraid this is not the network for you.
- How much did it cost? This event was FREE - yes you read that right - FREE! This group operates purely on the good will of our members. All meet-ups leaders, speakers and workshops facilitators are offering their time and experience for free which we are very grateful for.
- What was the capacity? We would have loved to have opened it up to any presenters that would have liked to come along but we were limited by the capacity of the spaces we were using to around 120 people.
- Where and when was this event? The event was held at the Royal Observatory Greenwich in London on 13th September 2018.
- Was it all be about science? No we had people from across the public communication sector, however because the network is run by the team here at the Royal Observatory Greenwich our networks naturally included lots of science related places and people.

Conference Programme

9:30am - Registration

This gave delegates the chance to meet each other, sign in and have a quick look around the galleries before we kicked off.

10:00am – Welcome and planetarium show

What better way to start a conference than with a trip to space? This portion of the day took place in our beautiful planetarium and the show itself was a take on our live *Sky Tonight* show and was presented by astronomers from the Royal Observatory Greenwich.

10:30am – Key Note Address

The key note speaker was the fabulous Helen Keen. You can find out more about Helen and all the awesome things she gets up to in the **Appendix**.

11:15am - Break

During all of the breaks people from the Royal Observatory Greenwich team and local hub leaders were available to answer any questions about the network or running a session. Delegates were not given a list of attendees but instead encouraged to talk to each other instead.

11:30am – Short Talks

In this section we asked the presenters from some of the most popular network meet-ups of the last few years back to speak as well as some brand shiny new people doing amazing things too. The speakers and talk titles were:

- **Nic Bonne (Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation, University of Portsmouth) – *As you can clearly see...: The do's and don'ts of giving an accessible presentation to a vision impaired audience.*** Drawing on my personal experiences as a vision impaired astronomer, this session will focus on best practices (as well as things to steer clear of) when presenting to an audience containing people with a vision impairment.
- **Aimee Eckert (University of Sussex) - *Come to the (science) cabaret.*** Over the past two years I have been moonlighting as Dr Jiggs Bowson: serving science-flavoured variety entertainment to audiences from Cheltenham Science Festival, to the bars of London & Brighton. In this talk I will share how this event and my presenting style have developed, and what I have learned about using science

themes as part of a wider scheme to attract new audiences, as well as introducing those in the audience who frequently seek out science events, to new performing styles.

- **Anna Ploszajski (Institute of Making) - *Who are these people and what do they want from me?*** These are the two most important questions in presenting. Asking these about your audience can dictate not only what you communicate, but how, where, when and why you do what you do. In this talk I'll be sharing my experiences in science communication and how learning to answer these two simple questions has impacted my career as a scientist and a presenter.
- **Matt Hutchinson (Imperial College Healthcare NHS trust) -** In this talk Matt will discuss getting comfortable with yourself when presenting and performing. Comedy and medicine (usually!) call for different approaches – so he'll also discuss "being the best you" for different occasions. Combining the 2 can be trickier still, so he'll also touch on lightening up talks on more serious subjects like disease, without coming across as a terrible person!

Find out more about our tip-top plenary speakers in the **Appendix**.

1:00pm – Lunch

2:00pm - Workshops

The focus of these workshops was very much skills based and practical so everyone could be kept pretty busy. When presenters arrived they were assigned a group which would rotate through all the workshops so they didn't have to choose between them. Here's a list of what we had:

- **Dan Plane (Freelance) - *Practical Joking: Experience, and more importantly try, some of the mechanics of being funny.*** From classic clowning to faking mistakes, we will investigate how to use your body and voice in new ways to amuse, entertain, and engage your audience.
- **Jennifer Hamilton (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance) - *Enjoying your voice*** - A workshop exploring the communicative power of the speaking voice.
- **Nic Bonne and Jen Gupta (A Tactile Universe, Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation, University of Portsmouth) - *Hands on with the Tactile Universe.*** This workshop will briefly introduce the Tactile Universe project and the team's tactile astronomy images. You will then have the chance to describe these images to other participants, giving you the experience of presenting to someone with a vision impairment (blind folds will be available if people want to simulate total sight loss during this activity). We will finish with plenty of time to discuss this experience, and presenting to visually impaired audiences more generally.

Find out more about our brilliant workshop leaders in the **Appendix**.

4:15pm – Closing Remarks and group photo

4:30pm – Networking

This gave presenters a chance to connect with anyone they missed through the day.

5:30pm – Social

There is always so much to talk about after Presenter Network meet ups. We headed for a drink and an informal chat after the conference and were glad to see lots of presenters come along.

For more information about the Presenter Network [click here](#).



Appendix

Key Note Speaker – Helen Keen

Helen is an award winning performer and popular-science writer. A regular, distinctive voice on BBC Radio 4, her debut show, It Is Rocket Science, won numerous accolades. Helen's innovative and quirky approach to matters factual has enjoyed rave reviews from critics and the public alike. Some career highlights include compering the first live comedy night at CERN, touring with Brian Cox and Robin Ince, having an episode of National Geographic's StarTalk with Neil deGrasse Tyson devoted to her work on pop culture and science, and being appointed as an Innovation Fellow by WIRED magazine in recognition of her original, influential blend of science and comedy.

Plenary Speakers

Nic Bonne (Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation, University of Portsmouth)

Dr Nic Bonne is a blind, Australian astrophysicist and outreach officer based at the University of Portsmouth whose research area is galaxy evolution. Nic is currently project lead for The Tactile Universe - a public engagement project to make current astrophysics research accessible to people with vision impairments. Nic also works as an advisor and consultant on a number of other national and international VI accessible astronomy projects.

coffee_samurai

Aimee Eckert (University of Sussex)

Aimee is finishing a PhD in cancer cell biology at the University of Sussex's Genome Damage & Stability Centre, and is a judge for the Royal Society of Biology's Science Communication Awards. Outside of the lab, she loves to entice science out of the ivory tower and into a gin bar where new styles of science communication can be created, mixing different flavours of performance to create Brighton's most experimental cabaret cocktail: Dr Jiggs Bowson's Charming Science Friends.

Anna Ploszajski (Institute of Making)

Dr Anna Ploszajski is an award-winning materials scientist, engineer and communicator. Named Young Engineer of the Year 2017, Anna is one of the UK's leading communicators of materials and engineering. By day she is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Making, but by night she performs stand-up comedy about materials in the UK's comedy basements. Anna is also a writer and produces a podcast about materials

called 'rial Talk. In the summer months, Anna can be found in wellies at the UK's top festivals, performing her one-woman show about Smart Materials, or alternatively, swimming the English Channel.

Matt Hutchinson (Imperial College Healthcare NHS trust)

Matt is a hospital doctor turned comedian – risking malpractice in the name of laughter. He performs in clubs including the Comedy Store, Backyard and Covent Garden. Sometimes, when he's lucky, he even gets to perform to rooms full of appreciative nerds in venues including the Science Museum. Off stage, he specialises in Rheumatology (treating inflammation, being a professional know it all) and General Medicine. He works at a London University Teaching Hospital – his name appears in at least one actual scientific journal and everything! On stage he specialises in making you think twice before ever trusting your doctor again.

@hutch_up, @dissectingthejoke and Facebook.com/dissectingthejoke

Workshop Leaders

Dan Plane (Freelance)

Dan is a freelance science communicator who has been delivering shows to audiences young and old for the last ten years. He has worked at the Science Museum and currently delivers schools outreach, family programmes, and video content for the Royal Institution.

@danplane

Jennifer Hamilton (trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance)

Jennifer has a huge amount of experience when it comes to using her voice and teaching others to do so effectively too. She has taught at a huge variety of institutions such as the Royal College of Music London, RNCM Department of Vocal and Opera Studies, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, Manchester University, the Music School in Ghent and DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama in Dublin. Jennifer has also directed twenty operas, including two special commissions. In 2017 she took up her current position as Head of Vocal Studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

Nic Bonne and Jen Gupta (A Tactile Universe, Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation, University of Portsmouth)

The Tactile Universe is an award-winning project at the Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation to engage the visually impaired (VI) community with our astrophysics research. We are creating 3D printed tactile images of galaxies which can be used in schools and at public events. Team Members presenting the workshop are Project Lead/ICG Outreach Officer Nic Bonne and Public Engagement Advisor/ICG Outreach Manager Jen Gupta.

@tactileuniverse, coffee_samurai and @jen_gupta

www.tactileuniverse.org