

Call for Papers

International Conference on Science, Research and Popular Culture, Klagenfurt, Austria, September 17-18, 2015

Research on public engagement with science has strongly focused on science content in journalistic news media and so far only a few studies seriously examined other products of media and popular culture. Science is also often part of wider popular and entertainment culture and these other popular images of science and research are also likely to have an influence on public imaginations of science, research and scientific work. However, some scholars have stressed that entertainment media also influence public perceptions of science, research and technology, such as genetic risks and beliefs and prejudices about biotechnology, and should therefore be studied accordingly.

What members of the public know about science and research is the outcome of formal science learning, as in schools, and informal learning of science, such as the encounters with scientific contents and issues in the media and in popular culture. Alongside science education and once formal science education is completed, informal accounts of developments in science and technology, such as through the media and popular culture, are very important sources of knowledge for most people. Science education and science journalism will still be important sources of information for many people. However, the historian A. Bowdoin Van Riper addresses a central problem: "Popular culture probably does more than formal science education to shape most people's understanding of science and scientists. It is more pervasive, more eye-catching, and (with rare exceptions) more memorable" (EMBO Reports 4(12): 1104-1107).

We are interested in bringing together various perspectives on science, research and popular culture (e.g. scientists and researchers, artists, media professionals). For instance, we'd like to learn more about how science and research are presented in different formats, for example fictional movies and TV series, in digital games, comic books and cartoons, in music and music videos, on social media sites (such as facebook or YouTube), in artistic and theatrical performances, science slams, science parodies and satire, etc.

Other interesting questions are how various audiences perceive science and research in various popular cultural formats. Are scientists and researchers relating to issues, themes, topics and channels of popular cultural as well, and if so how? What role do humour and aesthetics play in the public representation of science and research? Can particular depictions of science and research in popular culture influence the career choices and academic subject choices of young people, and if so how? How do scientific and research institutions use popular cultural formats to make themselves heard, and how do people and organizations opposed to scientific consensus views use the same channels and formats?

What are science and technology studies perspectives on popular culture and science and research? How can perspectives from cultural and media studies and (science) communication research illuminate the interrelations between science, research and popular culture? And what is happening in the world of science and research itself? Are scientists and researchers relating to issues, themes, topics and channels of popular cultural as well, and if so how?

We are looking for empirical, conceptual, and theoretical contributions and experience reports that illuminate the manifold interactions between science, research and popular culture.

If you are interested in participating, please send an email including contact details and an abstract (up to 500 words) before June 15 to Joachim.Allgaier@aau.at.

For further information or general enquiries contact either Joachim.Allgaier@aau.at or Hauke.Riesch@brunel.ac.uk.

It is planned to edit a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal or an edited book, based on the contributions of the conference.

The conference will take place at Alpen-Adria-Universität in Klagenfurt, Austria, September 17-18, 2015. The language of the conference is English.

Keynote Speakers are:

Darryl Cunningham (Author of Science Tales)

David Kirby (Manchester)

Chun-Ju Huang (Taiwan)

Rainer Winter (Klagenfurt)

Bernard Seidel (Vienna)

The conference is organised by Joachim Allgaier, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, and Hauke Riesch, Brunel University London, and supported by the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST): <http://easst.net/>