

Make science part of everyday culture

Make science part of culture; connect with people in their everyday lives; and think out of the box when you plan engagement activities. These were three of the key messages from a science communication event hosted at CREST on Friday 2 September 2016.

Two science communicators - both with extensive research of working on big science communication projects in the UK - shared their work experiences and challenges as part of our "Science Fridays @Stellenbosch" series.

Manisha Laloo (seated front right) has completed the Master's programme in science communication at Imperial College in London and has managed public engagement projects at a range of organisations including CERN and the Royal Academy of Engineering. She is currently employed at the Institute of Physics.

"You can enjoy music without being a concert pianist, and you can be passionate about sport without being an athlete yourself," Manisha explained. "We want people to enjoy and appreciate science in the same way." She highlighted the need to reach and engage audiences that are currently isolated from science as a major challenge, as well as finding effective ways to evaluate the impact and quality of public science engagement events.

Dr Lucia Marchetti (seated front left) is an Italian astronomer working at the Open University (UK), who also worked on International Year of Light (IYL) project in the UK during 2015. She is currently on a DST-NRF visiting fellowship in South Africa working on a research project using the South African Large Telescope (SALT) in collaboration with the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) in Cape Town.

Lucia's whirlwind overview of the wide range of activities that took place in the UK under the banner of the IYL during 2015 provided good examples of creative, and out-of-the-box thinking towards engaging public audiences. She highlighted "outreach" (educational activities) and "upreach" (reaching decision makers and industry investors) as key objectives.

Send an email to Rolene Langford (rlm@sun.ac.za) if you would like to be invited to future "Science Fridays @Stellenbosch" events.