USA and have linked together to form a National Science Policy Group (http://natscipolgroup.org/). ASCB offers online resources to help you start and sustain your own group (www.ascb.org/toolbox/), and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology also provides many advocacy materials for those getting started (www.faseb.org/Science-Policy-and-Advocacy/Become-an-Advocate/Advocacy-Tool-Kit.aspx). Tom Pollard, another longtime advocate for science, also provides a comprehensive list of additional ways you can get involved in science advocacy [1].

What are you waiting for? The biomedical research enterprise needs all hands on deck to speak up for science!

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Special Issue: Communicating Science

Scientific Life: My Word

Engaging the Public with Your Research

Praveen Paul[1,*] and Michael Motskin[1]

Effectively communicating science and linking it to the 'real world' has important benefits for both scientists and society. Here we share our experience at *Pint of Science*, an initiative that encourages researchers to discuss their findings with the public and to engage in conversation in a relaxed setting. We discuss strategies towards organizing a scientific outreach event – big or small – and encourage you to get involved in a science festival near you.

Pint of Science began where the best lab ideas are born, by the centrifuge while waiting for cells to spin down. A few months later we had a handful of interested friends and colleagues and a simple website with the strap line 'The biggest science festival in the UK', which was removed after the point was made that this was quite an ambitious claim for an event that had not yet taken place. Three years later and the Pint of Science festival has become the largest celebration of scientific discovery and research across the globe. We started with almost no experience in public engagement or event hosting, but were fueled by a passion for communicating science to the public and a fearless determination, boosted in part by naiveté. Here we share our journey and experiences with the hope of inspiring more scientists to reach out and share their interests, knowledge, and experience with others – either on a public platform or simply with curious family and friends. We have found that these interactions often reap rewards for everyone involved, often in unexpected ways.

History of Pint of Science

As postdoctoral researchers at the division of Brain Sciences at Imperial College London, one of us (Michael) was working on nanoparticles to deliver drugs to the brain for Parkinson's and the other (Praveen) was working on genes involved in motor neuron disease. Our focus was on understanding molecular mechanisms underlying these diseases, but we felt that there was a gap between the research efforts and what motivated them. In addition, when discussing our work with friends, especially some of the new techniques being used such as nanoparticle delivery of drugs to the brain, they thought it sounded like science fiction. We felt that it was important to show how we conducted our research, especially to the individuals affected by the conditions that we studied and their families. In September 2012, we organized 'Meet the Researchers', an event that brought people affected by Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, motor neuron disease, and multiple sclerosis into our labs so that they could see the research being carried out there. Our guests were fascinated by the approaches being used to try to understand the biological basis of these afflictions and by the latest developments in both basic research and translational efforts. This event was inspirational to everyone involved. We thought that, if people want to come to labs to meet scientists, why not bring scientists to people? This was the birth of Pint of Science.

We wanted Pint of Science to be a chat, a brainstorming session led by the brightest scientists across various fields, an event in which you could be inspired by the most exciting new ideas but were also able to ask the most basic questions without judgment. What could be a more suitable place for an event like this than the most traditional institution in the UK – the pub?

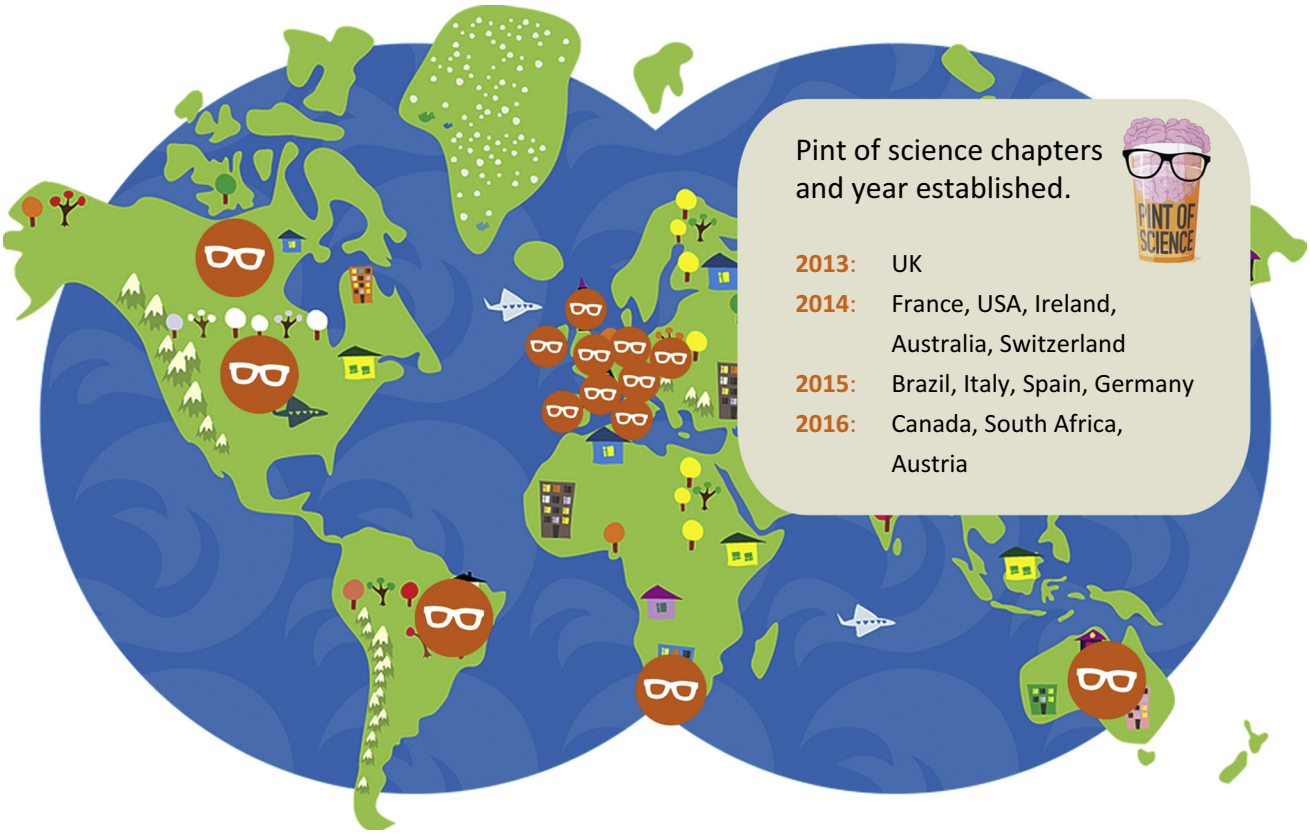

Figure 1. Pint of Science Chapters around the World.[i]

Science talks in public places such as cafes, bars, and pubs are not a new idea, but we introduced a twist: we designed Pint of Science to be a festival where the attendees can choose the subject they want to hear about or the speaker that they are interested in hearing. Each Pint of Science event is curated by a local team of organizers, which comprises a group of volunteers, most often early-career scientists. In any particular Pint of Science festival you will have many different events taking place at the same time in multiple cities. Each event is unique and anything is possible. For example, a recent festival in Glasgow featured zombie nights while Birmingham had robots serving you crisps. The first Pint of Science festival included simultaneous events across London, Oxford, and Cambridge – 15 pubs held 45 events over three days in May 2013. In the past 2 years, Pint of Science has hosted over 500 events in 150 pubs and bars in over 50 cities across nine countries (Figure 1).

How It Works

Pint of Science aims to include all areas of research. Events are divided into the following six themes: Beautiful Mind – neuroscience, psychiatry and psychology; Atoms to Galaxies – physics, chemistry, maths; Our Body – human biology, health, and medicine; Planet Earth – earth sciences, zoology, plant science; Tech Me Out – technology, engineering, and computing; and Our Society – sociology, law, history, policy. Typically, a group of three to ten organizers take on representing and showcasing one of these themes. The event organizers are responsible for finding a single venue for the three evenings of the festival and for planning and running three separate events related to their chosen theme. Each city has three to six groups of organizers and hence three to six venues. There is a further handful of coordinators who manage and guide the teams within their city and link back to the central team that manages the entire festival, including the website, publicity, and merchandise.

A single Pint of Science event generally involves two or three scientific talks with an intermission that can take any shape – music, comedy, art, or more science. The organizers of each event develop the program and 'own' the event, from defining the topic to selecting the speakers and deciding on the venue (Box 1). Often the organizers will also play the role of the host. There are no strict guidelines on choosing the speakers, although it helps if they have had experience in public engagement and you've seen them speak. However, Pint of Science also