

Annual report 2008 -2009

AGM Tuesday 17 November 2009, Sir Alexander Fleming Building, Imperial College

1. Overview

All our events were sold-out last year as our audiences increased three-fold and we filled each of our venues. Our membership has jumped by 40% over last year.

We continue to increase our paid membership at the rate of about 15 per cent per annum. We have maintained our surplus over last year.

We therefore fulfil our aim of helping the College with one of its five strategic intents "to communicate widely the significance of science in general, and the purpose and ultimate benefits of its activities in particular."

Through our programme of promotion many of the people attending our events are new to the College and we have continued to attract a number of school groups. In this way we help to promote science to a broad spectrum of people and to young people as a future career.

Winton Capital Management Ltd has made a further generous donation for the third year running. The donation has allowed us to reduce the prices of our tickets for members, alumni, staff and students during this year and we have little doubt that this, combined with a particularly stellar programme of speakers and topics, has helped to increase our audiences by so much.

We continue to receive a great deal of support from the College in the provision of lecture theatres, technical support and promotion of our events. We are very appreciative.

This year we will be increasing our contribution to the Students Opportunities Fund from the £1500 we donated last year to £2000 this year, in recognition of the increase in membership and audiences we have attracted.

The College has again honoured the Friends by conferring membership of the Imperial 1000 for those benefactors who donate more than a £1000 in any year.

2. Organisation

This is the fourth year that your committee has taken on the responsibility for the organisation of our membership and activities. As you are aware, we are responsible for our own finances, arranging lectures, organising food and drink, managing bookings and membership.

The College has continued to support us in a number of ways: through promoting our lectures to the 40,000 or so on their database of alumni through publications and email; featuring our events prominently on the College website; providing the lecture halls and the attendant security and technical staff at no cost.

The website has continued to improve and about a third of our event bookings are being made through the on-line forms.

Our administrator Jill Cook has continued to provide excellent support during the year and her enthusiasm and energy has made a major contribution to our increased membership and audiences at our events.

Our administrative website which keeps our membership and events up-to-date has been updated during the year by committee member Richard Tang. During the course of this year we are planning to link the booking forms on the public website to the back-office database.

3. Committee

Your committee consists has met five times during the year, with an additional meeting to consider the future development of Friends.

Committee members during 2008-2009 were Rodney Allen, Manu Duggal (Hon Treasurer), Rita Leek, Roderick Rhys Jones (Chairman), Riitta Soininen, Bill Blackburn, Richard Tang, Liz Jaggs (née Gregson), James Lovely John Nuttall, John Sanderson (Hon Sec).

Liz Jaggs has joined London School of Economics to work in its development office and stepped down from the Committee in June. She is remaining a member of Friends and we look forward to seeing her at some of our future events. I would like to thank her as she has made a tremendous contribution to the development of Friends over a number of years with her enthusiasm, diplomacy and organising ability.

Emma Jones joined the committee in her place in November. Emma is responsible for Alumni relations in the Office of Alumni and Development and provides a very useful conduit for information and collaboration between the Friends and the College.

At our meeting in September 2008 we were joined by three of the four new candidates for committee membership, Bill Blackburn, was unable to join that meeting.

4. Finance

We are financially independent of the College and therefore aim to make a small surplus on all our events which, together with our membership subscriptions, provides sufficient funds to cover administration and promotion. We have also received some donations directly from members for which we are very grateful.

This year our surplus on the year was £962.45 which added to the surplus of £5230.71 gives a surplus of £6193.16 before the donation of £2000 to the College Students Opportunity Fund.

I would like to thank Manu Duggal who has now stepped down from his role as Treasurer for all his work in keeping track of our finances and at the same time welcome Bil Blackburn who has kindly agreed to take over the role of Treasurer.

5. Donation to the college

This year we are increasing our donation to the Students Opportunities Fund from £1500 to £2000. which helps to promote sciences amongst schools, supports needy students and contributes to new facilities at the College.

The College has created a club called the *Imperial 1000* to honour an elite group of about 100 supporters who make leadership gifts in excess of £1000 to the College. Friends is a corporate member of this club and we received a badge of the College Crest. Our contribution is also recognised in the annual publication for donors.

Our members are to be congratulated for the huge support that they have given us again this year.

6. Using the Friends' surplus

Last year I reported on a sub-committee that was lead by Manu Duggal to look at how best we should spend our surplus with the objective of increasing membership and attendance at our events. Their findings made a number of suggestions about increasing our promotional activities and I believe that some of our successes in attracting such large audiences in this last year are due to these initiatives.

We also said that we would not increase our contribution to the Students Opportunities Fund but such has been our surplus this year because of the large increase in our audiences that we felt we would like to do so.

7. Membership

I reported last year that we would invite donors to the College funds to register as members of friends and as reported above, 33 have taken up this opportunity. We will be continuing the programme during this year

Our paid membership has continued to rise at the same rate as last year, 15%. However our total membership including the 33 Imperial donors has risen by 40% taking us up to 185 in total.

Our database of all those who have attended our events was 500 last year but because of the large increase in our audiences is now close to 1000. We are adding to that list with each event.

8. The year's events

We organised nine events during the Academic Year 2008 to 2009, one up on the previous year. Our speakers, most of whom are well known, proved a huge draw with record audiences. Our total audience for our nine events was 1540 against 484 last year a three-fold increase. Our attendance numbers are outlined below.

2008-2009	Event	Total attendees	Members	Non members
22 Sept 08	BTS @ NHS Trust St Mary's	42	26	16
15 Oct 08	Is Human Evolution Over (Steve Jones)	156	23	133
19 Nov 08	Eco Cities of China (Peter Head)	143	27	116
14 Jan 09	Eleven Dimensions (Michael Duff)	279	44	235
19 Feb 09	Trick or Treatment (Simon Singh)	271	43	228
30 April 09	First Song (Armand Leroi)	206	38	168
13 May 09	Can Science make you Happy (Robert Winston)	303	40	263
9 June 09	BTS @ The Porter Institute	34	24	10
7 July 09	Summer Party	106	38	68
	Total attendees	1540	303	1237
	<i>Average for all nine events</i>	171	34	137
	<i>Average for members events</i>	61	29	31
	<i>Average for lectures</i>	226	36	191
	<i>Percentage audience mix</i>		20%	80%

There has been an increase in non-members attending our events. In the last year there was a total of 1237 non-members attending our lectures, 80% of the total audience and in the previous year 304 non-members, 63% of the total audience.

In the following breakdown the figures in brackets are last year's audience figures.

The breakdown of non-members between the two years show: Guests 289 (86 last year); Alumni (not members) 100 (54 last year); Staff 211 (48 last year); students 253 (13 last year); Schools 136 (35 last year); Others 248 (18 last year).

These figures suggest that the lectures have become particularly popular with students and staff of the College. There is also a notable rise in the number of schools attending. Conversations with members of our audience suggest that our lectures help staff and students to find out what is going on outside their own disciplines. Unusually staff and students have to pay to attend our lectures – unlike most other lectures in the College.

There are rather a lot of unidentified attendees in the "other" and "guest" category. We are making efforts this year to identify how these audience sectors might be categorised in order to illuminate plans for the future.

We are also aware from conversations that our lectures attract a number of attendees who are in the arts. They say that they feel the need to understand more about science which has been lacking in their education.

We have trialled audio/visual recordings of some of our events this year, making them available on our website. We intend to continue with this activity in order to build up an valuable archive of our activities.

9. Strategic Plan

We set up a sub-committee of John Nuttall and Rod Rhys Jones to develop a strategy for Friends over the next few years. Their analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats together with their vision of the future was discussed at length by the full committee and a shortened version is shown below.

Overall during the next two years we are seeking to consolidate the gains in audience numbers, membership and reputation of the last year in order to ensure sustainability and growth in the future.

In the next two years we are seeking to:

- Understand more about our members and audiences
- Improve our system and processes particular our web-booking
- Increase marketing and communications
- Sustain capacity audience levels
- Extended and revitalised committee, new members, development of user groups and consultation
- Increased co-operation with IC Alumni Office
- Explore need for additional support, professional help
- Continue the development of pod/video casts to extend the reach of lecture programme
- Establish links and build trust with other IC Societies
- Test market additional and new events to main programme

Within five years

- Friends as a role model of communications between science and society, bridging the gap
- Some key function every month, a broad portfolio of events
- Greater external awareness of the activities, function of Friends
- Friends seen to encourage the understanding of science amongst young people
- Increased links to college benefactors, greater support to college fund raising activities
- At least 1000 members

The sub-committee is now developing an implementation plan.

10. The programme 2008 –2009

Our programme launched at the Summer Party in July 2009 is

1. The self healing heart: regenerating a sound heart after attack, Professor Michael Schneider.
2. Engineering and emotion, Chris Wise, FRSA, Master of the Royal Designers for Industry
3. Seeing is believing – the house of deceptions of the sight, Professor Christopher Kennard.
4. Behind-the-scenes @ the Institute of systems and synthetic biology Professor Richard Kitney, Professor Paul Freemont and Professor Nikolas Rose
5. Life in the solar system: Saturn's moons reveal their secrets, Professor Michele Dougherty
6. The geni in our cells: how cells change and remember what they are, Professor Richard Festenstein
7. Behind-the-Scenes @ Grantham Institute for Climate Change, Sir Brian Hoskins, Director

8. The hunt of the Higgs Boson at CERN, Professor Jordan Nash

Inspired by our strategy we also added three more events. They are

9. Nazi persecution: Britain's gift. Dr Ralph Kohn. A joint lecture with the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, CARA.

10. Imperial Innovations Endowment Scheme jointly with the Office of Alumni and Development

11. Theatre of the quantum absurd - freaks of physics Dr Nic Harrigan and his troupe

11. Thank you

I would like to thank our members who have given us great support during the year and particularly members of the committee who have contributed so much to the smooth running and success of the our year.

Roderick Rhys Jones,

Chairman, 17 November 2009