

Annual report 2009 -2010

AGM Tuesday 16 November 2010, Imperial College

1. Overview

We have had our most successful year to date. We organised more events, maintained high audience numbers, increased our membership, maintained our financial health and the size of our donation to the Student Opportunities Fund.

We organised twelve events, four more than in the eight published in our programme. They were a lecture by Sir Ralph Kohn on the support Britain gave to refugees academics promoted jointly with the Council Assisting Refugee Academics, the Circus of the Quantum Absurd at which post graduates acted out characteristics of quantum behaviour, the launch of the Imperial Innovations Endowment Scheme with the Office of Alumni and Development and our Summer Party

We have maintained our new higher audience levels albeit spread over more events. The number attending our events this year, 1511, is broadly the same as last year, 1540. Both are over three times the previous year's audience of 484.

Our membership has increased by 60% having risen by 40% over the previous year. Our membership now stands at 280. Additionally we have approximately 1100 supporters, who are not members, but who have attended at least one of our events in the last few years.

We continue to attract a wide range of people to membership and to our events. 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.

We have implemented our strategy drawn up last year of consolidation, improvement to our administration systems and some experimentation with new types of activity as described above.

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".

Winton Capital Management Ltd has made a further generous donation for the fourth year running. This donation has allowed us to maintain low subscriptions and low ticket prices whilst promoting Friends events in local magazines and other media.

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 of this funding and support of our activities.

This year we will be maintaining our contribution to the Students Opportunities Fund at £2000 in recognition of the increase in membership and audiences we have attracted.

2. Organisation

This is the fifth 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 to 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.

We launched a new website during the year which brought together the back office and front of house functions. Members and supporters can book events and indicate how they are making payment and also pay through PayPal directly. We have transferred all the data about members from our previous database so that these are held on the new website. Members visiting the site for the first time will find their contact details already available for updating. It is no longer necessary to fill in these details when you book each event. Members and supporters are encouraged to check their details and make bookings in order to reduce our administration costs and liberate our administrator to carry out organisational tasks rather than processing bookings. It is also possible to update membership subscriptions on line.

We are deeply indebted to committee member John Little who has designed, written the software and maintains the website, all at no cost to Friends.

Our administrator Jill Cook has continued to provide excellent service during the year and her enthusiasm and energy has made a major contribution to increasing our membership and maintaining our audience levels.

3. Committee

Your committee consists has met five times during the last academic year.

Committee members during 2009-2010 were Rodney Allen, Bill Blackburn (Treasurer), Rita Leek, John Little (IT), James Lovely, Emma Jones or Louise Birrell (OAD representative), John Nuttall, Paresh Parmar, Roderick Rhys Jones (Chairman), John Sanderson (Secretary), Riitta Soininen (Membership Secretary).

James Lovely has stepped down from the Committee. He made a great contribution to the reception desk at our events and his contribution to that and our dates will be missed.

4. Finance

We are financially independent of the College and therefore aim to make a surplus on all our events which, together with our membership subscriptions and the donation from Winton Capital Management, provides sufficient funds to cover administration and promotion.

This year's financial statement shows that our bank balance was £12,784.82 at the end of our financial year and we made a small operating loss of £125.09 for the year.

I would like to thank Bill Blackburn who has taken over the task of Treasurer very effectively.

Our membership subscriptions will remain the same for the coming year.

5. Donation to the College

Last year we increased our donation to the Students Opportunities Fund from £1500 to £2000 and we are maintaining it at the same level this year. The Fund helps to promote sciences amongst schools, supports needy students and contributes to new facilities at the College.

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

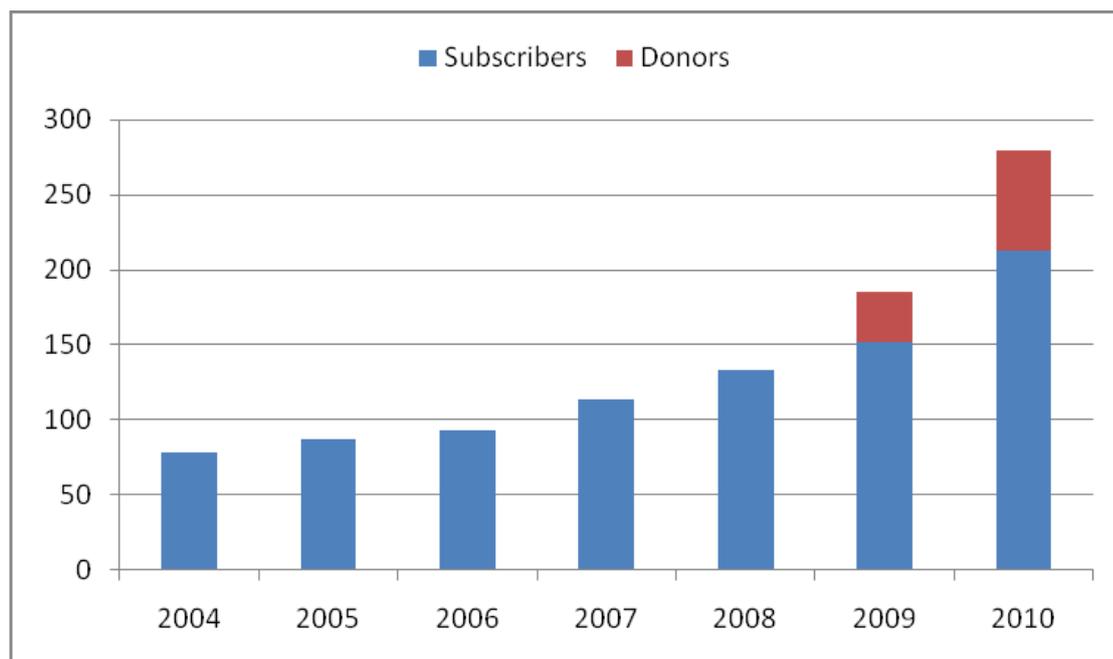
6. Membership *

Our total membership has risen by 50% to a total of 280 from 185 the previous year.

We continue to offer free annual membership to those donors to the College who wish to join Friends – 67 donors have taken up our offer this year – twice as many as the previous year when 33 took up the offer.

Our paid membership has increased by 40% over last year.

Our database of all those who have attended our events is now 1350 up from 1000 last year.



Most subscriptions, 158, were paid in September, October and November, but they continued throughout the year with the other nine months accounting for 122 subscriptions. This vindicates the decision not to offer a reduction in subscription rates for part of a year. We now have one rate of £20 a year.

Because of our increase in the numbers of members we held three members-only events: two Behind-the-Scenes events and the Summer Party. This may well have encouraged some of our supporters to become members.

7. The year's events

We organised twelve events during this year four more than in the printed programme we issued in June 2009 at our Summer Party and four more than the year before.

The full programme was

1. *The self healing heart: regenerating a sound heart after attack*, Professor Michael Schneider. 24 September 2009
2. *Engineering and emotion*, Chris Wise, FRSA, Master of the Royal Designers for Industry. 20 October 2009
3. *Nazi persecution: Britain's gift*, Dr Ralph Kohn. A joint lecture with the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, CARA. 3 November 2009
4. *Seeing is believing – the house of deceptions of the sight*, Professor Christopher Kennard. 17 November 2009
5. *Imperial Innovations Endowment Scheme* jointly with the Office of Alumni and Development. 30 November 2009
6. *Theatre of the quantum absurd - freaks of physics*, Dr Nic Harrigan and his troupe. 13 January 2010
7. *Behind-the-scenes @ the Institute of systems and synthetic biology*, Professor Richard Kitney. 28 January 2010
8. *Life in the solar system: Saturn's moons reveal their secrets*, Professor Michele Dougherty given by Professor Carl Murray, Queen Mary, University of London. 24 February 2010
9. *The genie in our cells: how cells change and remember what they are*, Professor Richard Festenstein. 25 March 2010
10. *Behind-the-Scenes @ Grantham Institute for Climate Change*, Sir Brian Hoskins. 28 April 2010
11. *The hunt of the Higgs Boson at CERN*, Professor Jordan Nash. 8 June 2010
12. *Summer Party*. 29 June 2010.

8. Attendance *

We have maintained our new level of audience numbers. Our total audience for the year was 1511, similar to the year before, 1540, but spread over three more events. Both years are much higher than three years ago when the total audience figure for the year was 484.

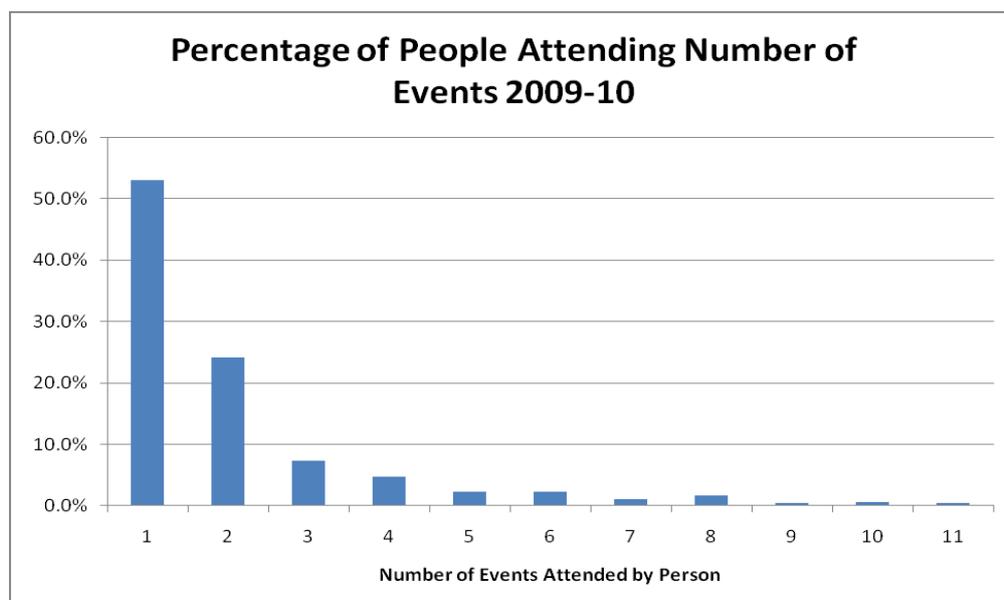
Half our audience are now members. This is a considerable increase over last year when members were 20% of the total audience for the year. It suggests that supporters in previous years have now joined.

There were 133 school students attending this year, a drop from 253 the previous year. Both years were above the year before when only 13 attended. Numbers appear to be sensitive to date, day and subject however we also suggested that schools should only come in groups of 10 or less to prevent schools dominating the lectures. We circulate all schools in the London and South East .

Support from Imperial students remains the same year-on-year at 252 (253 previously): a large increase on the year before at 13. This coming year our events are featured on the student union web site and we are getting more publicity in other student media.

	Total Members	Guest	Staff	Student	School	Total Non members	Grand Total
Self-healing Heart (Sep-09)	55	19	4	20		43	98
Engineering and Emotion (Oct-09)	64	43	6	29	29	107	171
CARA lecture (Nov-09)	14	27	30	54		111	125
Seeing is Believing (Nov-09)	62	25	10	13	61	109	171
Launch Imperial Innovations Endowment Scheme (Nov-09)	27					0	27
Theatre of the Quantum Absurd (Jan-10)	83	34	10	22	30	96	179
B T S @ Institute of Systems & Synthetic Biology (Jan-10)	43	2		8		10	53
Life in the Solar System (Feb-10)	78	20	11	24	6	61	139
The geni in our cells (Mar-10)	61	18	8	34	7	67	128
B T S @ Grantham Institute for Climate Change (Apr-10)	43		3			3	46
Hunt for the Higgs Boson (Jun-10)	123	60	22	48		130	253
Summer Party	85	14	22				121
Grand Total	738	262	126	252	133	737	1511
<i>Percentage audience</i>	49%	17%	8%	17%	9%	51%	

In the analysis below of 11 events (leaving out the Summer Party), 47% (87 people) of our audience attend two or more lectures and 22% (85 "frequent fliers") attended three events or more 29 were members, 27 alumni and 9 donors. This suggests that a number of our audience come to a number of our events but have not been converted to members. Fifty three per cent only attend one lecture. See the diagram below.



An analysis of the bookings to 11 events (leaving out the Innovations event) show that 401 supporters and members made 847 booking for events resulting in 1465 paying attendees. Ten teachers made 15 bookings leading to 133 pupils attending.

The majority of bookings are made for one person. Four hundred and five out of a total of 747 bookings (excluding schools) were made by one person, 256 bookings for two people and the remainder for groups of up to eight.

9. The programme 2010 –2011

Our programme for the coming year has already been augmented by the addition of a magic show from Dr Nic Harrigan and his troupe.

1. *Behind the Scenes @ The Institute of Biomedical Engineering*. 22 September 2010
2. *The End of ageing*. Professor Nadia Rosenthal, Chair in Cardiovascular Science; Scientific Director, National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College. 19 October 2010
3. *How the sun influences climate* Professor Joanna Haigh, Chair of Atmospheric Physics; Head of Department of Physics. 16 November 2010
4. *Can humanity survive in the age of information?* Emeritus Professor Igor Aleksander, Senior Research Investigator, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. 8 February 2011
5. *The secret life of chaos*, Professor Jim Al-Khalili, Chair of Theoretical Physics, University of Surrey; Chair of the Public Engagement in Science. 17 March 2011
6. *Behind the scenes @ Nanostructured Materials and Devices Group*. 13 April 2011
7. *Swarm robots – the future of drug delivery?* Dr Frantisek Stepanek, Reader in the Department of Chemical Engineering, Imperial College; Associate Professor at the Institute of Chemical Technology, Prague. 12 May 2011
8. *Quantum mechanics and reality – does god play dice?* Dr Antony Valentini, Research Associate, Theoretical Physics Group, Imperial College. 9 June 2011
9. *The Magic Show*, Dr Nic Harrigan and his graduates will present a real magic show based on quantum mechanics. 25 January 2011.

10. Strategic Plan

Our strategic plan drawn up last year set out to consolidate the gains in audience numbers, membership and reputation in order to ensure sustainability and growth in the future.

As planned, we have improved our administration system and computer processes, in particular our web-booking and subscriptions.

We have increased our marketing and communications through local media and particularly over the web.

We have tried a number of different events this year including the members-only events, the Circus of the Quantum Absurd and the Imperial Innovations Endowment evening. This year we are looking at arranging a tour to the Diamond Light Source synchrotron facility at Harwell and possibly a visit to science facilities in Berlin where we will link with local alumni.

This year we will be finding out more about our members and their expectations using questionnaires and the information gathered on our website.

The Strategy aims to achieve the following 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.

11. Thank you

I would like to thank our sponsors, the College, our members and other supporters 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, 16 November 2010

* Changes have been made in the method of collecting statistics and in audience categories. This may have resulted in some apparent anomalies. We intend that the new IT system will provide us with more robust methods and results.