



# *the BA annual review* | 2002

The BA is investing in the future. We provide opportunities for people to discuss, investigate, explore and challenge science and, in particular, how our lives and those of future generations are affected by science.

The BA does this by organising innovative events for a wide range of audiences and age groups. We bring together scientists, the media, and people from business and education; people who enjoy a good debate and those who care about science – what it has done and achieved, how it will influence and improve our lives, and what the future dangers could be unless we ensure we are informed and empowered.

**The BA would like to thank all its members and sponsors, including its main funders: the Office of Science & Technology, the Wellcome Trust, and the Royal Society.**



The launch of National Science Week 2002



The BA is in the business of communicating science. We work to encourage people to become involved in science in a variety of ways.

A key area of our work is with young people – from 5 year olds to undergraduates – and all ages in between. We run a wide range of activities for specific age groups, interests and audiences. Teachers run science awards, school clubs, take advantage of in-service training sessions and use our materials to support their classroom teaching. We offer hands-on science days, online clubs, prestigious competitions and conferences for older students. There is plenty on offer for young people, whatever their abilities or interests, whether at home or at school.

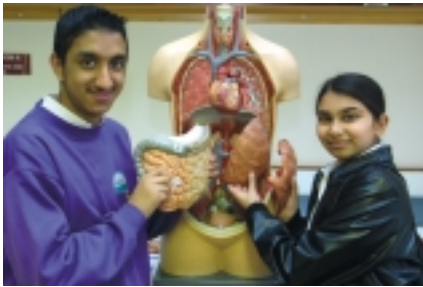


The BA publishes the magazine Science & Public Affairs, which is used by teachers and students, often as part of their citizenship programme. MPs, science journalists, BA members and people who work in science communication also subscribe to Science & Public Affairs. It is the best way to keep abreast of developments and views on the role science plays in society. Full BA members receive the magazine free.



We have a wide range of events that are open to everyone, from the annual BA Festival of Science to National Science Week, and from formal debates to discussions in the local pub.

**We love people to talk about science!**



We are also asked, regularly, to comment on important developments or enquiries concerning science and society. The BA submitted evidence to the Government enquiry into the supply of science and engineering skills (the Robert's Report), and to the House of Commons enquiries into science education for 14-19s and into Government funding of the scientific learned societies.

As a membership organisation, we offer a range of benefits to members, who provide valuable support for our work. In fact, the BA is there for everyone who wants to write about science, make programmes about science, discuss science issues, challenge the experts,

find places and events to visit themselves or with their families, locate a good speaker for their own events, join a local branch or just take part in the fun. You are all welcome.

This website contains further information on all the BA's events, activities, people and publications. By entering the BACkroom, you can browse the BA member publication archives, receive tailored email alerts for events happening in your area, meet the experts and participate in online debates, express your opinion through our regular online surveys, take advantage of our regular special offers and communicate with BA members.



the BACkroom



The BA Festival of Science, held in Glasgow in 2001 was a roaring success. With over 400 speakers taking part and the huge presence of over 300 members of the media, we ensured that the BA inspired even more coverage for science, the Festival and the organisation than in previous years. With over 10 000 visitors, our flagship event is growing from strength to strength.

One of the most popular innovations at the Festival was the x-change, which built on the huge success of the BA's informal sciBARs. The x-change took place every evening, after the main sessions of the day, and was an opportunity for festival goers to question speakers, debate the emerging issues and discuss some of the areas covered in the earlier presentations. Hosted by the inimitable Quentin Cooper, of BBC Radio's Material World,

the x-change is a great place to meet, chat, hob-nob and be refreshed. Make sure you're there at the next Festival!



Quentin Cooper and David King



As one of Science Year's strategic partners, the BA has been busy running innovative and creative events and schemes to promote the initiative. The BA has branched out into new areas through its collaborative work on the phenomenal LaughLab – the international mass-participation investigation into humour, and the drama production Footprints, which deals with the science of genetics through a contemporary and lively piece of theatre aimed at secondary school students.

To celebrate Science Year, the annual two-day BAYSDAY was complemented by a special event held at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Geographical Society. The event, Science Discovery Day, launched National Science Week. It was aimed at 10-19 year olds and saw demonstrations and workshops from, amongst others, the British Antarctic Survey, Eagle Heights and the Met Office. In addition, high profile speakers, such as Ian Wilmut, spoke to older students. Science Discovery Day attracted nearly 3 000 visitors.

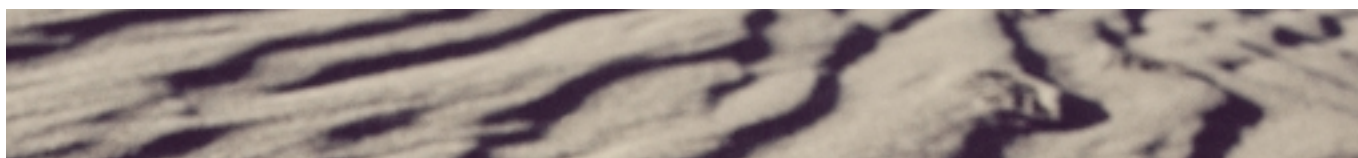


The Science Communication Conference, held in association with Copus, took place in May at the Institute of Electrical Engineers and was a well-attended and much appreciated professional gathering. The excellent presentations provided exactly the right stimulation for exploring issues and debating ideas. The feedback has been superb and we are eagerly working on next year's conference.

Conferences of a different but equally sparky nature were held during the year. Owing to popular demand, the BA ran a number of successful Visions conferences across the UK, including 'Risky business' (Wakefield, October 2001) and 'Going bananas' (Bristol,

November 2001). The latter was part of European Science and Technology Week in the format of a video conference run with organisations in Madrid, Munich and Brussels to discuss the implications of plant biotechnology.





**Congratulations to the pupils and students who achieved success in the BA's award and prize schemes.**

Thousands of children and students took part in First Investigators, Young Investigators and CREST, whether enjoying activities in science clubs, or taking part in investigations and projects as part of their school work. Last year, over 26 000 BA CREST awards were presented in the UK – a number that is growing each year. BAYS news was relaunched as BAckchat to include schools participating in CREST and Science Communicators.

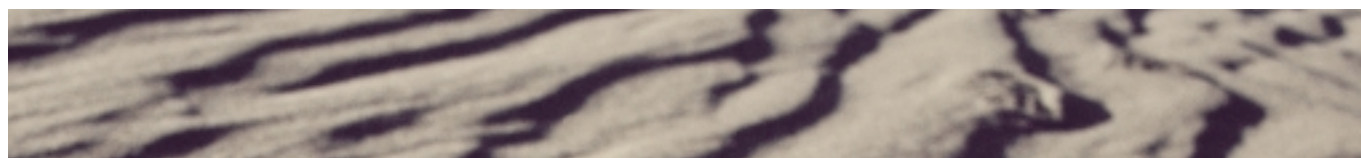
The UK won first prize, third prize and two special awards at the 13th European Union Contest for Young Scientists in September 2001. The contestants were selected at the BA Science Fair, an annual event that showcases the best of the rising UK science talent. Students came from across the UK to exhibit science projects and discuss their research with experts in their field and the public. From here, students were selected to represent the UK at international fairs and competitions in Louisville, Kentucky, Vienna and Stockholm.

David Stockdale represented the UK at the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize ceremonies in Stockholm, Sweden. This was part of the Swedish International Youth Science Seminar which saw twenty-five 18-25 year-old international science students joining the festivities and events. They came to Stockholm from 18 countries to meet and exchange ideas and inspiration with the Nobel Laureates.

Congratulations, too, go to Catherine Newstead, teacher at Caton St. Paul's C Of E School, who has received the BT Award for Science Year in a Primary School for the North West region. The number of Catherine's pupils achieving high-level BA Young Investigator Awards at the small, rural school where she teaches impressed the judges. One even won a coveted gold award, which are only awarded to outstanding projects.



Judges also reported that Catherine regularly inspires other teachers at the school and when pupils aren't busy with the weekly science club, they can be found crawling around the local woods checking on their science experiment. We wish Catherine and her school the very best for next year – one we hope will be full of further investigative feats.



The BA continued to increase its activities throughout the UK through the highly successful National Science Week in March and a complementary programme of events throughout the rest of the year. Our volunteers work throughout an expanding network of branches (currently 26) to drive forward an ambitious diversity of events and activities.



During National Science Week there were especially big programmes in Sheffield and Wessex, and the BA branches and staff ensured that events for adults featured strongly in local programmes, such as a joint conference with the Eden Project in Cornwall. There were also marvellous events in Wrexham, Aberdeen and East Yorkshire.

Throughout the year, talks covered climate change, the science of musical instruments, the human genome, food policy, diabetes research, sleep and winemaking. Excursions included the Claverton Pump (Bath), the Blue Planet Aquarium (Ellesmere Port), high precision survey instruments measuring movement in a medieval church (Bristol), the Halewood Jaguar factory and bird watching by boat off the Aberdeen coast. In Leicester and Nottingham, science talks preceding feature films in local cinemas showed

that the BA continues to think creatively about science in informal contexts. The Mini-Festival of Science organised by the North West Branch showed the value of regional partnerships (in this case with Daresbury Laboratories). Popular large-scale events for younger audiences included the well-established North West BAYSDAY and Science is Great in Middlesbrough.

We also enjoyed sciBArS in Plymouth, Rutland and Liverpool along with SPA Forums in Wrexham, Glasgow and Northern Ireland. Other innovations included initiatives in Wales and the North West Branch explicitly targeting professional scientists, attracting speakers such as Lord May and Colin Blakemore. In Wales the BA linked up with Channel S4C, producing a series of children's science programmes and an interactive website.

New branches launched this year were Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire and Moray. In a first for the BA, the independent Richmond Scientific Society agreed to fulfil the functions of a branch for members in South London. We are currently negotiating with similar societies with whom we share common interest and aims in order to mutually grow our network of supporters and friends.



The BA continues to operate on a European-scale through the success of the internet-based press service, AlphaGalileo. The core team and our partner organisations in Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Sweden and the UK continue to provide knowledge-based European research information to the media across the world. In May the service extended its coverage to research in the arts and humanities. Negotiations are well advanced to increase the number of national partners during the next year.

[www.alphagalileo.org](http://www.alphagalileo.org)



The ABSW (Association of British Science Writers) continues to have its home within the BA. The organisation hosted a visit at the BA Festival of Science for a group of EUSJA (European Union of Science Journalists' Associations) members from sister European nations. Opportunities to discuss science communication with European colleagues are always welcomed.

[www.absw.org.uk](http://www.absw.org.uk)

Communicating science in museums and science centres involves thousands of practitioners throughout Europe. ECSITE, the collaboration of such institutions, has completed another year of its ISCOM project, in which the BA is a lead partner. The project is focused on taking the communication agenda forward through technological advance and innovative exhibitions.

As a result of the work undertaken by ECSITE members in the UK, and given the high number of members based here, *ECSITE UK* has been born. We are delighted that this fast-evolving new network has made its home at the BA and will strengthen further our relationships with colleagues and organisations across Europe.

[www.ecsite-uk.net](http://www.ecsite-uk.net)