



# National Science Week

## 11-20 March 2005

### Evaluation summary

#### Overview

National Science Week is made up of a variety of events organised across the UK. Anyone can organise an event and no restrictions are placed on subject, format, audience or venue. Consequently National Science Week evaluation data are chiefly concerned with: events, organisers, presenters, attendees, the BA and the relationships between these groups and with the public. This report analyses the available data for each of these areas.

#### How the evaluation was carried out

National Science Week 2003 saw the introduction of a new evaluation strategy, including both quantitative and qualitative elements. This has been continued in the evaluation of National Science Week 2004 and 2005.

#### Qualitative

15 30-minute telephone interviews were conducted with various organisers of registered NSW 2005 events and a focus group of 7 organisers was conducted.

#### Quantitative

Organisers who registered an event before 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005 were sent an evaluation pack containing questionnaires. In addition, each copy of the 2005 challenge packs (*Vertically Challenged?* and *Einstein's Birthday Party Pack*) contained a tear off and return questionnaire.

320 organisers with 943 registered events received the evaluation pack. 107 organisers completed and returned questionnaires for 161 events (33% response rate), 1880 attendees completed questionnaires at 138 events and 220 presenters at 133 events.

This report includes data from four main sources:

- the National Science Week database.
- completed and returned evaluation questionnaires.
- printed and broadcast media data supplied by Romeike.
- a National Opinion Poll omnibus survey.

All statistics are taken from the questionnaire data unless otherwise stated.

In addition to the formal evaluation, 37 registered events were visited by BA staff during NSW.

## **Number of events and organisers**

- National Science Week 2005 had 1090 registered events, an increase on the 1013 registered in NSW 2004.
- The total estimated number of events is 1644 based on extrapolation from the media trawl.
- Since 2003 the number of registered events has increased by around 5% each year.
  
- South East England has the most events, whilst Eastern England, the North East and Wales have all seen a significant increase in numbers of events due to regional science festivals.
- Yorkshire and Humberside has the highest proportion of events per capita.
- The West and East Midlands had the least number of events per capita.
  
- The South East has, by far, the most number of organisers.
- Scotland has the most organisers per capita.
- Northern Ireland and the West Midlands have the least number of organisers per capita.

## **Event formats**

- As in previous years, lectures, hands-on activities and workshops were the most common event formats.

## **Marketing and target audiences**

- The most popular way of marketing NSW events was by direct mail outs and via the BA's online programme.
- A large proportion of events were aimed at families.
- Total attendee numbers could be estimated at 525,000 people, a significant increase from the 360,000 estimated by the same method in NSW 2004.
- The majority of events (57%) were open to all age groups.

## **Event success**

- 96% of organisers felt their events were either excellent or fairly successful.
- When rating the individual aspects of the events between 80% and 91% of attendees said that the events value for money, educational, topical, enjoyable and interesting.

## **Ethnic diversity**

- Diversity figures for attendees at events are very close to the figures for the whole of the UK.
- Organisers and presenters are still under-represented in the ethnic minority groups.

## **Attendee profile**

- The majority (55%) of attendees are school students.
- 50% of attendees attend the events as a school/class activity.
- 58% of attendees stated that they had never attended any type of science event before.
- 79% of attendees believed they were attending their first National Science Week event.
- 84% of attendees said they would visit another National Science Week event next year.
- 85% of attendees said they would recommend a National Science Week event to a friend.

## **General public awareness**

- Overall awareness of National Science Week as measured by the NOP omnibus poll stands at 34% which is the same level as both 2004 and 2003.
- The OST MORI poll put awareness of NSW at 55% of the adult population

## **Presenter profile**

- 85% of presenters confirmed that they had presented to a public audience before.
- 41% are employed in the academic sector (including schools and universities).
- 20% of the presenters work in a research institution.
- 80% of presenters had studied science to either a university or postgraduate level.
- Many presenters take part "to have fun".
- The overwhelming majority indicated that they would definitely support National Science Week in the future.

## **Organiser profile**

- 377 organisers registered events in NSW 2005 (350 in NSW 2004 and 499 in NSW 2003).
- The majority of organisers are in full-time employment (70%).
- A significant proportion of these organisers either work in the academic sector, in museums or other visitor attractions (66%).
- 60% of organisers have studied science at least as far as degree level.
- 34% of organisers had never organised an event for National Science Week before.
- Website usage by organisers continues to increase from 50% in 2003 and 63% in 2004 to 68% in 2005.
- 80% of organisers are satisfied with the level of support provided by the BA.
- Organisers would like to see an increase in the amount of local and national publicity highlighting individual events, an increase in the breadth and quantity of resources available, such as stickers, badges, other promotional materials, and an increase in the amount of funding available.

## **Media coverage**

- Coverage for National Science Week 2005 fell slightly compared to 2004, probably due to the strong central "Spring into Science" campaign in 2004.
- 39 national publications published articles on National Science Week, including 7 daily nationals (2 tabloids and 5 broadsheets) and 1 national Sunday broadsheet.
- 577 regional publications published articles about National Science Week.
- The South East, including London, had the most coverage with Northern Ireland and Wales receiving the least.

## **Broadcast media**

- Overall broadcast coverage decreased slightly in 2005 (70 broadcasts) in comparison to 2004 (104 broadcasts).
- The high number of national radio broadcasts this year was due to both Radio 4 and Radio 2 promoting the Universe competition in advance of the launch of National Science Week.
- National coverage was higher than any coverage in a particular region.
- Scotland had a particularly high amount of coverage in relation to the number of events.

## **Online coverage**

- Many National Science Week organisers included links to the official website; there were also many links and articles on other pages. As yet, no accurate way of quantifying web coverage has been discovered.
- Hits to the NSW website were the highest that have been recorded (over 100,000)
- The Einstein themed challenge pack was the most downloaded document on the website (downloaded 5982 times).

## *UNIVERSE* Competition

For National Science Week 2005, the BA worked with Creative Partnerships to develop a nationwide poetry competition on the themes of time, space and energy to fall in line with the themes of Einstein Year. The competition was open to people of all ages and managed to attract over 2000 entries. Coverage for the competition included; a direct link from the BBC online science homepage leading to thousands of referrals to the BA's website; features on Radio 4 and Radio 2; articles in the Times and the Guardian and numerous articles in local and trade newspapers. The Universe homepage received almost 9,500 visits in three months, making it the third most popular page after the BA's homepage and the main National Science Week page.

### **Recommendations from the qualitative research:**

- Redesign the logo and NSW brand.
- Create an on-line shop for branded items
- Further information or literature should be sent out with any goodie bags this could include Postcards, ideas for future events and a CD with downloadable resources and images