

Department of Earth Science wins University Public Engagement Award

The Department of Earth Science has won a Building Capacity Award in this year's Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards, which celebrate public engagement work across the University. The announcement was made at an awards ceremony at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History on 28 June hosted by Vice-Chancellor Professor Louise Richardson.

The Department of Earth Science's award-winning project *Borrow the Moon* invited Oxford primary school groups with very low levels of participation in Higher Education to visit the Department of Earth Sciences. There they joined researchers in investigating samples of real lunar material brought to earth by the Apollo missions in the 1970s, which are rarely seen and held, even by researchers of lunar science. The project was led by Dr Jonathan Wade, NERC Research Fellow, Department of Earth Sciences.

Over 180 children from three primary schools attended the sessions, and six research students and researchers participated as presenters and facilitators. Since the project two research students have undertaken additional engagements at two further schools. The activity has also enabled the Widening Access and Participation team to build capacity by creating new and strengthening existing links with participating schools.

The Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards recognise and reward those at the University who undertake high-quality engagement activities and have contributed to building capacity in this area. The Department of Earth Sciences was one of three winners in the Building Capacity category of the awards.

Professor Louise Richardson, Vice-Chancellor says: "I have been deeply impressed by the quality of the public engagement with research projects submitted for this year's awards. The breadth and diversity of the activities taking place show how seriously the University takes its commitment to public engagement."

Professor Alison Woollard, the University's Academic Champion for Public Engagement with Research says: "Public engagement enriches both research and society and the University is committed to enabling our researchers to inspire, consult and collaborate with the public. I'm delighted that we are able to recognise and highlight the fantastic work our researchers are doing and hope these awards encourage more colleagues across the University to carry out their own public engagement with research."

About the awards

The Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards recognise and reward those at the University who undertake high-quality engagement activities and have contributed to building capacity in this area. The awards are awarded in three categories – Early Career Researcher, Building Capacity and

Projects. Entrants can be at any level in their career and activities of any scale are welcome.

Winning entries receive recognition for their achievements at the Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Awards Ceremony that will take place on 28 June 2017. The Vice-Chancellor's prize will also be announced at the ceremony and receive a cash prize of £1,500.

Further information on 'Borrow the Moon

1) Project lead

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2) Project Case study

Building Capacity Award Winner

Department of Earth Sciences for "Borrow the Moon"

Borrow the Moon invited Oxford primary school groups with very low levels of participation in Higher Education to visit the Department of Earth Sciences. There they joined researchers in investigating samples of real lunar material brought to earth by the Apollo missions in the 1970s, which are rarely seen and held, even by researchers of lunar science.

Building capacity for Public Engagement with Research

The project's goals were to: introduce researchers to the joys and challenges of public engagement with younger children from diverse backgrounds, including those from lower socioeconomic and educational attainment households or with a disability, working alongside Oxford's Widening Participation and Access (WAP) team to identify the schools; and to introduce children to the excitement of Earth Sciences research.

On these visits, the children interacted with researchers working on palaeobiology, planetary formation, and volcanology and explored the topic of space exploration through hands-on activities.

This activity allowed researchers to trial working with outer-space materials to create enrichment activities. It also provided early-career researchers with a pre-

structured activity that introduced many of them to the challenges and rewards of working with children for the first time.

Outcomes & Impacts

Over 180 children from three primary schools attended the sessions, and six research students and researchers participated as presenters and facilitators.

Since the project two research students have undertaken additional engagements at two further schools. The activity has also enabled the WAP team to build capacity by creating new and strengthening existing links with participating schools.

"I found that being able to break down complex science into a story fully understandable to school children was a really good exercise in adapting material to different audiences. Working with school children is also really fun because their questions and comments keep you on your toes!" DPhil student

Funded by: Resourced by the Department of Earth Sciences and WAP. Lunar samples loaned by the Science and Technology Facilities Council.