Media and Public Engagement

The value of positive interaction between the scientific community and the general public cannot be underestimated. Progress toward solving some of our world's most critical problems depends equally on the innovations of science and the ability of science experts to communicate and gain public support for their findings. AAAS, through its sophisticated yet highly accessible Annual Meeting, its extensive participation in science events for the public, and its varied public outreach programs, helps to make the world of science accessible to all.

2012 AAAS ANNUAL MEETING

Held in Vancouver, British Columbia, the 2012 AAAS Annual Meeting urged the scientific community to reach out, across national borders and diverse belief systems, to help develop and gain support for solutions to the world's most urgent problems. AAAS President Nina Fedoroff (shown below) emphasized that scientists in developed and developing nations must collaborate to combat problems such as the threat of widespread hunger as the world's population grows and climate change endangers the Earth's limited supply of arable land.

New ways to reach the public through traditional and online media on issues such as climate change headlined a plenary event presented by a panel of renowned science communicators. Other presentations focused on wide-ranging subjects, from carbon storage to synthetic hamburgers, to the lag in women's participation in the science and engineering workforce and leadership positions.

The Meeting's Family Science Days brought more than 6,387 attendees who enjoyed exploring alien planets, sea creatures and rocketry at table-top laboratories, as well as meeting and talking with scientists. The 2012 meeting also drew 4,420 general delegates and 760 journalists, bringing the total attendance to 11,567 attendees.

USA SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FESTIVAL

AAAS provided thousands of jelly beans—and a memorable learning experience about how taste and smell interact—at the second USA Science & Engineering Festival, the nation's largest science festival, of which AAAS is a founding partner. The giant, colorful 3-D models of a mouth, nose, ear, finger and eyeball representing the different interactive stations

of "The Science of our Senses" exhibit, hosted by AAAS Education and Human Resources, drew excited youngsters and parents to the two-day expo event, as did the association's popular "Meet the Scientists!" stage shows, organized by the Office of Public Programs.

During the stage shows, scientists wowed an audience with dynamic presentations. Afterward, audience members spoke one-on-one with the scientists and asked questions. Staying with the theme of the senses, the show featured experts researching the science of perception, encompassing topics from how babies make sense of sound to how robots sense touch.

ART GALLERY

A discussion exploring the complex problem of worldwide waste was just one example of how the AAAS Art Gallery used art as an entrée to the world of science and technology in 2012. Hosting the "Disposable Culture" exhibit, which was inspired by a special "Working with Waste" edition of the journal *Science,* the gallery featured five artists who are reintroducing cast-off items to our world through art. The discussion brought experts from different fields who spoke about the innovative work being done to address the issue of accumulating waste. Other 2012 exhibitions focused on the historical, scientific and global impacts of malaria, and the need to protect what lies beneath the surface of the oceans.

The gallery is an outgrowth of the AAAS Art of Science and Technology Program, which was created to further public engagement with sci-

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At right: Award-winning journalist Frank Sesno, director of the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University (foreground, left) moderated "Science is Not Enough," an interactive science communication event featuring Hans Rosling (right), James Hansen and Olivia Judson.

Below: The AAAS Art Gallery's multimedia exhibit, "Malaria: Blood, Sweat and Tears," organized in cooperation with the international nonprofit Malaria Consortium, featured the work of photojournalist Adam Nadel.

ence and technology by using art as a medium for the presentation of scientific themes.

COMMUNICATING SCIENCE WORKSHOPS

Being able to effectively communicate science to the public, policymakers and reporters is a critical skill for scientists and engineers. AAAS organized an array of workshops and talks in 2012 for scientists at the AAAS Annual Meeting, the annual meeting of the American Society of Plant Biologists, the Geological Society of America Annual Meeting, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Virginia Commonwealth University, among others. The workshops reached more than 420 scientists.

The tips and tools provided by AAAS workshops seek to foster information-sharing and respect between the scientific community and the public, which is crucial to the communication of critical issues such as the environment and health. The workshops help scientists to conduct media interviews, participate in public forums, and otherwise explain scientific information in a comprehensible and engaging way.

SENIOR SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS

Students in Mary Yeates' high-school classes in Montgomery County, Maryland, are being taught to think like junior engineers. Partly, they have AAAS volunteer Senior Scientists and Engineers (SSE) to thank—for providing Gerry Klebe, an aeronautical engineer who spends quite a bit of his time collaborating with Yeates. "We really ended up transforming the class," Yeates said. "I'm the CEO, and he's my senior consultant, and we have management meetings."

The professional input offered by the SSE volunteers comes at a crucial moment in science education, as updated science education standards emphasize the importance of instruction in engineering skills as well as hands-on learning and understanding processes over memorizing information.