Artistic or creative activities are not something people would associate with an STFC grant; however we are getting an increasing number of PIs reporting an artistic output. During our 2014 submission period we had around 20 unique artistic outputs reported.

Projects like these help increase awareness of the science currently being done by UK scientists with UK funding. To sustain the UK's position as one of the world's leading research nations, we help maintain a focus on research excellence and leadership. This creates an immediate impact on skills and training, and by pushing the boundaries of science and technology, supports the growth of a high-technology UK economy.

Once Upon a Universe

Once Upon a Universe was established in April 2011, when a group of intrepid explorers set out in the Discovery Bus, to areas of Dumfries and Galloway. However there is a deeper meaning to the concept - referring to the strange places we travel to in our minds, into a world of quantum mechanics, quark-gluon plasma, and other odd phenomena.

The group has two guides, Norman Gray (Glasgow based astrophysicist), and David Sobral (observational cosmologist), who lay down the foundations for the storytellers and writers, some with backgrounds in drama and others in bioelectronics.

From discussions and ideas they began writing stories. The results can be found here. The site explains complex concepts and attempts to communicate the entire history of the universe as a single narrative, with easy to understand language, some pretty pictures and storytelling. There are currently 11 stories and poems available on the site but the group are always keen to add to this portfolio, and would welcome your help.
Sixty Symbols

The University of Nottingham have made great progress internationally with their short videos. Sixty Symbols is a collection of videos about the symbols of physics and astronomy. This channel currently has more than 180,000 subscribers and the 200 videos have been viewed more than 16 million times.

The YouTube videos present both broader discussion of interesting topics in astronomy but also specific explanations of their research as it is published. The approach adopted is to engage the viewer with both the science being presented and the daily life of the researchers undertaking it, so that a long-term relationship is established with the audience.

Following from the phenomenal success of this channel, the group were approached by Google (who own YouTube) to develop new ideas. Deep Sky Videos (http://youtube.com/deepskyvideos) was then created. This looks at astronomical objects, concentrating initially on the Messier Catalogue, and again drawing on their research activities on these objects. This channel has also been a success, with more than 70,000 subscribers and more than 2 million views of the 79 videos produced to-date. An independent study has since looked at the demographics of the audience for these channels, and found that they span a very wide range of ages and backgrounds. Feedback through the channels’ comment sections and email also indicates the profound effect that these videos have had on some viewers’ interest and even career aspirations.

Going forward the team continue to plan making more videos as the popularity continues to grow, receiving many humbling stories of the impact that the videos have made on people’s lives. They are also looking at other ways to develop the channel having recently received funding from UKSA, to make videos about Tim Peake’s mission to the International Space Station and associated physics.

E-ELT primary mirror

In 2014 University of Oxford, along with members of the public attending the stargazing Oxford event, recreated a 1:25 scale model of the E-ELT primary mirror in only 11 hours. Each segment was provided by approximately 1000 visitor to the department. It took two days to complete the mirror and the total time to complete was 11 hours.

The mirror has been on display for the last year in the foyer of the Denys Wilkinson Building at Oxford. It is now housed in the new HARMONI group area in the Denys Wilkinson Building.

The original idea for an interactive activity on our E-ELT exhibit was suggested by Niranjan Thatte, PI of HARMONI, and they then adapted this idea to feature silvered segments that children could cut out and write on so that the final product was more mirror like.

Projects like this help us to achieve our goals engaging the public for increased visibility, public accountability, scientific literacy and to inspire young people.

For more information on STFC and Researchfish please visit: www.stfc.ac.uk/1846.aspx