

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY COLLABORATION

A Proposal

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Members of the Academy are invited to respond to these proposals by contacting John Troyer at: j.troyer@bath.ac.uk

Both the Social Sciences and the STEM subjects co-exist and overlap in Higher Education Institutions across the country. Even if a particular HEI favours one discipline over another, the historical relationship between both Science and Society affects our daily lives. Chances are good that this very message was delivered via one of the twentieth-century's most transformative innovations for both Science and Society: digital communication.

The epistemological roots supporting both the STEM subjects and the Social Sciences form a networked partnership that represents a possible future. Building upon that partnership means stressing how the creation of future innovations that benefit the population at large (and the national economy along the way), requires both teaching and discussing Science and Society on a common plane.

In order to better develop a strategy to this end, the STEM subjects and the Social Sciences must work together to stress the collaborative relationships and histories shared between both groups. Each area of study maintains its own disciplinary expectations but a particular focus, for example, on how technology is both a social and scientific phenomena represents one possible way forward. A number of important initiatives could emerge from these collaborations.

For example:

- Working with government officials so that every time an MP or Minister states that 'technology' will fix a particular social problem, it is clear what that technological fix is and how it will work.
- Promoting projects between the Creative Industries and Science and Society disciplines in order to demonstrate that all Science and Society disciplines are at their cores Creative Industries.
- Bringing together environmental design and sustainability projects to simultaneously address the scientific, societal, political, and technological aspects of those projects.
- Using Museums (e.g., Science, Natural History, Design, and Fine Art) as sites for joint, cross-disciplinary projects.
- Developing a television programme which pairs Science and Society teams to explore the history of innovation and change in the modern world. Everything from: space exploration (science, politics, literature) to organ transplantation (bioethics, medicine, religion) to infrastructure building (architecture, engineering, social construction).

- A key project: As senior academics in UK HEIs retire and/or die, institutional memories of previous Science and Society relationships and projects are being forgotten. It is important to recognize and document these previous collaborations before they are lost.
- Both the Social Sciences and the STEM subjects should explore how to create a new kind of interdisciplinary Undergraduate degree. This four-year degree would involve both a STEM subject and a Social Science discipline. The Human Sciences and Arts and Humanities should also be involved. This new kind of programme would require most Universities to change how undergraduate degrees are awarded but it would also mean students are working on courses in a truly interdisciplinary manner. Pilot programmes should be started at interested and committed HEIs.

Most importantly, this partnership should stress how the prospects for a future innovation economy requires demonstrating the divergent and overlapping creative practices produced by both the STEM subjects and the Social Sciences working together.

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