

'Sights and Frights' Conference evaluation

1. How the RLI fund award was used, and the impact this had

The RLI fund was used to cover costs of the hire of rooms at the University of Sussex, where the conference took place and the costs of catering for lunch for the attendees. We hired a lecture theatre and three adjoining rooms at Fulton which were ideal for the conference and provided the perfect location for lectures and discussions. Providing lunch for participants was highly beneficial as it enabled conference participants to gather together and have smaller group discussions and meet other academics in the same field.

2. Things that went well with the event

- There were a sufficient number of participants to have fruitful discussions and provide a good audience for papers. This means that our website and advertising had worked well.
- The papers were brilliant – the keynotes and panel discussions were very well prepared and provided very interesting food for discussion. We grouped the papers together well and there was a balance of attendees at each panel.
- Timings were adequate – by the end the conference ran 15 minutes over the scheduled timing (which, given the number of panels and events taking place, was not a significant delay). We had tried to keep a strict eye on time, including using signs to warn speakers if they were going over time, and this seems to have worked well.
- The rooms were generally adequate and the location chosen was highly convenient.
- Catering was good quality and arrived on time.
- The volunteers helping us were very hard working and helped the conference run smoothly.
- The delegate packs and labels produced were highly professional.
- Participants stated how well they thought the event had gone and how interesting they had found the day. In particular, they commented on how innovative and different it was to have a magic lantern show at a conference.

3. Things that didn't go so well

- There were a couple of problems with the rooms we had hired. Firstly, another conference came into our room and used our teas/coffees, which meant that we had to have fresh ones delivered. Secondly, the blinds did not work in one of the rooms, which was frustrating given the need to have low lighting to see the presentations. In this room the light also flickered, which was also frustrating.
- Another problem we encountered was that the magic lanternist took longer to put his lantern away than anticipated, which meant that we had to relocate a panel discussion to an alternative room. This meant that we lost time and it was disruptive for attendees to change rooms.
- We ran a little over time (as above). Although we tried hard to keep things to time, the lunch break ran over slightly, which meant that during the afternoon things were

running late. We should have been stricter about ensuring that lunch finished on time.

- Although there were a good number of attendees (50), we had capacity to have more (60).

4. Things you would do differently next time

- As per (3) above, we would have been more rigorous about keeping to time.
- Regarding attendees, we would have preferred to hold the conference during Autumn term, as we think it might have attracted more participants if it occurred during term-time, and in particular at the start of the academic year when enthusiasm is running high.
- We should have checked the rooms before the conference, in order to identify any rooming issues, rather than rely on the conference team to do this for us.
- We should have asked the magic lanternist how long he would take to put his lantern away. (However, the key issue was that he had to put his lantern in the middle of the lecture theatre – which was not planned – which is why it was impossible to continue with the next panel whilst he put his lantern away. Therefore this was difficult to predict, having not seen the lantern prior to the conference).