

2016 ASTEN fellowship report – SCITECH

I have been with the Science Centre and Planetarium for nearly 12 years, I started as a university student intern and worked my way up to full time supervisor. We are a small science centre in Wollongong, with only 6 full time staff, 30 university casual student interns and approximately 20 volunteers. My role as supervisor involves the daily running of the centre; liaising with school groups; training interns in shows/planetarium/shop/reception/workshops/day to day activities; developing new content for our live science shows, workshops; and the development of professional development programs. I come from a Biological Sciences and High School Science Teaching background so my knowledge on effective museum programs is limited to my experience at the Wollongong Science Centre and Planetarium so I went to ASTEN to try and learn more about the way that other centres look after all these different programs.

I attended different workshops and learnt some valuable new skills and insights in regards to program methodology. The talk by Mark McCrindle reinforced the idea that in order to engage younger audiences in today's society you need to keep it real and relevant, and that it is important to look at what these younger generations find important, and target program using those key focuses. With that in mind it is then important to look at ways to effectively set and monitor those programs. Both Karen Murcia and Alison Kevan's talks on program logic and program theory demonstrated effective ways to think about programs from initial ideas to what are your long term expectations and how this aligns with the goals of society. Alison's talk also demonstrated how program logic helps to keep programs relevant with the initial goal in mind.

I also attended workshops on day-to-day programs that different centres run. The outreach talk by Nick Wood, Murphy People, and Nadja Tkachenko discussed what needs to be planned before an outreach and the challenges that can occur (i.e. staffing, training, travel etc) and what different activities can be presented on outreach. It is not just limited to shows and workshops, there can be activities such as science morning teas leading to a visit to help engage parts of the community who wouldn't necessarily attend a science centre or museum. The workshop with Craig Bloxsome provided valuable information about training staff in shows and how to keep them engaged within their roles.

Attending ASTEN was a great benefit to me. I had the opportunity to network with people from many different organisations and created valuable connections to help support and provide advice on the different aspects of my role. I feel that it provided me new ideas and new ways to tackle problems that I have been having with different aspects of my roles. I can now set myself clear goals in what I hope to achieve, and with the information provided by the talks and workshops and the connections that I have made, I have the confidence to effectively implement these new ideas and programs. I hope this will help to continue to grow the Wollongong Science Centre and Planetarium and expand on our current programs.

Thank you to ASTEN for awarding me the fellowship to attend such a wonderful conference and to Scitech for their hospitality. This was a very rewarding experience.

Amanda Kruger – Supervisor – Wollongong Science Centre and Planetarium.