

The Journal

Winter 2022



**Article from The Journal
on the one-day IST Conference 2022**

Written by Joan Ward, MBA FIScT

IST Technical Conference 2022

14th September 2022 - Spring Lane Building, University of York

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Key Theme: Teams behind the Scenes

On 14th September 2022, delegates arrived from across the country to attend the IST Annual Technical Conference at the fantastic facilities provided by in the University of York's Teaching Building on Spring Lane. We were especially delighted to be able to meet with our delegates in our first face-2-face Conference since the pandemic, and it proved to be as enjoyable and inspiring as we had hoped.

The facilities at the venue were excellent and the staff and volunteer support were extremely helpful in directing attendees around the venue and out to visits to nearby University of York facilities. We were joined on the day by arrange of sponsors and exhibitors who all played a key role at the event, and who our delegates enjoyed interacting with.

After everyone had arrived, **IST Chair, Terry Croft MBE** made a prompt start and welcomed everyone to the Conference and after holding a one-minute's silence in memory of Queen Elizabeth II, introduced our Chair for the day, our **President, Dr Helen Sharman, CMG OBE**. Helen then formally opened the Conference and introduced Professor Charlie Jeffery, Vice Chancellor of the University of York, who welcomed delegates to York, voiced his appreciation of the contribution of technical community and hoped everyone enjoyed their visit to York. Helen then introduced the first **Keynote Speaker, Dr Hannah Roberts**. Her fascinating talk "**The Psychology of Selves: Beyond Imposter Syndrome**" received consistently positive feedback following the Conference:

"Very interesting and insightful. I will be applying knowledge from this in my daily life, both in and out of work."

"One of the best talks I've attended, very useful self help tips to take home."

Following Hannah's keynote talk, there was a short break and then delegates split up for the first session of workshops. The themes for the day, were:

- o **Career development**
- o **Arts & media technologies**
- o **Health and safety**
- o **Digital skills & AI**
- o **Environment & sustainability**

The workshops and demonstrations available in the first session were:

Workshops:

1. Science Museum: The Technicians Gallery - Kara McLoughlin and the Science Museum Team
2. Digital skills - Introducing Python for non-specialists - Richard Saldanha, Kanupriya Bhargava & Andrew Blance (IST AI Group)
3. Enhancing Student Employability Using Live Briefs - Evan Wilson and Sam Heitzman (MMU)
4. Enhancing H&S Management using Technology - Rachael Peters (MMU)
5. Cryogenic storage and the safe use of cryogenic fluids - Bob Wiltshire (Cryo Storage Solutions)

Demos:

1. Film: Easy when you know how - Erik Olafsen, (University of York)
2. Mechanical Research Workshop – Mark Bentley (University of York)

A few of the comments made about the above sessions are below:

“Really interesting to hear about the Technicians Gallery at the Science Museum- seems really well thought out.”

“Really interesting and forward thinking, a new chapter for the role of technicians in enhancing student employability and independence.”

“Interesting, its not just knowing which button to press its the knowledge and creativity that technicians have - this applies across the range of types of technician, arts, science etc. :-)”

“This was a fantastic session, great to see the technician presenting what they work with.”

The workshops and demonstrations available in the 2nd session were:

Workshops:

1. Becoming a STEM Ambassador and how it could help your career - Chris Snowden-Smith (STEM Ambassador Hub Manager)
2. Supporting sustainability and the key role of technical staff - Racheal Peters, Robert Crapnell, and Clare Dean, (MMU)
3. Women in Tech Network Group Update - Marie Oldfield, Margaret Ross and Joan Ward, (IST Women in Tech Group)
4. The OpenSTEM Labs: An internet of laboratory things – James Smith (open University)
5. The asset resale service for universities. Case studies of laboratory equipment resale from University of York and other universities. - Michael McLeod (UniGreenScheme)

Demos:

1. Measure the speed of light - Andy Firth (University of York)
2. Deliver Clearer Results Through Accessibility - Richard Hagan (University of York)
3. Green Impact and the Sustainable Laboratory - Rebecca Sutton & Dave Hay (University of York)

A few of the comments made about the above sessions are below:

“The speaker was extremely engaging and gave a lot of great information during the session. It made the topic approachable and was very inspiring.”

“Good to listen to three different technicians from three different STEM background and their contribution towards supporting sustainability.”

“I hadn't heard of the openSTEM labs prior to the talk. The talk itself was very interesting and the interactive elements were enjoyable. I could see how 'digital experiments' could be utilized more in our own labs and STEM engagement activities.”

“Interesting to hear about how easy it is to have old equipment sold on, given the volume of redundant and no longer used equipment lying around universities.”

Following the morning sessions, the break for lunch provided everyone with a chance to catch a breath and do some networking, meet the exhibitors and prepare for a busy afternoon.

After lunch some delegates chose to take tours of the various facilities around the University of York Campus:

Music Facility - Ben Eyes (University of York)

Engineering Manufacturing Facility - Andy White (University of York)

Horticulture Research Facility – Jason Daff (University of York)

Institute for Safe Autonomy - James Hilder (University of York)

A couple of the comments made about the above tours are below:

“The technician leading this was very knowledgeable and engaging.”

“Despite not being fully open and set up yet, the facility was extremely interesting and the tour guide was very approachable.”

Those delegates who were not attending the facilities tours gathered in the theatre for the **2nd Keynote** of the day and Helen welcomed everyone back from lunch and **Michele Fisher** for her talk **“From Lab to Leadership”**. Michelle’s career journey was very well received, as reflected in the comments below:

“Was a very interesting talk, she was a very engaging speaker.”

“As an earlier career technician, this talk resonated with me due to similarities in beginning of their journey. It highlighted potential routes that I could take. As well as putting me at ease that not having a idea, plan or path already in mind is ok.”

Following Michelle’s excellent talk, Terry and Helen were delighted in being able to announce some awards, including **5 new IST Fellows**, and these included **Julia Barkans** (Open University), **Jan Brett** (University of Liverpool), **Melissa Sterry** (Bioratorium Limited), **Gillian Riddell** (Queens University Belfast) and **Simon Breeden** (University of York). We were very pleased that both Gillian and Simon were able to attend the Conference to receive their Fellowships.

In addition to the Fellowships Terry announced the winner and commendations from our **Image Competition** for which the theme was “Teams behind the Scenes”. The winner of the image competition was **Morgan Shaw**, a Research Technician at Newcastle University, and her photo depicted her colleague Nicola Dyson, a Research Technician in the Newcastle University’s Transplant Regenerative Labs.

Other images commended were from **Joanna Scamp**, a Facilities and Operations Technician came second place with the pencil drawing, *Unsung Heroes*, which depicted Antonio Mendoza, an Electronics Technician at the University of University of Kent. Also, **Paula Boeira**, a Research Technician at the Hepatology Research Group, University of Plymouth, for her photo submission of technician Helge Mruck collecting liver cells from liquid nitrogen.

Once all the awards had been dealt with Terry and Helen thanked the delegates for joining us for the day and wished everyone a safe journey home when the final sessions had finished.

It was time again to have a short break prior to splitting up into the workshop groups for the final session. Delegates having attended the external tours rejoined the delegates and enjoyed a little more networking and visits to our sponsors and exhibitors stands before dropping into the final workshops of the day.

The workshops and demonstrations available in the 3rd session were:

Workshops:

1. Unlock the Technician survey data and discover Educational Development for Technical Staff at HEaTED - Sarah Baggely & Jared Carnie (NTDC)
2. Professional Registration - whats in it for me? – Michelle Jackson and Laurence Dawkins-Hall (IST)
3. Introducing the IST’s Artificial Intelligence Special Interest Group - Alicia Colson, Murray McMonies, Marie Oldfield, Murray Webster, Andrew Blance & Richard Saldanha (IST’s AI Group)
4. Laboratory Plastic & Sharp Bin Recycling Schemes – James Fox (University of York)
5. Lab planning & design: putting safety first? - Catherine Davidge (University of Manchester)
6. How To Be Transferable – John-Paul Ashton-Kinlin (Pro Vital Medical Services Ltd)

Demo:

1. Spinner construction lab – Andy White (University of York)

A few of the comments made about the above sessions are below:

“I am now going to look into professional registration”

“It is great to see techs being recognised and the growing number of courses we can attend”
“Very informative, inspired me to see what recycling options could be implemented in my work”

“We are always told that technicians have transferable skills, but this talk opened my eyes as to using those skills to look into furthering my career”

The final workshop/demo session completed, the bulk of our delegates headed for home, tired, but hopefully inspired by the day’s activities. At this point the IST was proud to be able to host an extra event in collaboration with **UKRI-Research England and MI TALENT** as they joined us in York to launch their report **“Research Culture: A Technician Lens”**. The project and report aimed to provide greater understanding of research culture from the perspective of technicians as key research enablers and teachers. We were joined by representatives from key stakeholder organisations.

The IST Executive certainly enjoyed the day and took away lots of ideas for 2023! We would like to say a sincere thanks to all the delegates that joined us for the day, the Conference planning team who developed the day's programme, Keynote speakers, workshop/demo presenters and the University of York. We would also like to say a special thank you to our **Key Sponsors, UniGreenScheme** and **CryoStorage Solutions** and our exhibitors and career zone supporters. The Conference would not happen without every single person who supported this year's event, and we hope to see you all in 2023.

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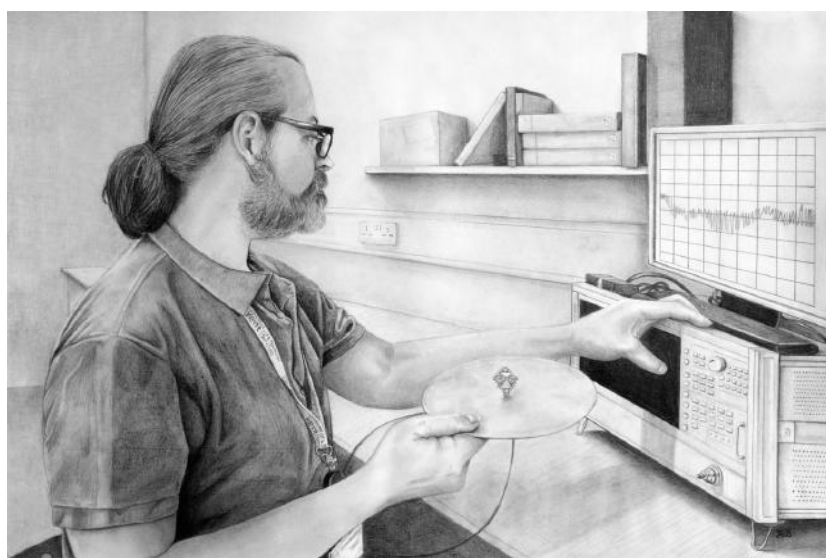
Exhibitors



Career Zone Supporters



Image Competition Commendations



By Joanna Scamp



By Paula Boeira



Image Competition Winner

Morgan Shaw, a Research Technician at Newcastle University, and her photo depicted her colleague Nicola Dyson, a Research Technician in the Newcastle University's Transplant Regenerative Labs.

Article written by IST Deputy Chair, Joan Ward , MBA FIScT



Having started her career as a trainee technician at the University of Manchester, with minimal science qualifications, Joan worked in a number of roles in their bioscience labs whilst gaining additional qualifications in science subjects up to degree level (Open University). Following on from her basic grounding in teaching/research she then spent 10 years as a Lab Superintendent/Manager, during which time she secured (over a number of years) approaching £1m in grant income to support the development of trainee technician programmes (in collaboration with a local FE College). In addition she also helped develop and roll-out a bespoke software package designed to handle HE departmental/faculty accounts and research grants – the software ultimately becoming adopted by over 400 departments across the country/HE sector. As a consequence of departmental/faculty restructuring she then moved into a Finance/Admin role where she set up a new faculty finance, purchasing and research administration unit – also completing an MBA (Open University) during this time.

After spending several years consolidating the new integrated finance/research grants unit, and helping to roll-out the model to other faculties, she decided to take advantage of a University early retirement scheme (having over 30 years University service) and 'jumped ship' to set up her own consultancy company, which she continues to run today. Her company provides consultancy support for admin systems development and website design/development.

Having joined the IST during her time as Lab Manager she continues to support the work of the Institute as Finance Officer, Deputy Chair and Administrator. Within her roles within the IST Joan was part of the team that obtained funding for, and facilitated the setup of HEaTED. She was also heavily involved in the IST team that gained a Science Council Licence for the award of CSci, RSci and RSciTech registration. Joan has a strong commitment to the development of technical staff career opportunities and the enhancement of the professionalisation of the technical community, and this is exemplified in her support for a variety of initiatives that work towards those aims. She is currently a Trustee on the Board of the Science Council and also on the Board of Trustees of the National Technician's Development Centre

IST Conference 2022 Photos

Photography - engaging speakers and networking with exhibitors



Photography - engaging speakers and networking with exhibitors



Credit: Alex Holland, University of York