

IST

TECHNICAL CONFERENCE



THE IST'S HALL OF KEYNOTES 10 YEARS OF INSPIRATIONAL VOICES

From 2015 - 2025, the IST One-Day Technical Conference has gone from strength to strength inviting thousands of delegates from the technical workforce. We have been very fortunate to invite a fantastic range of speakers to deliver keynote plenary talks. To thank and celebrate their contributions, we have created the IST's version of the 'Hall of Fame'.

www.istonline.org.uk/conference-archive

IST HALL OF KEYNOTES

BEFORE YOU MEET THE SPEAKERS

Twenty-Five Voices. One Shared Purpose.

Over the past decade, twenty-five keynote speakers have taken to the IST Technical Conference stage in-front of thousands of technical professionals.

They have come from higher education, industry, science, technology, creative practice, leadership, artificial intelligence and professional development. Some have been technicians themselves. Others have worked alongside technicians throughout their careers.

What unites them is a recognition that technical professionals are fundamental to innovation, discovery, learning and organisational success.

For many delegates, these keynotes have provided more than inspiration. They have offered validation.

- Validation that technical expertise matters.
- Validation that technical careers can lead to leadership.
- Validation that the work technicians do every day deserves visibility, recognition and celebration.

The speakers featured in this Hall of Keynotes represent more than individual achievements. Together, they tell the story of a profession that has become increasingly confident in its voice, influence and impact.

Nearly half of our keynote speakers have been technicians or former technicians themselves. Many others have openly credited technicians as essential partners in their own success.

Their stories remind us that technical excellence is not confined to laboratories, workshops, studios, performance spaces or specialist facilities. It shapes research, teaching, creativity, innovation and societal progress.

The pages that follow celebrate the individuals who have helped champion that message.

But they also celebrate the thousands of technicians whose expertise, dedication and professionalism continue to make that message true.

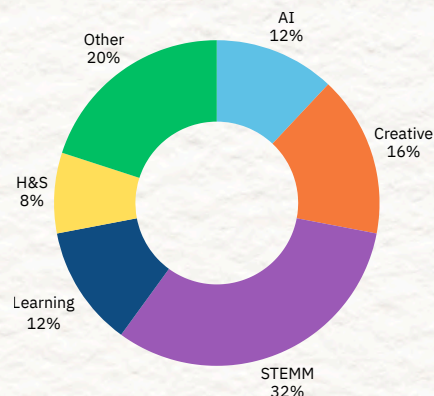
Welcome to the IST Hall of Conference Keynotes.



A Conference Stage Shared by Technicians and Their Champions



Keynote Topics: A Decade of Impact



Consistently High Delegate Satisfaction Rating



1,000's

of Technical Professionals engaged across UK-Wide Conference locations

Together, these figures tell the story of a conference that has championed representation, sparked important conversations, connected technical professionals across the UK and consistently delivered an outstanding delegate experience.

IST HALL OF KEYNOTES

DR. RAJ PERSAUD



2025 Keynote Talk: Workplace survival skills or managing your manager because adulting is hard

Scientific and technical careers are driven by curiosity and innovation, but they can also be demanding and high-pressure. As a consultant psychiatrist supporting professionals in complex environments, Dr Persaud shared essential workplace survival skills. This session offered practical psychological tools to build resilience, protect wellbeing, and sustain a fulfilling, long-term career in science and technology.

PROF. TRACY HARWOOD



2025 Keynote Talk: Navigating the Inflection Point: Creativity, AI and the Future of Innovation

Technology is at a pivotal moment, shaped by artificial intelligence, creative computing, and rapid innovation. Professor Harwood explored how professionals can lead through disruption with adaptability, ethical awareness, and collaboration. Using real-world examples, Tracy highlighted the skills and mindsets needed to navigate change confidently and thrive in an AI-driven future.

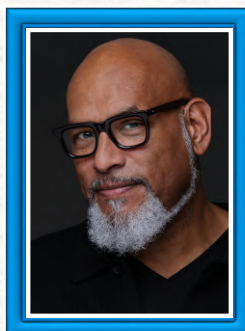
PROF. KIT WINDOWS-YULE



2025 Keynote Talk: Artificial Intelligence: the Good, the Bad, and the Grey Area

AI is now embedded across academia and industry, yet its link with sustainability is complex. Drawing on experience as a researcher, advisor, ethics reviewer, and start-up founder, Professor Windows-Yule shared lessons from AI adoption across sectors. This session explored AI at its best and worst, offering practical insights for responsible implementation.

PROF. JOHN AMAECHI OBE



2024 Keynote Talk: Professional Registration - What's in it for me?

This inspiring session explored the power of professional development and how investing in your skills can unlock new opportunities, greater satisfaction, and increased earning potential. Professor Amaechi shared practical strategies for continuous learning, effective networking, and staying competitive in a fast-moving tech landscape. Delegates gained tools to strengthen their expertise, build confidence, and shape a successful future.

JESSICA FISHER



2024 Keynote Panel: Technical Careers Discussion: From Apprentice to Leadership, and everything in between

Jess is a Chemical Engineering Technician at Lancaster University who started her career in an Apprenticeship. Brand new, this keynote technical panel featured professionals from apprentices to heads of discipline. Panellists shared insights from their varied career journeys across technical, specialist, and leadership roles. Attendees asked questions, gained practical advice, and explored potential pathways within the technical profession.

PAOLA FOULKES



2024 Keynote Panel: Technical Careers Discussion: From Apprentice to Leadership, and everything in between

Paola Foulkes is a Laboratory Technician at Cardiff University. Brand new, this keynote technical panel featured professionals from apprentices to heads of discipline. Panellists shared insights from their varied career journeys across technical, specialist, and leadership roles. Attendees asked questions, gained practical advice, and explored potential pathways within the technical profession.

IST HALL OF KEYNOTES

ANNETTE RYAN



2024 Keynote Panel:

Technical Careers Discussion: From Apprentice to Leadership, and everything in between

Annette Ryan is a Senior Technician and Safety Officer at Lancaster University. Brand new, this keynote technical panel featured professionals from apprentices to heads of discipline. Panellists shared insights from their varied career journeys across technical, specialist, and leadership roles. Attendees asked questions, gained practical advice, and explored potential pathways within the technical profession.

RICHARD KEOGAN



2024 Keynote Panel:

Technical Careers Discussion: From Apprentice to Leadership, and everything in between

Richard Keogan is a Technical Specialist and Associate Lecturer at the University of York. Brand new, this keynote technical panel featured professionals from apprentices to heads of discipline. Panellists shared insights from their varied career journeys across technical, specialist, and leadership roles. Attendees asked questions, gained practical advice, and explored potential pathways within the technical profession.

NATALIE KENNERLEY



2024 Keynote Panel:

Technical Careers Discussion: From Apprentice to Leadership, and everything in between

Natalie Kennerley is Technical Services Development Manager at Manchester Metropolitan University and former Director of NTDC. Brand new, this keynote technical panel featured professionals from apprentices to heads of discipline. Panellists shared insights from their varied career journeys across technical, specialist, and leadership roles. Attendees asked questions, gained practical advice, and explored potential pathways within the technical profession.

DAN FOWER



2024 Keynote Panel:

Technical Careers Discussion: From Apprentice to Leadership, and everything in between

Dan Fower is Head of e-Lab at OrganOX Ltd. Brand new, this keynote technical panel featured professionals from apprentices to heads of discipline. Panellists shared insights from their varied career journeys across technical, specialist, and leadership roles. Attendees asked questions, gained practical advice, and explored potential pathways within the technical profession.

DR. KELLY VERE MBE



2023 Keynote Talk:

Transforming the Technical Profession: Shifting Narratives and Building a Positive Culture

This talk explored the evolution of the technical profession in the UK, addressing historic challenges and growing recognition of technical expertise. It highlighted initiatives such as the Technician Commitment and TALENT programme. The session also looked ahead, focusing on inclusivity, professional recognition, and future initiatives designed to strengthen and elevate technical careers.

PROF. DAVID PHOENIX OBE



2023 Keynote Talk:

Post 16 Technical education and the need for sector differentiation (FE - HE technical universities)

England's "skills system" often operates in silos, limiting opportunity and efficiency. While traditional education routes are well defined, distinctive technical pathways remain underdeveloped. Professor Phoenix highlighted the need for clearer sector differentiation and genuine progression routes from secondary to higher education. This keynote explored how strong technical pathways can meet lifelong learning needs and support the future workforce.

IST HALL OF KEYNOTES

DR. HANNAH ROBERTS



2022 Keynote Talk: **The Psychology of Selves: Beyond Imposter Syndrome**

Dr Roberts is a career coach and professional skills trainer working globally. Host of the Women in STEM Career & Confidence podcast, she supports purposeful career planning, networking, and leadership development. With experience spanning academia, industry, and start-up creation, Hannah brought her expertise in online presence and inclusive leadership to the delegates, helping professionals build confident, strategic careers.

MICHELE FISHER



2022 Keynote Talk: **From the Laboratory to Leadership: A Personal Perspective**

In From Lab to Leadership, Michele shared her journey from laboratory technician and microbiologist to health and safety leader. Drawing on experience across scientific research, higher education, and government, she explored how technical expertise can support career progression, leadership, and innovation. This session highlighted the challenges, achievements, and lessons learned throughout her career, offering insights into building a successful professional pathway.

DENISE MCCLEAN



2021 Keynote Talk: **Why EDI and Belonging are Important Factors For Sustainability within the Technical Community**

This session explored the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion within the technical workforce. Denise examined the barriers technical professionals may face and highlighted practical steps institutions can take to create more inclusive, supportive environments. Focusing on culture and opportunity, the talk emphasised how diverse technical teams strengthen innovation, performance, and long-term sector sustainability.

PROF. ANTHONY J RYAN OBE



2020 Keynote Talk: **How Scientists and Refugees Have Turned the Desert Green**

Scientists and refugees transformed two challenges into one humanitarian solution. In Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, poor soil, water restrictions, and rules against planting made growing food difficult, while unrecyclable polyurethane mattresses created hidden waste. By repurposing mattress foam to support plant growth, they helped turn desert conditions into opportunity. The project demonstrated how technical expertise, collaboration, and creative thinking can deliver sustainable, community-led solutions.

DR. HELEN SHARMAN CMG OBE



2019 Keynote Talk: **Technical Lessons from Astronaut Training**

Dr Helen Sharman explored how astronauts train, combining formal preparation with informal lessons that shape recruits into effective team players, communicators, and collaborators. These highly skilled "space technicians" are recognised worldwide for their technical expertise and practical capability. This session considered how technicians in other sectors can develop comparable skills, build strong professional identities, and gain the recognition they deserve.

PROF. ALBERTO VECCHIO



2019 Keynote Talk: **How to Discover Black Holes with a (Pretty Damn Good) Ruler**

In the 1970s, scientists set out to build instruments sensitive enough to test Einstein's prediction of gravitational waves. After decades of global collaboration, Advanced LIGO made the first detection in 2015. This breakthrough launched gravitational-wave astronomy, revealing black hole mergers and neutron star collisions. This talk explored a powerful new way to explore the most extreme events in the Universe.

iST HALL OF KEYNOTES

DR. KIANOUSH NAZAPOUR



2018 Keynote Talk: Star Wars, Terminator, Bionic Hands - Science Fiction or Reality?

Kia explored the world of bionic hands, brain-computer interfaces, and artificial intelligence. Once the realm of science fiction, these technologies are now transforming lives through advanced prosthetics and intelligent systems. Blending innovation with real-world application, the talk demonstrated how emerging technologies are reshaping human capability, inspiring the audience with a glimpse of a future that is already becoming reality.

PROF. SIR DOUG TURNBULL



2018 Keynote Talk: Diseases affecting the small circle of life

Sir Doug Turnbull spoke about mitochondrial disease, a complex and often devastating inherited condition affecting energy production in cells. He explained the scientific foundations of mitochondrial research and the impact of these disorders on families. While known for pioneering mitochondrial donation techniques, his talk focused on the science behind the disease, the hope offered by research advances, and the vital role of technical expertise in driving medical breakthroughs.

DR. TURI KING



2017 Keynote Talk: The King's DNA Analysis in the Richard III Identification Project

Turi King described the search for Richard III as a "historical missing persons case." She explained how DNA analysis, combined with archaeological and forensic evidence, confirmed the king's identity, with vital support from skilled technicians. Blending science, history, and storytelling, she revealed the twists and turns behind the discovery, highlighting the essential technical expertise that underpinned one of the most remarkable identifications of modern times.

PROF. ANU OJHA OBE



2017 Keynote Talk: Space, What's the Point?

Opening with the provocative question, "Space, what's the point?", Anu Ojha challenged the audience to reconsider the value of space exploration. Drawing on his leadership within the UK space sector, he demonstrated how satellite technology deepens our understanding of Earth. From monitoring climate change to supporting a growing global population, the talk showed how space science not only expands our horizons outward, but helps us better protect our own "pale blue dot."

PROF. MALCOLM PRESS



2016 Keynote Talk: Technicians for the 21st Century

Professor Press highlighted the vital contribution technicians make to both teaching and research in modern universities. He reflected on the breadth and impact of their work across disciplines and institutions.

Emphasising adaptability and evolving expertise, the talk recognised technicians as essential partners in innovation, learning, and discovery in the 21st century.

PROF. VANESSA TOULMIN



2015 Keynote Talk: All You Have To Do is Turn Up - The Importance of Technical Support in Public Engagement

Professor Toulmin delivered a talk on the importance of technical support in successful public engagement. Drawing on examples (Festival of the Mind), she demonstrated how events rely on skilled technical teams. Often working behind the scenes, technical staff combine creativity and expertise to deliver safe, immersive, and memorable experiences, ensuring public programmes achieve meaningful impact.

IST HALL OF KEYNOTES

ROGER DAINTY MBE



2015 Keynote Talk:

From a Molecular Biology Technician to Leading the Largest Stem Cell Repository in the UK

Roger shared a compelling account of his journey from molecular biology technician to leading one of the UK's largest stem cell repositories. He challenged the belief that moving from academia to industry is difficult, highlighting the transferable skills technicians already possess. Through real-world examples of stem cell therapies and business success, he illustrated how technical careers can evolve in unexpected and rewarding directions.

In Memoriam

Roger Dainty MBE, FIScT

1946 – 2017

As we celebrate a decade of keynote speakers and technical leadership, it is fitting to remember one of the individuals who helped shape both our profession and our community.

Roger Dainty MBE, FIScT was one of the IST Conference's earliest keynote speakers, an IST Fellow, and a tireless advocate for the recognition and advancement of technical professionals. Throughout a distinguished career spanning more than five decades, Roger exemplified the values of technical excellence, lifelong learning and professional service.

Beginning his career as a Junior Technician at the University of Birmingham in 1962, Roger developed an extraordinary breadth of technical expertise through continuous professional development, practical innovation and leadership. His career culminated in his appointment as UK Managing Director of Future Health Technologies, where he led the organisation to achieve the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2010.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to scientific research and training, Roger was awarded an MBE in the 2012 New Year Honours. His citation recognised his exemplary service, innovation, entrepreneurship and commitment to advancing scientific and technical practice.

Roger believed passionately in the value of technicians and their contribution to society. Long before technician recognition became a national conversation, he championed the profession and inspired others to pursue excellence in their own careers. He demonstrated that technical expertise, combined with determination and lifelong learning, could create opportunities not only for individuals but for institutions, industries and communities.

His influence continues to be felt throughout the Institute and the wider technical community. In honour of his contribution, the IST's Conference Best Poster Award proudly bears his name, ensuring that future generations of technicians continue to be inspired by his example.

Roger was more than an accomplished technician, leader and innovator. He was a colleague, mentor and friend whose warmth, humour and generosity touched countless lives.

As we reflect on the voices that have shaped the IST Conference, we remember Roger Dainty with gratitude, admiration and affection. His legacy lives on in every technician who continues to learn, innovate, collaborate and make things happen.

"Technicians make it happen."

Few people embodied that sentiment more completely than Roger Dainty.

Twenty-five keynote speakers. A decade of ideas, innovation and inspiration.

Together, they have helped transform the conversation around technical professionals, demonstrating the expertise, leadership and impact that technicians bring to every field they touch. Their stories represent more than individual achievement; they reflect the growth of a profession that is increasingly visible, valued and influential across higher education, industry and society.

This Hall of Conference Keynotes document is not simply a record of those who have taken to the stage. It is a celebration of a community whose knowledge, creativity and dedication continue to drive discovery, learning and innovation. It is a testament to the technicians who solve complex problems, enable world-changing research, support outstanding student experiences and help turn ambitious ideas into reality.

Across the past decade, these keynote speakers have challenged assumptions, shared lessons, inspired confidence and championed the importance of technical expertise. In doing so, they have helped shape not only a conference, but a stronger and more connected professional community.

As we close this chapter, one thing remains certain: the future will continue to be shaped by technicians, and their voices will continue to inspire, impact, influence and empower the generations that follow. The next decade of the IST Conference story is waiting to be written.

IST

TECHNICAL CONFERENCE

THE IST HALL OF KEYNOTES

www.istonline.org.uk/conference-archive

