

Forbidden Planets: Workshops on Habitability

IATL Pedagogic Intervention Grant Report

Introduction

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Habitability aims to introduce the concept of habitability, both in the sciences and across the arts, to students throughout the university. In this grant we targeted postgrad taught and research students with a program of seminars related to Habitability, a competition open to all students, and an interview with the science fiction author Alastair Reynolds. The IATL grant IL1533 enabled us to better advertise and develop these programs, and encouraged participation in the competition through providing prize vouchers for the winners.

Outcomes

Three key events were hosted. The first of these was an open seminar and discussion led by Chloe Pugh (a PGR student in Physics) on “Space Weather: Impact on Habitability”. This was followed by a seminar led by Hendrik Schaefer from Life Sciences on “Microorganisms, atmospheric trace gases and planetary habitability”. Finally we held a competition, “Concepts of Habitability” in June, where students could submit entries in any media relating to habitability. Several high quality entries were received, with judging performed by an interdisciplinary panel of staff and students. The winner is pictured below: yeast creating and then destroying its own environment during the fermentation process. We also established a connection with the science fiction writer Alastair Reynolds, holding an interview between Jonathan Heron of IATL and the author. This connection, and the students engaged during these events form a core that can be built on in future to develop our reach and impact with new and expanded projects.

Resources

Winning entries to the competition:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/physics/research/astro/ich/competition/>

Alastair Reynolds Interview

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/physics/research/astro/ich/roundtable/interview/>

