

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the APR07 Meeting of
The American Physical Society

Bringing Science to the Public through City-wide Science Festivals and Street Fairs/Supported in part by the National Science Foundation and the Lounsbery Foundation¹
BRIAN SCHWARTZ, The Graduate Center of CUNY

Many organizations make an effort to reach the general public and children in the area of science understanding and appreciation. These include museums, universities, professional societies, government agencies, corporations and television networks. When studies are made of the composition of the audiences for many of these outreach programs one finds a great overlap. For example, those who like to go to science museums often enjoy viewing NOVA programs. The challenge is to bring Science to the People in places, times and venues not usual associated with science. For the past six years the Science & the Arts program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York has made use of the performing arts to bring science to old and new audiences. See <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/sciart>. While this program has been effective, we have tried additional approaches in new modes and novel sites. In this paper we relate our experience with a citywide science festival, which we operated in New York City in November 2006. This idea was based on the science festival held in Atlanta in conjunction with the APS Centennial in 1999. We will review the history, effectiveness and various styles of Science Festivals in the United States and worldwide. In an even more adventurous outreach effort, in June 2006 our program rented booths at a conventional New York City weekend street fair, offering hands-on science experiences amidst the typical street fair food and wares. Adults and children were delighted to find science in this setting and welcomed the fact that they could get science with their tasty kielbasa sandwiches as well as a bargain on tube sox. Their responses were documented in a video. We will present parts of this video and offer suggestions for adapting this project to other locations

¹Supported in part by the National Science Foundation and the Lounsbery Foundation