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## University experts wow crowds with their creativity at Maker Faire UK

Northumbria's students and staff have been awarded for their innovation at this year's spectacular Maker Faire UK exhibition at the Centre for Life.

More than 10,000 visitors attended the two-day celebration of DIY invention across science, engineering, art, performance and craft, featuring professional and amateur 'makers' from around the world. The attractions included robotic dinosaurs, daleks and much more in a huge range of interactive displays, with headliners EepyBird performing a live version of their famous 'Extreme Diet Coke and Mentos experiment' in Times Square with spraying geysers of cola

25ft into the air.

Among the 'makers' were staff and students from across Northumbria, who helped bring their research and academic excellence to life with a range of interactive displays. This year's Maker Faire UK was also the first to feature Northumbria's £3m+ Think Physics project, an initiative led by the University to encourage more young people, especially girls and under-represented groups, to consider studying STEM subjects by opening their minds to science from Early Years onwards.

Think Physics enjoyed an award-winning debut at the event after being awarded a Maker of Merit ribbon for creating one of the best and most innovative exhibits with its Light Box wall.

Think Physics Director, Dr Carol Davenport, said: "The Think Physics team were absolutely delighted with our first appearance at Maker Faire UK. Our two installations provoked wonder and sparked conversations.

"We're particularly pleased that our light box wall was awarded a Maker of Merit ribbon by the organisers. The wall was an ever-changing sculpture of light and shadow created by visitors, young and old, to the show, and was always busy with making – encompassing the spirit of both Think Physics and Maker Faire UK."

Northumbria's ongoing support for this family friendly weekend of invention and creativity further demonstrates the University's commitment to driving world-class research and teaching across STEM disciplines following the launch of Think Physics and its co-funded £6.7 million investment in new STEM facilities.

Lucy Winskell OBE, Northumbria's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and Engagement, said: "Northumbria University supports Maker Faire UK because it makes a difference and helps inspire young people to have a go and see what they can do. That's exactly what we need if we want to plug the skills gap and address the gender imbalance in STEM. It is vitally important we encourage the next generation to see the exciting range of careers available to them in this area."

Staff from Engineering and Environment and Health and Life Sciences

courses also had stands at the event. These included exhibits from Northumbria's Physics and Electrical Engineering department led by Head of Department Dr Richard Binns. He said: "The department provided a stand at the event as a way of promoting some aspects of electrical and electronic engineering. We highlighted the John Adams hot wires kits of basic electronics which attracted many children to the stand with the motor experiments sending spinning disks flying off into the venue. It quickly became a game of how high they could be propelled and how the circuit could be modified to have more power.

"A simple robot was also on show based on Lego Mindstorms and we had a number of exhibits from our final year students demonstrating their project work which proved exciting, especially as the students could then help and play with the kits themselves. Projects from students included a Telepresence Robot inspired by The Big Bang Theory, a Camera Hyperlasing rig, and a Potentiometer test system for use in industry. We also had a number of research demonstrations based on visible light communications. We're already looking forward to next year's event."

Northumbria offers a range of courses across the STEM disciplines. To find out more, register for Northumbria's Open Days on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 June at [www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday)

*Banner image courtesy of EepyBird.com*

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