

A group of academics chosen as 'New Generation Thinkers' in a recent BBC competition will begin to air their research on *Night Waves* (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tp43>), a BBC 3 radio show from Wednesday night. The winners, who include LSE's Dr Jon Adams, will broadcast on the station's flagship arts and ideas programme following a competitive application and audition process which saw the BBC and AHRC whittle down the applicants from 1060 to a final 10.

Five-minute presentations by each academic on their research topics have already been broadcast on air and some of the final ten will be invited to develop longer pieces for the radio show. Radio 3's Head of Speech, Matthew Dodd, told the THE (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=417353&c=1>) that the ambitions underlying the competition were quite humble; programme makers were simply looking to unearth more academic contributors.

"Public communication [in academia] is becoming valued and cherished in a way it was not before", said Zoe Norridge, a lecturer in modern and contemporary literature at the University of York. She believes that views of public engagement are partly changing because of the increased focus on impact and said that she was attracted to the competition by the opportunity to use the "intimacy" of radio to "communicate complex ideas in terms somebody washing up on a Wednesday evening can grasp and that make them want to hear more."

David Petts, lecturer in archaeology at Durham University, said that he was, in part, motivated to enter the competition by the impact agenda, although he recognised that it would be difficult to measure the impact of increasing the public's historical understanding through his broadcasts.

"The BBC can tell us listener numbers, but were they tuning in to listen to me or to Arianna Huffington?"

Academics also have a role in making people "stop and think about the world they are in", urged Philip Roscoe, lecturer in management at the University of St Andrews. "It is liberating that we are able to do this kind of thing and potentially gain house points for doing it successfully," he added.

The AHRC has responded to the unexpected volume of applicants by organizing eight day-long workshops in broadcast media for those interested in improving their broadcast skills. While the AHRC and BBC hope to run the competition again next year, Jake Gilmore, AHRC communications manager, is optimistic that other research councils will consider running similar schemes aimed at academics across other disciplines.

*A more detailed article, 'Turn on, tune in and make waves' (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=417353&c=1>), was originally printed in the THE on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> September.*

*Read Dr Jon Adams on how to measure thoughts and thinkers (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/08/19/measuring-thoughts-thinkers/>), and the need for universities to preserve disciplinary autonomy in the face of impact assessments (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/08/30/opposition-impact-criteria/>).*

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