

# Science Media Centre

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The **Science Media Centre** is an organisation which formed in 2002,<sup>[3]</sup> two years after the United Kingdom House of Lords Select committee on Science and Technology's third report on "Science and Society" in 2000.<sup>[4]</sup>

This report stated that while science was generally reported accurately in the mass media, there was a need for the promotion of more expert information at times when science is under attack in the headlines, mentioning the public reaction to GM crops, in particular.

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## Science Media Centre

<b>Abbreviation</b>	SMC
<b>Formation</b>	2000
<b>Legal status</b>	<u>Non-profit organization</u>
<b>Purpose</b>	Science and society in the UK
<b>Location</b>	<u>Wellcome Trust</u> , 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE
<b>Region served</b>	UK
<b>Membership</b>	60 science organisations
<b>Director</b>	<u>Fiona Fox</u> <sup>[1][2]</sup>
<b>Website</b>	<u>http://www.sciencemediacentre.org</u>

## Functions

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In order to promote more informed science in the media, the centre's main function is as a service to journalists, providing background briefings on current scientific issues and facilitating interviews with scientists. Its director is Fiona Fox who is a former member of the Revolutionary Communist Party and a former contributor to its magazine Living Marxism.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Aims

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The SMC's stated aim is to "facilitate more scientists to engage with the media, in the hope that the public will have improved access to accurate, evidence-based scientific information about the stories of the day".

## Structure

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The setting up of the Science Media Centre was assisted by Susan Greenfield, the director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain. While the centre is still based in a specially refurbished wing of the Royal Institution, full independence is claimed from all funders and supporters.

The Science Media Centre is funded by over 60 organisations, with individual donations capped at £12,500 per annum. The SMC receives sponsorship from a range of funders including media organisations, universities, scientific and learned societies, the UK Research Councils, government bodies, Quangos, charities, private donors and corporate bodies. For an up-to-date list of funders, see [1] (<https://www.sciencemediacentre.org/about-us/funding/>).

## Criticism

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A 2013 article in *Nature* stated about the SMC, "Perhaps the biggest criticism of Fox and the SMC is that they push science too aggressively – acting more as a PR agency than as a source of accurate science information."<sup>[6]</sup>

In 2002, Ronan Bennett and Alan Rusbridger described the SMC as a lobby group.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Other SMCs

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During Professor Greenfield's term as Thinker in Residence in South Australia, a new Australian Science Media Centre was set up in Adelaide, Australia in August 2005.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

Science Media Centres exist in other countries such as Japan;<sup>[1]</sup> except for the relation between the Science Media Centre in UK and the Australian Science Media Centre, these centres are independent of each other.

The Science Media Centre of Canada was founded in 2008.<sup>[10]</sup>

The New Zealand Science Media Centre was launched on 30 June 2008<sup>[11]</sup>

The Science Media Center Germany was founded in 2015 with €1.5 million in seed money by Klaus Tschira, founder of the software company SAP SE.<sup>[12]</sup>

## References

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2. Anon (2005). "Editorial: Public controversies that involve scientific uncertainty can be influenced by mavericks. Open confrontation and analysis serves the public better than excommunication" (<https://doi.org/10.1038%2F437001a>). *Nature*. **437** (7055): 1. doi:10.1038/437001a (<https://doi.org/10.1038%2F437001a>). PMID 16136088 (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16136088>).
3. Kirby, Tony (2009). "Fiona Fox" ([http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(09\)61099-0/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(09)61099-0/fulltext)). *The Lancet*. **373** (9680): 2017. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(09)61099-0 (<https://doi.org/10.1016%2FS0140-6736%2809%2961099-0>). PMID 19524767 (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19524767>).

4. "House of Lords - Science and Technology - Third Report" (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldselect/ldscitech/38/3810.htm>). *www.publications.parliament.uk*. Retrieved 29 July 2016.
5. Melchett, Peter (19 April 2007). "Clear intentions" (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/apr/19/farmingforthefuture>). *The Guardian*. London.
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7. The Guardian (2002). "Lobby group 'led GM thriller critics' " (<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2002/jun/02/gm.observersciencepages>).
8. "Our Origins" (<http://www.aussmc.org/about-us/our-origins/>). Australian Science Media Centre. Retrieved 3 March 2011.
9. "Adelaide Thinkers in Residence - Impacts" (<http://www.thinkers.sa.gov.au/thinkers/greenfield/impacts.aspx>). Govt. of South Australia. Retrieved 3 March 2011.
10. The SMCC Story ([http://sciencemediacentre.ca/site/?page\\_id=24](http://sciencemediacentre.ca/site/?page_id=24)) The Science Media Centre of Canada, retrieved 29 January 2019
11. The New Zealand Science Media Centre (<https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/>), retrieved 29 January 2019
12. The Science Media Center Germany (<https://www.sciencemediacenter.de/en/smc/>) retrieved 28 January 2019

## External links

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- [Science Media Centre \(http://www.sciencemediacentre.org\)](http://www.sciencemediacentre.org)
- [Australian SMC \(http://www.aussmc.org.au/\)](http://www.aussmc.org.au/)
- [Science Media Centre of Canada \(http://www.sciencemediacentre.ca/smc/index.php\)](http://www.sciencemediacentre.ca/smc/index.php)
- [Science Media Centre of New Zealand \(https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/\)](https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/)
- [Profile \(http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Science\\_Media\\_Centre\)](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Science_Media_Centre) at SourceWatch
- [George Monbiot on Science Media Centre \(http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2003/12/09/invasion-of-the-entryists/\)](http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2003/12/09/invasion-of-the-entryists/)
- [Robin McKie, Lobby group 'led GM thriller critics' \(https://www.theguardian.com/gmdebate/Story/0,2763,726475,00.html\)](https://www.theguardian.com/gmdebate/Story/0,2763,726475,00.html), *The Guardian*, 2 June 2002
- [About the Science Media Centers & the Press \(https://www.cjr.org/the\\_observatory/science\\_media\\_centers\\_the\\_pres.php?page=all\)](https://www.cjr.org/the_observatory/science_media_centers_the_pres.php?page=all), By [Fiona Fox](#) and [Connie St. Louis](#) 2013

## Audio clips

- [Leading Edge March 2009 \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/leadingedge\\_20090305.shtml\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/leadingedge_20090305.shtml)
- [Leading Edge December 2008 \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/leadingedge\\_20081204.shtml\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/leadingedge_20081204.shtml)

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