

Science Shops – Important Actors in Community Based Research

In addition to the demands made on research and development by commerce and industry, 'civil society' organisations have their own research needs. Within the concept of 'social demand' for knowledge there is an increasing necessity for communication from society to researchers.

Science Shops are one type of interface between science and its researchers and society. Science shops are organisations created as mediators between citizen groups (trade unions, pressure groups, non-profit organisations, social groups, environmentalists, consumers, residents association etc.) and research institutions (universities, independent research facilities).

A Science Shop provides independent, participatory research support in response to concerns experienced by civil society.

The term 'science' is used in its broadest sense, incorporating social and human sciences, as well as natural, physical, engineering and technical sciences.

There is not one dominant organisational structure defining a Science Shop. How Science Shops are organised and operate is highly dependent on their context.

The above definition of a Science Shop might also include organisations that do not self-define as a science shop. Organisations that meet the definition of a Science Shop and do provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education on an affordable basis are invited to subscribe to the Living Knowledge network.



LIVING KNOWLEDGE

The International Science Shop Network

You can contact the International Science Shop Network, and its members, by sending an email to the International Science Shop Office (ISSO).

International Science Shop Office,
Padualaan 8, 3584 CH Utrecht,
the Netherlands,
tel: +.31.30.2537363,
fax: +.31.2535795,
email: isso@bio.uu.nl
www.livingknowledge.org

You can find national networks or contact points in:



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**Building partnerships for
public access to research**

Living Knowledge – Breaking out of local conditions

Science Shops and similar organisations in Community Based Research (CBR) in general are small and local entities, bound to local conditions. They are highly diverse in respect to organisational structure, focus and funding.

A network allows for breaking out of the local. Facilitating collaboration and cooperation broadens the base of knowledge and experience. Living Knowledge focusses on strategic issues and is active within political settings.



International Networking

The European Commission encourages the implementation of an international Science Shop network, supporting the development of structures and tools for the dissemination of the work of Science Shops.

A network is a flow that moves with the contribution of its members. Let us raise the awareness of scientists and policy makers of (research) issues – in Europe and worldwide – that are of concern to the public.

Living Knowledge – Tools and Infrastructures

The dialogue between society and science needs to be a two-way street where all listen as much as they talk. The dialogue between the public on the one side and researchers and experts on the other side will be more promising, when the public is able to discuss „science/society“ issues in full knowledge and understanding of scientific „facts“, and of the way in which research operates in practical terms. Sharing the expertise of Science Shops advances citizens' ability to participate in the dialogue between science and society. The Living Knowledge Network's activities focus on different levels, ranging from strategic networking to training of individual skills and from information to mentoring of old and new Science Shop practitioners. A summer school focussing on new Science Shop initiatives is one of the offered tools.

Discussion Group, Database and Website

The Living Knowledge News and Discussion Group keeps subscribers informed about developments related to "Building partnerships for public access to research" and the international network of Science Shops. It is an open and free internet mailing list. All subscribers can contribute at any time with any frequency. There is no moderator.

The Living Knowledge Database is a free, public accessible resource for science shops, community-based organisations, universities and funders worldwide. It is the only online resource that brings together information on the science shops and community-based research activities from around the world. Subscribers to the Living Knowledge Database can enter their own information and search for organisations, people and (thematic) expertise in community based research all over the world. The database is moderated.

The network website, www.livingknowledge.org, gives access to all tools of the network. It offers background information, news, reports and access to archives.



Magazine and Newsletter

The magazine "Living Knowledge - Journal of Community Based Research" carries information at regular intervals about issues relating to the various facets of Science Shop work. It is one of the infrastructure tools for communication within the Living Knowledge network. It publishes a combination of news, reviews and discussion of science shop research methods, results and impacts. It is targeted to science shops and science shop staff, as well as similar working organisations and scientists interested in community based research. This structural activity for the expanding network is complemented by an electronically newsletter.



Projects and Conferences

Two international conferences, 2001 in Leuven, Belgium, and 2005 in Seville, Spain, and several international cooperation projects have been indispensable milestones for the development of the Living Knowledge Network. Find out more about SCIPAS, *interacts* and ISSNET or other projects, such as TRAMS (Training and Mentoring of Science Shops) on the Living Knowledge website.