

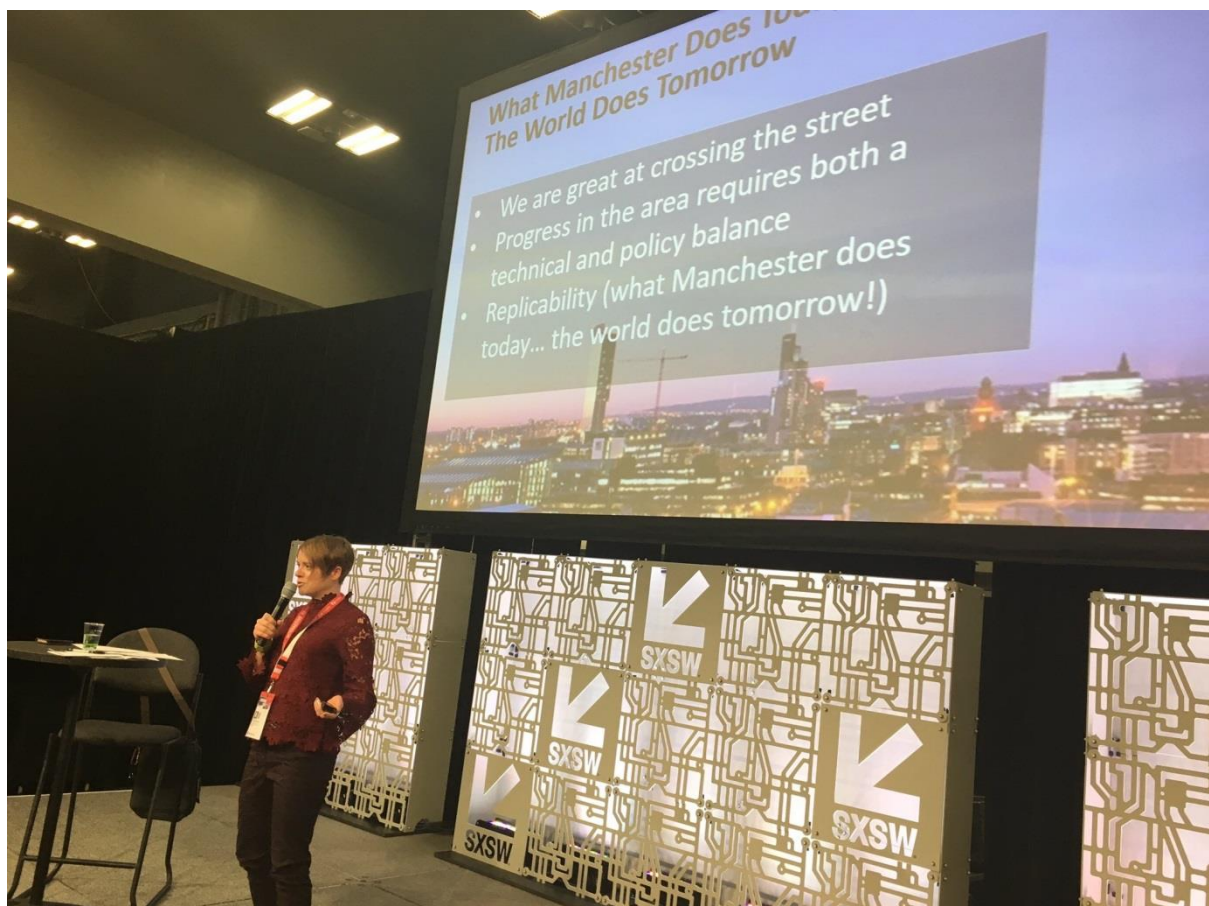
Tech Trade Show Exhibition of the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin Texas

A summary of events by Rachel Kenyon and Rosie Haynes

In March 2017 the Faculty Business Engagement and International Projects team (Rachel Kenyon & Rosie Haynes) joined a delegation representing the city of Manchester at the Tech [Trade Show Exhibition](#) of the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin Texas. One of the main strands of the festival, which aligns with key university research initiatives, was [Intelligent Futures](#).

Global organisations, start-ups, Universities, and government departments travel from all over the world to attend SXSW, with over 80,000 attending across the week.

The high-profile city delegation included inward investment agency Midas, Manchester Growth Company, Manchester City Council including council leader Sir Richard Leese, Rowena Burns of MSP plus international firm with a Manchester presence Jacobs Engineering.



Day 1 at SXSW, Saturday, getting the feel for it

The tech trade show does not open until tomorrow so today is spent attending various panel sessions and meet-ups to meet people involved in areas that the University is active in that could lead to new collaborations.

First up was the Smart Cities Sound of, key discussion: smart cities are the future, but how do we get there? Answer: Collaboration is key (good to hear!).

Right after this on the agenda was a FinTech Future session, but this was so popular we didn't get in, but there's so much going on at SXSW that there were plenty of other events to keep us busy...

Such as - the Smart Cities, Better Lives Meet Up. These Meet Up events are geared to help find people working in similar areas; learn from each other and discuss ways of working together. It was a very international room at the meet up, Europe, Asia and Americas all well represented. We were sought out by academics from the University of Texas who are keen to collaborate. Another key contact was a Smart Cities start-up incubator from Berlin.

An interesting session on how communications can initiate social movements led to some interesting conversations with senior staff from global organisations, including the United Nations Foundation.

Well we had definitely brought the Manchester weather with us, it poured down all day, expecting Texan sunshine none of us had coats or umbrellas so we got soaked - Time for a quick change!

Another meetup on Digital Healthcare introduced us to the Head of Science & Innovation for the British Consulate General in Houston as well as some start-up companies in the sector who we invited to join us at GB House later in the day.

In the evening the full delegation re-grouped for the opening party of Department for International Trade's GB House opening party.

Day 2, Sunday, the exhibition opens

After some time spent on the Manchester Stand, (chatting quite a lot about music and football!) we had secured a slot on the Pitching Stage; giving opportunity to let the room know about what Manchester has to offer and inviting them to visit the stand to find out more. We did a 10-minute double-header to a busy audience with Emma Cheshire of the Manchester Growth Company giving an overview of the innovative history of Manchester and Rachel covering the role the university has played, how it continues to lead innovation, and reasons to work with us. There was significant social media activity around this and hopefully we drove a good few people to visit the Manchester stand.

We were sought out at the stand by Santa Monica Talent, London-based, looking to assist 5 start-ups set up new UK offices with Manchester as 1st choice. Other companies met at the

exhibition include Mcr-based Hello Soda's Head of Analytics, Consultancy & Solutions; Pfizer NYC's VP for Global Media Relations & Digital Comms.

An event titled Research Universities Should Be Better at Startups looked worth attending – it was a heated session with the President of the University of Texas, Austin, Professor Gregory Fennes and inventor of the Ethernet and Professor of Innovation, Bob Metcalf. This discussion focused on how universities had an important role to play in the start-up and innovation community, and the best way to support new companies under the constraints of higher education policy.

An early evening followed before yet another busy day tomorrow.



Day 3, Monday, Manchester Event at GB House

The day kicked off with a morning panel session: Collaborative Innovation in the Digital Health Age, which discussed how Healthcare is evolving and the need for organisations to solve problems they have not solved before. Speakers were the CEOs of IBM and Johnson & Johnson; both had some useful insights which provided good tweeting material.

A lot of work had been happening before we left for Austin, identifying the events most worthwhile attending, looking who else would be there and making contact with the people we really wanted to speak to on the ground.

For Rachel, one of those was a US-based Brit working for law firm DLA Piper, some further communication Monday morning and an invite to our GB House event led to a meeting to discuss our current activity around “LawTech” and how the company could get involved, we will be following up with their Manchester office. After a useful discussion we enjoyed a well-earned tipple and lunch on the rooftop of GB House at the Manchester lunchtime event...

Our colleagues at Midas had been working hard to put-together an exciting event to promote Manchester’s activity on Smart Cities entitled “***Manchester: Join us in creating a blueprint for smart cities worldwide***”. Short talks from Sir Richard Leese, Rowena Burns and Ross Powell of Jacobs Engineering were followed by an extended networking session over drinks and canapes, thankfully the sun had finally come out in force!

A few attendees of our event are particularly keen to build links with Manchester around smart cities; these included the Technical Programme Manager, Smart Cities Enterprise Architecture, Denver; and the MD of Smart Cities Connect, which provides decision makers with information to empower smart cities at all stages of growth and conducting research into smart cities in the US and China.

Meanwhile, Rosie had to miss the Manchester event to spend the afternoon visiting colleagues from the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas, Austin to discuss potential avenues of collaboration, particularly around undergraduate and staff exchanges.

We rounded off this busy day with a dinner for the full Manchester delegation, before Sir Richard and Rowena returned to the UK.



Day 4, Tuesday, final full day of Exhibition

The final full day of the event before Rachel heads on to New York for another event, and Rosie leaves for Manchester.

In the morning was a very interesting panel session: Connected Cities, Hackable Streets, here it was discussed how the benefits of connecting street furniture in terms of efficiencies will be balanced with risks of key infrastructure becoming 'hackable'. Do we want internet-connected trash cans?? An important statement in this (and several other sessions) was that collaboration is the key to success – a very useful message from our perspective.

Rachel had arranged to meet a contact from Smart Cities Edinburgh at the Manchester stand; this was a useful discussion and will hopefully lead to link ups with activity in the city of Edinburgh around future transport infrastructure and traffic management, hopefully this relationship could be useful to help assess replicability of activity in both cities.

Our final mission was a shopping trip to buy some souvenirs and of course treats for colleagues in the office back home, we then got to enjoy a bit of the Texan sunshine and see a wee bit of live music. The delegation had a final de-brief dinner together before parting ways the next morning....