

WPI Exhibit Report: 2012 AAAS Annual Meeting

16–20 February 2012 • Vancouver, Canada

Prepared 2 March 2012 by
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Solid science crossing borders and disciplines.



NIMS MANA public information officer (PIO) Kotaro Takeda (background left) and Tohoku Univ AIMR PIO Susumu Ikeda engaging visitors at the WPI booth | Vancouver Convention Centre foyer

Japan’s science ministry and six leading research institutions presented the World Premier International Research Center Initiative (WPI) at the 2012 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Annual Meeting held in Vancouver, BC, Canada from February 16 to 20. Over the course of the three-day exhibition during the meeting, representatives from the ministry and WPI centers* engaged a diverse audience of 2,700 at the Japan pavilion — ranging from scientists to administrators to lawmakers.

The WPI booth showcased the latest advances in a range of research at the six centers, as well as their efforts to create an open environment where scientists of all levels can interact and collaborate across borders and disciplines. One of the big draws turned

out to be the WPI tote bags, which disappeared by the end of the second exhibition day.

“To what extent is it necessary to speak Japanese?” asked a graduate student, expressing his interest in working at a Japanese university. “It sounds easy enough to get by as long as you are in a lab. I’m curious what the social life is like (without being able to speak Japanese),” said another visitor, noting that English is the official language across all WPI centers.

“We sure are wild about [Japan’s participation in the meeting]. This is truly a global scientific conference now with representation from 60 different countries, and we have strong representation this year

from Japanese scientists and engineers,” said AAAS Office of Public Programs Director **Ginger Pinholster** in an interview. When asked if she would like to see more active involvement from Japan, she said: “Absolutely. The journal *Science* publishes about 900 research articles a year. Most of them have international coauthors, and about 45 percent have non-U.S. lead authors. So it is

critical to involve all the brain power we can amass in solving global problems.”

The conference theme of “*Flattening the World: Building a Global Knowledge Society*” was emphasized by AAAS President **Nina Fedoroff** in a recent *Science* editorial (335, p 503; 2012). “The extraordinary value of knowledge is, of course, that there are no

The venue: Vancouver Convention Centre (1) | The WPI booth under construction (2) | The WPI booth located in a corner of the Japan pavilion (3) | WPI posters, periodicals, and cards on display (4, 5) | Representatives from the ministry and WPI centers (6; from left): Yutaka Iijima (iCeMS, Kyoto U), Masako Matsuura (I²CNER, Kyushu U), Jun Sakanoue (IFReC, Osaka U), Sanae Aitani (I²CNER, Kyushu U) holding a WPI tote bag, Yoshihisa Obayashi (IPMU, U of Tokyo), Mitsuyuki Ueda (MEXT), S Ikeda, K Takeda, and Kazuo Abe (IPMU, U of Tokyo)

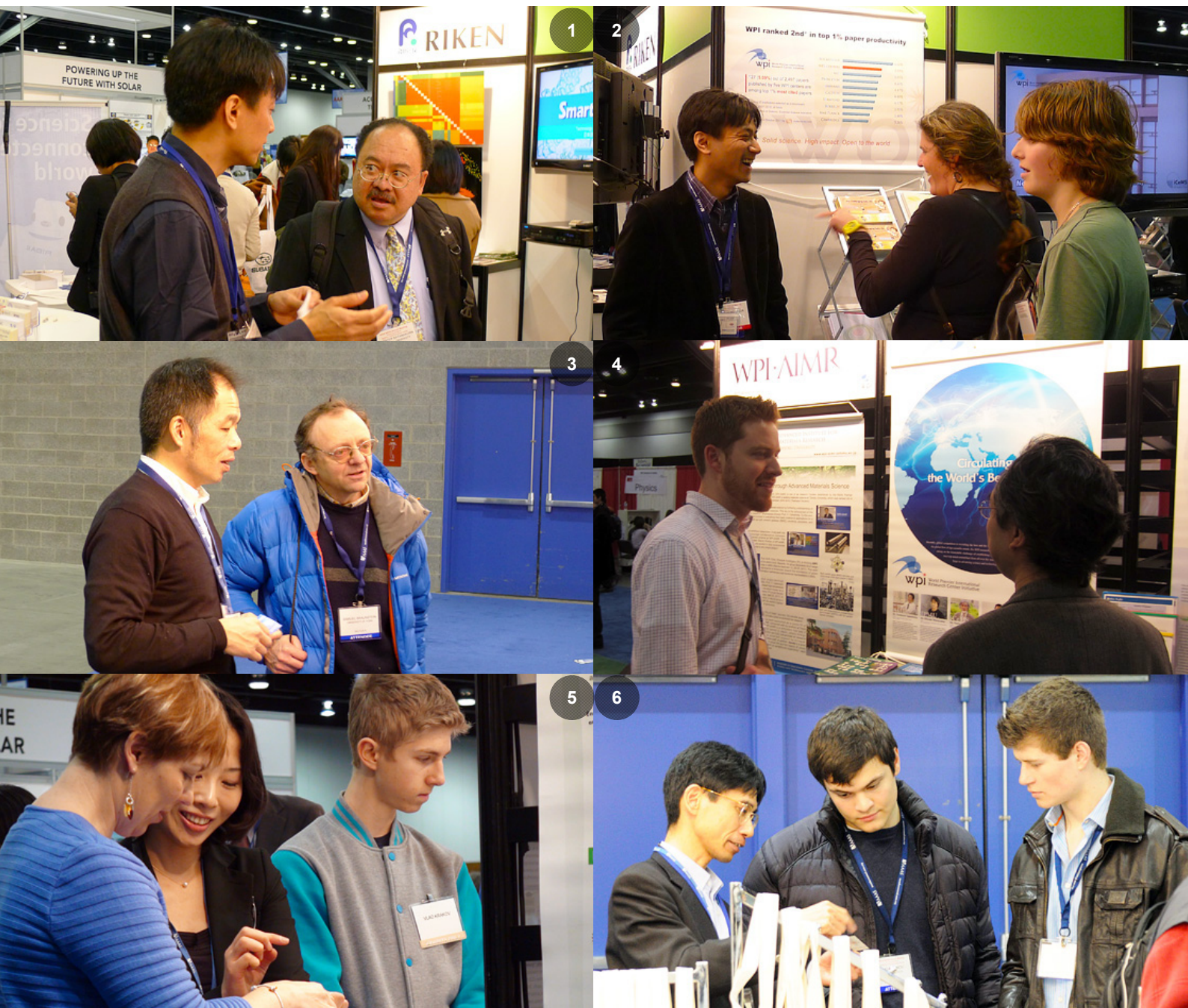


limits to its growth or the value it can generate. Going beyond local benefit, it is increasingly important to create a global knowledge society.”

The annual meeting this year — marking its 178th anniversary — attracted about 11,000 attendees, well surpassing the usual turnout. About 6,000 of these were parents and children visiting the Family Science Days, and about 700 were reporters and public

information officers from across the globe. Notable speakers at recent meetings include: Google CEO **Larry Page** (2007), U.S. NIH Director **Francis Collins** (2001), then U.S. President **Bill Clinton** (1998), Microsoft Chairman **Bill Gates** (1997), and numerous Nobel laureates. The next annual meeting will be held in Boston, MA from February 14 to 18, 2013. ■

M Ueda (1, 2), Takuya Iwasaki (3; Osaka U), Y Obayashi (4; right), S Aitani (5; center), and S Ikeda (6; left) engaging visitors at the WPI booth



About WPI

Launched in 2007 by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the **World Premier International Research Center Initiative (WPI)** aims to attain the highest levels possible for scientific research environments at six designated centers. This bid to achieve "global visibility", including attracting the world's best brains, also seeks to create a new model for Japanese academia, imparting greater autonomy to each institution in order to spark transformations in leadership, administration, and operation.

www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-toplevel

iCeMS PIO Ayumi Hagusa (1, 2) | Japan pavilion exhibitors — Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST; pavilion organizer), Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), RIKEN, The University of Tsukuba, and WPI — having a meeting before the exhibition opening | *CBC News* filming the RIKEN booth (4) | An array of exhibitors, from government organizations to universities to corporations, hosting booths (5) | Children and parents engaging in Family Science Days’ hands-on demonstrations (6)



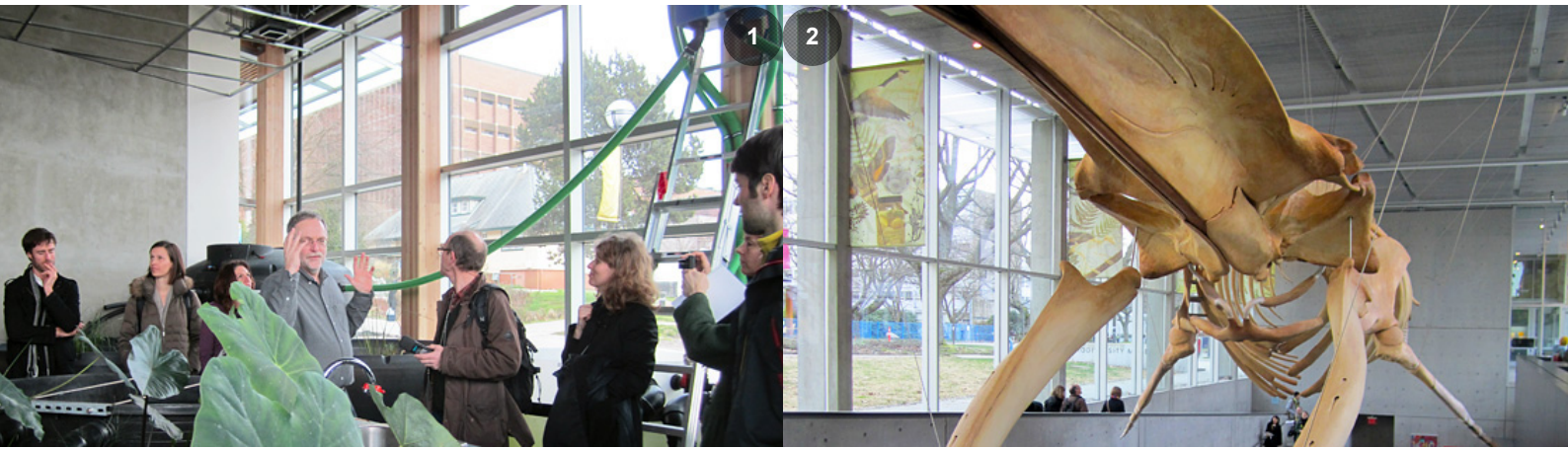
About AAAS

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) — founded in 1848 and based in Washington, DC and Cambridge, UK — is an international non-profit organization dedicated to advancing science around the world by serving as an educator, leader, spokesperson and professional association. In addition to organizing membership activities, AAAS publishes the journal *Science*, as well as many scientific newsletters, books and reports, and spearheads programs that raise the bar of understanding for science worldwide.

www.aaas.org

Scenes from: the symposium “*Unmuzzling Government Scientists: How to Re-open the Discourse*” (1), the symposium “*Misreporting Fukushima: A Failure of Science Journalism with Global Repercussions?*” (2), the workshop “*Sharing Science: Presenting Yourself and Your Work*” (3), and general poster sessions (4) | Over 1,400 attended the plenary discussion “*Science is Not Enough*” (5), with Dr **James Hansen**, moderator **Frank Sesno**, Drs **Hans Rosling** and **Olivia Judson** on the panel (6)





Special opportunities for AAAS newsroom registrants — both reporters and public information officers — include: a media tour of the North America’s “greenest” building and Canada’s largest blue whale skeleton exhibit at the University of British Columbia (1, 2); a Q&A session, chaired by AAAS Public Programs Director **Ginger Pinholster** (3; left), with President **Nina Fedoroff** (3) and CEO **Alan Leshner** over breakfast (3–6); a gala at the Vancouver Aquarium (7); Int’l Science Writers Association (ISWA) President **James Cornell** giving advice in early mornings (6, 8)



Waseda University associate professor **Miho Namba** (1; second from left) and award-winning science writer **Lynne Friedman** (1; fourth from left) networking with WPI PIOs, and the award ceremony (2) both at the museum Science World in Vancouver



Those who gave help and guidance to WPI PIOs around the newsroom include (3; from second left): AAAS news briefing moderator **Tim Radford**, senior communications officer **Earl Lane**, ISWA President Cornell, (4; from left) AAAS senior communications officer **Natasha Pinol**, and senior communications associate **Jennifer Anderson**

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Booth presented by: MEXT-WPI Outreach Officers, WPI centers*, and JSPS

Report and photos by: Yutaka Iijima

Photos courtesy of: Sanae Aitani, Ayumi Hagusa, Susumu Ikeda, Takuya Iwasaki, Jesse Karras, Masako Matsuura, Kotaro Takeda, and Mitsuyuki Ueda

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***WPI centers:**

- Tohoku University Advanced Institute for Materials Research (AIMR)
- National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS) International Center for Materials Nanoarchitectonics (MANA)
- The University of Tokyo Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPMU)
- Kyoto University Institute for Integrated Cell-Material Sciences (iCeMS)
- Osaka University Immunology Frontier Research Center (IFReC)
- Kyushu University International Institute for Carbon-Neutral Energy Research (I²CNER)