

# profile

A closer look at our members and their interests

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## Chris Finlayson

Researching across disciplines



**CHRIS FINLAYSON**  
MRSC

*Chris Finlayson is a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellow, based at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, who joined the RSC in 2006.*

*Having graduated as a physicist, he currently works on interdisciplinary projects concerned with developing molecular materials for optoelectronics applications.*

“it’s interesting to keep up to speed with areas not so related to my work”

### **Q Why did you choose a career in academia?**

**A** It’s honestly true to say that I’ve never really considered doing anything else and I appreciate how very fortunate I am to be in a job that is also like a hobby to me, even if the salaries are not astronomically high!

I particularly enjoy the lifestyle freedoms that go with being a university academic. My research groups, both in Cambridge and at the University of Southampton before that, have offered very intellectually stimulating environments to work in.

My main research collaboration is within a European Science Foundation project, involving physicists, bio-physicists, chemists and materials scientists from a number of different European universities.

The aims are to develop novel supramolecular and bio-molecular architectures for applications in molecular electronics and solar cells. As one might expect, the whole area of “renewable energy” sources currently receives a great deal of scientific attention and funding.

### **Q As a physicist, why did you first decide to join the RSC?**

**A** Given the interdisciplinary nature of my research, I don’t believe my role to be rigidly defined as a physicist. There are some areas of chemical science which are of direct relevance and in which I would consider myself to have some degree of expertise.

I have always enjoyed chemistry, even going back to my school days! Undergraduate courses rarely seem to allow much interdisciplinary study and my involvement in research chemistry had to wait until I became a Ph.D. student.

I have attended, and contributed to, a number of RSC conferences over the past few years and I decided to take up the offer of membership following a particularly enjoyable Faraday Discussion meeting.

### **Q What have you found to be the greatest benefits of your membership?**

**A** Well, it certainly brightens up my day when Chemistry world arrives in my pigeon-hole!

It’s particularly interesting to keep up to speed with areas which aren’t so closely related with my work (e.g. biochemical sciences, catalysis, pharmaceuticals).

### **Q What are the hurdles you feel you face in the climbing the academic ladder?**

**A** My future career depends on making the giant leap up to a permanent staff appointment. Academia is something of a “pyramid”, in terms of upwards promotion prospects.

Most post-docs face long years on short-term contracts before they will even be considered for lectureships; unfortunately, many of even the most talented researchers are destined to leave eventually.

### INTEREST GROUPS



For the many scientists working at the interface between traditional disciplines, there are a number of RSC interest groups that provide information and valuable links with scientists from different areas. One example is the Polymer Physics Group, which is a group jointly sponsored by the RSC’s Faraday Division, the Institute of Physics and the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining. Others run jointly with the IoP are the Neutron Scattering group and the British Carbon group. Furthermore, Faraday Discussions (organised by the Faraday Division) are unique international discussion meetings which focus on the rapidly developing areas of physical chemistry and its interfaces with other scientific disciplines. For more information on RSC Interest Groups visit [www.rsc.org/interestgroups](http://www.rsc.org/interestgroups)