

History of the UTLS



The 366 conferences organized without interruption of January 1, 2000 to December 31 2000 received an exceptional reception which resulted in: - a passion without precedent of the public (500 people on average per conference); - a constant engagement and an implication of the scientific and intellectual world; - a very great visibility of the demonstration and a preoccupation with a diffusion of the knowledge through the unit of the media.

1 - A passion without precedent of the public

January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000, the University of all the knowledge attracted approximately 180 000 people, that is to say an average of 500 people per conference. Several conferences attracted between 1000 and 2000 people: those of François Jacob (January 1, 2000), Jean-Pierre Changeux (January 3, 2000), Axel Kahn (January 31, 2000), Benoit Mandelbrot (June 29, 2000), Pierre Gilles de Gennes (September 29, 2000), Éric Hobsbawm (October 24, 2000), Paul Ricœur (November 29, 2000), inter alia. So certain conferences attracted less public, the minimal frequentation is never descended to the lower part from 250 people. Vis-a-vis for this surge of the public, it was necessary to open, as of January, in addition to the amphitheatre Paul Painlevé (of a capacity of more than 500 places), two other amphitheatres, in order to allow a retransmission on line. They is thus 800 places could be placed at the disposal of the public.

The success of the scientific conferences of the summer

Of June 15 at August 28, Utlis opened its scientific university of summer. The topics selected for this period were: mathematics, astrophysics and cosmology, sciences of the sphere and the environment, physics and chemistry. As opposed to what one could fear, these scientific conferences were a great success. For the period going from June 15 until August 10 the average frequentation of the public was around 700 people, with regular points of 1000 people and more. For the period going from the 10 to August 28, devoted primarily to chemistry, the average frequentation was approximately 400 to 500 people per conference. This quite relative fall can be explained at the same time by the period, but also by the lack of familiarity of the public with the discipline. The conferences devoted to materials and the techniques, even more austere were less success, with nevertheless an average fixing itself at the neighbourhoods of 400 people by conferences.

The experiment of decentralization

One of the reproaches frequent formulated against Utlis to its launching was its centralized character. In December, Utlis thus settled for one week periods each time, in three large towns of area: Lille, Rennes, Lyon. The experiment proved very rich lesson from the point of view of operations to come. Thus in Rennes, the average of frequentation was higher than the average in Paris. In Lille and Lyon, it was stabilized in 300 people per conference. The important factors of frequentation are not only the programming itself, as one checked it in Paris, but the choice of the place, the familiarity of the public with these places, the schedules, the local implication of the authorities and the press in the communication. Reports on the frequentation of the public As opposed to what one could have supposed before the demonstration, in fact the conferences of science were the most notable success overall. If for certain topics, the life sciences in particular, this success was foreseeable, it was it much less (with the statements of the speakers themselves) for disciplines or topics considered difficult, like mathematics, physics or chemistry. The estival period devoted to the exact sciences constitutes a good period, the public being more available to be interested on not very easy famous subjects.

Typology of the public

Several investigations into the public ones of the University of all the knowledge were carried out under the responsibility for the sociologist Olivier Martin (University Paris V - Sorbonne and CERLIS).

They highlight fidelity, the heterogeneity and the specificity of public of Utls: - it acts of a public representative of the French company: 14 % of students, 23 % of pensioners, 10 % the unemployed ones, 48 % of people occupying an employment full-time, - this public is faithful (nearly 60 % of the listeners attended several conferences) and is renewed (only 30 % of the people having attended the scientific conferences attended the conferences of social sciences), - this public is not accustomed to following public conferences and seminars (accustomed these demonstrations represented only 18 %), - finally, it acts of a studious public which chooses before all the conferences according to the subjects. The University of all the knowledge knew to constitute a public, and especially knew to answer waitings knowing dissemination of knowledge. It constitutes a platform for the expression of the knowledge such as it is being done.

2 - The engagement of the scientific and intellectual world

It is essential to stress that the 366 conferences have all be assured. However, the risk (statistical) of a defection on such a great number of conferences was high. One of the reasons of this success resides in enthusiasm expressed at the demonstration by the lecturers. So some of the lecturers, consulted during the period of preparation and programming of the demonstration, have particularly start found the project interesting while emitting, for some, of the reserves on its feasibility, all recognized that this demonstration constituted a very great success.

Interest of the scientists

The relevance of the programming and the choice of the speakers, the organization of Utls, its modes of diffusion, etc, were many times underlined by the speakers. From this point of view the scientists more expressed their enthusiasm and their interest that the lecturers in social sciences. This difference is explained by the inflation of the number of conferences in social sciences and contrary by the deficit to conferences on scientific or technological subjects. There is a very great need felt by the scientists to diffuse their knowledge and their work directly with the public; what Utls according to them succeeded in doing. This interest also resulted in a true engagement. Many lecturers made known Utls, that it is at the national level like international. Much required that have sends programs and documents of communication to them to diffuse them around them. Much required that the demonstration continue.

Conferences to measure

Many lecturers let know that to be invited to give a conference to Utls for them a true honor constituted. Some delayed their participation in other conferences to come to give their conference to Utls It is important to note that all the conferences given to Utls were conceived especially for this demonstration. All the lecturers noted that it was a true work, but also of a intellectual challenge.

Fame of Utls

One can also stress that Utls acquired a great visibility in the academic world, intellectual, political and especially in the world of the company. From this point of view, lecturers invited coming from the mediums of companies (Strong James, Lafayette Gallery, SNECMA, etc.) were unanimous to stress that Utls had been from their point of view the most outstanding event of this year 2000

Communication

The principle of diffusion of Utls was to diffuse its conferences through the most media possible, in particular to counterbalance the too centralized character of the demonstration and to touch a public little accustomed to this kind of demonstration.

It is resulted from it a great visibility of Utls, which probably explains the presence of listeners of any origins.

The conferences were diffused and repeated, thanks to Internet, with television, the radio or the newspaper industry.