



**THE LINDA AND JACK GILL
CENTER FOR BIOMOLECULAR SCIENCE**
COLLEGE OF ARTS + SCIENCES

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Gill Center partnership with local coffee shop stimulates community conversations

Bloomington, IN, July 01, 2022 At Hopscotch Coffee each month, people sip drinks and eat snacks while enjoying an event that's different from the concerts, films, and comedy shows that one often finds in Bloomington. Science Café Bloomington is an accessible, interactive seminar series for the public covering current topics in science.

Science Café Bloomington is modeled on a grassroots effort that began in the 1990s in France and England to make scientific research more accessible. Now in its 16th year, Bloomington Science Café is one of the oldest in the country. "It's very accessible. That's what we aim for." says Alex Straiker the Indiana University research scientist who organizes the cafés. "It's also very interactive and the Q&A with the audience is often quite lively." Straiker chooses topics by following the news and noting what issues are generating public interest. He then seeks out people at IU who are working in those areas. This can be challenging even though there are hundreds of research-active faculty on campus. Topics have included global warming, self-driving cars, nanocrystals, antimatter, smog, and the science of obesity. Audiences range in size from 20 to more than 100 people.

Details about upcoming Science Café Bloomington [events](#), including an option to [subscribe to announcements](#) can be found on its [website](#).

"It's about building bridges," says Alex Straiker. "There's this wide and growing gap between scientists and science on the one hand, and the public on the other." Straiker says preparing his talks helped him think about communicating the relevance of his work to a general audience. "It's a good experience for everyone," he says.