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[Oxford Student](#) > [TT2005 Week 4](#) > [News](#) > Oxford scientist starts firm to target 'bad science' in Hollywood blockbusters

OXFORD SCIENTIST STARTS FIRM TO TARGET 'BAD SCIENCE' IN HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTERS

By [Morwenna Coniam](#)

Bad science in movies may be a thing of the past. An Oxford Don has set up a consultancy agency to Hollywood in an attempt to counter the negative portrayal of scientists in bigbudget films. Dr Lizzie Burns, of the department of Biochemistry, launched Hollywood Math and Science Film Consulting with Harvard mathematician Professor Jonathan Farley after the two met whilst undertaking research in Oxford. Dr Burns told the Oxford Student: "Jonathan had the idea after watching A Beautiful Mind. He thought Hollywood needed a service that helped film makers deal with maths and science in a sensitive and realistic way - it's something that's difficult to convey on a personal level." Fans of science fiction need not worry - the aim of the agency is not to make fantasy films more realistic.

Dr Burns is adamant that in some films the confused attempts at scientific explanation detract from the magic: "I totally love the Star Wars films, but when they tried to explain the 'Force' in terms of 'medichlorians', it was obviously a reference to mitochondria, which made no sense at all. It's set in another universe - why should it even need to be explained?" Instead, the aim is to work on titles that present science and maths in a realistic way.

"We want to help them avoid big blunders, and make their films more credible - having the right equations in the background, that sort of thing. We hope scriptwriters will come up with new ideas from their consultations with us." Dr Burns told The Oxford Student the films she feels could most benefit from her treatment are those in the James Bond series. "I'd love to be picked up to work for them. They actually try and explain their science and technology in detail, but they sometimes get it horribly wrong."

In Die Another Day the explanation of gene therapy for the villain changing his face is so wrong it's unbelievable. We'd have advised them to say it was a face transplant - it wouldn't have messed up the plot, but it would have made more sense."

Professor Farley has previously done consultancy work for hit US television drama Numb3rs, about an FBI agent who solves crimes with the aid of his mathematically gifted brother. "He checked over their equations and technical language, and gave them ideas of the kinds of things they could incorporate in the future." Despite becoming involved in the star-studded arena of Hollywood, Dr Burns continues to undertake research in the Department of Biochemistry.

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