

# Past President's Message



**Martin George, Curator  
Launceston Planetarium  
Queen Victoria Museum  
Wellington Street  
Launceston, Tasmania  
Australia  
+61 (3) 63233777  
+61 (3) 63233776 fax  
martin@qvmag.tas.gov.au**

It has been a great pleasure to serve the IPS as president over the past two years, and I'd like to thank the many IPS members who have written so positively to me recently in relation to my role. It's always important to remember, though, that the officers work as a strong team and it is perhaps not widely known that quite apart from their daily communication, the officers do have get-togethers at times other than the council meetings and biennial conferences. A special thanks to Shawn Laatsch and Kim Cooper for making their house in Greenville, North Carolina, USA available for such meetings over my period as president!

## **Congratulations to Tom Mason**

Speaking of the officers, congratulations and a big welcome to Tom Mason, our new president elect! When I wrote my last President's Message, the results of the election were not known but, by the time you read this, Tom will have spent nearly three months as part of the team of officers. Already Tom has become actively involved

in our frequent (usually daily!) and detailed discussions and I, and the other officers, are delighted to be working with him.

I was reflecting recently on some of the special strengths of the IPS, and one in particular that stands out to me is the fact that we have three people in presidential positions at any one time: the president, the president elect, and the past president. It is a system that has served us well for a long time. The two years' experience gained by the president elect are a very important preparation for the two years to be spent as president, and the past president has experience to contribute after having been "in the chair."

An essential part of that strength, though, is the enormous support from both the secretary and the treasurer/membership chair.

Near the end of 2006 I reviewed the committee structure of the IPS and, as I write this message, President Susan Button is happy to leave me with the task of sorting out a few possible changes that may still need to be made.

I made one specific change, however, in December, to one of the ad hoc committees. It is the Language Committee, which I have, after some consideration, renamed the International Relations Committee. I feel that broadening the scope of this committee will serve the IPS well, especially as we reach out to some areas of the world in which we have very few IPS members and in which English may not be the native language. Naturally, this committee can work closely with the Outreach and Membership committees. A big thank you to all who continue to serve on this committee! By the time you read this, I shall hopefully have added a few new members in order that the committee can fulfill this broadened role.

## **Conferences Around the World**

During October and November, while still serving as president, I found myself again travelling around the world. In the last week of October, after attending the very enjoyable one-day expo session at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, Illinois, USA, I was delighted to attend the Great Lakes Planetarium Conference which was held in Merrillville, Indiana, USA. A large gathering, many excellent presentations, fine social events, and visits to local places of interest made for an excellent conference. I was delighted to make many new friends and am currently enjoying reading the GLPA Conference Proceedings, which was distributed to all attendees by Dale Smith very soon after the conference.

A few days later I travelled to Brazil to attend my second conference in two weeks: the Brazilian Planetarium Association (ABP) conference in the city of Vitória, a coastal city about a one hour flight northeast of Rio de Janeiro. A big thank you to ABP members for my very warm welcome and for having me there at their most interesting conference, with special thanks to Sergio Bisch, Alexandre Cherman, Fernando Vieira and Ormis Rossi for their wonderful assistance.

Naturally, the proceedings were conducted in Portuguese, but through the help of our Brazilian colleagues I was able to follow what was happening during the sessions. I was deeply honoured that the ABP flew an interpreter up from Rio de Janeiro for the two talks—one about the IPS and one about Astronomy in Australia—that I presented. The interpretation was performed concurrently and flawlessly. Again, excellent company and several most enjoyable social events made the conference most memorable.

Just before departing for Europe, I was also delighted to visit the planetarium in Rio de



**A session at the Brazilian Planetarium Association Conference in Vitória. All photos by Martin George.**



**The staff of the Munakata Yurix Planetarium in Japan (left); JPS members gathering in the planetarium at the Nagoya City Science Museum, where the Japanese Planetarium Society Conference was held.**

Janeiro, which will be the site of our 2007 council meeting this August. Since my last visit in 2004, a number of fine exhibitions have been installed at the planetarium and I strongly recommend to you all to go along to see it if you are in Rio de Janeiro!

After Brazil, I made a short visit to the United Kingdom to meet up with Dr. Gloria Clifton and Gilbert Satterthwaite in London, who showed me around the construction site for the new Greenwich Planetarium. As I write this message, their planned opening date is in the (northern hemisphere) spring of 2007, so it's not far away!

I then made a quick visit to the impressive Heureka Science Centre in Helsinki, Finland, which includes a major planetarium and is planning a significant expansion. Many thanks to the director, Per-Edvin Persson, and Kai Santavuori for showing me around on what was my first visit to the facility.

### Japanese Planetarium Society Conference

December saw me in Japan for a week, mainly to attend the wonderful Japanese Planetarium Society Conference, which was held in Nagoya. Some 250 planetarians attended from all over Japan, and here again I was delighted with the proceedings and met up with many planetarians for the first time. I am very grateful to the JPS, to all of the staff of the Nagoya City Science Centre, and especially to IPS Council Member Shoichi Itoh from the Sugunami Planetarium in Tokyo, for assisting with my visit. Shoichi also did a fine job as my interpreter on no fewer than four occasions when I was speaking.

I was delighted to learn that the Nagoya City Science Centre is planning a major upgrade for its planetarium, which will have

a significantly larger dome in a few years. I strongly recommend a visit!

Following the conference, I had the pleasure of visiting both the planetarium at the Children's Centre in Hiroshima and the Munakata Yurix Planetarium near Fukuoka. So many people contributed to making my visits there very enjoyable, but special thanks are due to Junko Onoda from the Munakata Planetarium for her assistance in organising my visit. At each place, the "bubbly" enthusiasm of the staff was very obvious!

My last official engagement as IPS president took place on December 10, when I had the very great pleasure of opening a new portable planetarium in Queensland, Australia, on Hamilton Island. Ray and Libby Johnson have been the driving force behind the establishment of their dome, which will be used at the resort and will be taken to

schools in the area. Their enthusiasm for astronomy also extends to conducting special stargazing evenings near the resort, adding to the enjoyment of visitors to one of Australia's famous tropical island getaways.

As I now move through my own two-year period as past president, I am looking forward to the continuation of my work as an officer and intend to press on with some specific tasks. We are now very close to having two new affiliates—China and Brazil—and I am hoping very much that this will be confirmed by the time of the council meeting in August. The first official meeting of the new Chinese planetarium group will hopefully take place around mid-year. I am hoping to attend that meeting, which will likely be held in Beijing.

A very happy Autumnal or Spring equinox to you all, depending on your hemisphere! ☆



**The Heureka Science Centre in Helsinki, Finland.**