

President's Message



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2006 Election Results

I would like to express a sincere "Thank You" to everyone who recently voted. As a result we have an eminently qualified new president elect, Thomas Mason, from Armagh Planetarium, Ireland. Welcome aboard Tom! Congratulations also to Lee Ann Hennig and Shawn Laatsch; we are all grateful for your continued excellent service. I certainly appreciate the chance to work with them, Tom, now Past President Martin George, the entire council, and the various committees as we strive to provide members with services that meet their varied needs. Please contact us with your concerns and suggestions about how IPS can better serve you; we depend on your input!

What does IPS Offer?

A student recently asked, "Mrs. Button, have you heard about scientists' discovery of a galaxy that seems too massive for current theories?" (www.universetoday.com/am/publish/distant_galaxy_too_massive.html)

The discovery he cited indicates that mature stars and large galaxies formed much earlier in cosmic history than was expected. An interesting class discussion ensued and I made the point that this kind of surprise is

what makes science so dynamic and exciting.

I feel very strongly that many people do not understand that IPS, like that galaxy, is surprisingly more massive and mature than the casual observer could detect. It is exciting to examine how impressive it is. Although the International Planetarium Society was formed a mere 36 years ago (the first conference was held in October of 1970), it has quickly evolved into a robust organization and continues to mature as our industry rapidly changes and it quietly provides an enormous amount of assistance to planetarians all over the world.

IPS is a professional organization that is and will continue to be responsive to the needs of its over 700 members from 35 countries. Encouraging the sharing of ideas among its members through conferences, publications, and networking is the primary goal and greatest influence of the Society. By sharing their insights and creative work, IPS members become better planetarians, programmers, artists, technicians, teachers, and so on.

Challenges for the IPS

Challenges for the IPS council include efforts to increase the visibility of IPS, to encourage new affiliations, and to promote new memberships (to become even more massive!). We are taking steps in that direction immediately. Council recently approved a new initiative in an effort to make IPS more inclusive, to increase visibility, and to introduce non-members to IPS and all that it has to offer. Through this initiative, invitations were sent to planetarians who are not currently IPS members to become an associate of the Society. IPS Associates will electronically receive, free of charge, the IPS News. This will allow colleagues who are not members to glimpse some of the issues and workings that IPS addresses and perhaps entice them to join us in our work and fun. In short, this initiative is designed to spark interest and inform new contacts about IPS activities and benefits. Council will review this offer after two years to determine if it is as effective as we hope.

A second strategy for improving our visibility is to rework and streamline the Outreach Committee. Jon Elvert, the new chair of this committee, will share more specifics on this in the June 2007 issue of the Planetarian and you will see some wonderful initiatives born from his efforts.

Take Advantage of the Benefits

If you are a member of IPS, you can take advantage of a multitude of benefits.

Council hopes that current and new members make use of all the opportunities that IPS now offers in order to get the most out of your membership. You can promote how we serve our membership to others by citing the extensive list of benefits on the IPS website (www.ips-planetarium.org/or/ips-howto.html). Just to clarify how complex and beneficial IPS is, I would like to emphasize and make a few comments about points on that list. I have included some points of my own that are intuitive but infrequently used by members. The on-line list is impressively long, so take your time and really think about each one so that you can get the most out of your IPS membership!

IPS members represent schools, colleges and universities, museums, and public facilities of all sizes, including both fixed and portable planetariums as well as digital and analog. Members include directors, teachers, technicians, programmers, writers, artists, media specialists, presenters, vendors, scientists, students, and sponsors and friends of the planetarium and the night sky and multi-media presentations. That means that a variety of interesting people are available to be tapped for advice and resources (and to visit on vacation!).

Speaking of resources, you can gain information from reading our colorful quarterly journal, the Planetarian, which is filled with insightful articles and a wide range of feature columns; the IPS Conference Proceedings that contain texts of contributed and invited papers and panel discussions; and special publications (see Dale Smith's article elsewhere in this issue of the Planetarian). You can keep abreast of current and future events and job openings and find contacts through reading the IPS News, the IPS website, and members-only web resources. Members receive many free CDs and discounted subscription rates to IPS video compilations, which deliver still images and extensive video footage from NASA, ESA, and the Space Telescope Science Institute. For the most part, members generally already take advantage of all of those benefits.

The Privilege of Voting

However, I do not feel that most of you really avail yourselves of the many other privileges and benefits. You have the privilege, as a member, to vote. Members are entitled to one vote per person, either by proxy, by mail (postal or electronic), or fax, on any question pertaining to the Society. Members elect IPS executive officers in this way. Generally only about 35% of qualified members take advantage of their voting opportunities. This is one very important way that you can influence the future of IPS. Another way, and the strongest, to impact IPS and

gain understanding is to run for office.

Yet another excellent way to gain insight and a full sense of membership is to volunteer. IPS has many committees devoted to areas of interest to the membership. Committee chairs accept and recruit volunteers from the membership; hence, members can actively shape the future of IPS and the planetarium profession. Or you can bid to host an IPS conference! Conference bids for 2010 have been accepted from Alexandria, Egypt; Saint-Etienne, France; and Beijing, China. You can read an article from each of these locations elsewhere in this issue of the Planetarian. Council will vote on the 2010 site at our meeting in August.

Donate, Share

You can also affect many aspects of IPS services, to you and fellow members, by answering calls for you to donate and/or share. Members can submit articles for publication in the Planetarian. Readers from the international community will be able to benefit from your experience and knowledge. The IPS Education Committee has posted some lessons on the website, and you can share by submitting samples of your own. The next round of the IPS Eugenides script writing competition begins this month (see the call for entries in this issue). The prize money is attractive and you'll earn extra prestige at and for your institution if you enter this contest and then are placed in the top two award categories. At the very least you would be contributing a new show idea for your colleagues. Or you could volunteer to create another special publication on a topic that most interests you.

Monetarily, you can also donate to the Armand Spitz Fund, which is maintained by IPS to fund efforts that further the ideas espoused by Armand Spitz, or to the Star Partners' Fund that was established to aid planetariums in countries with non-convertible currencies and/or facing severe economic problems. You can have a meaningful impact on the International Planetarium Society's goals and interests, beyond your own lifetime and far into the future, by make a charitable gift during your lifetime or as part of your estate. At the same time, you can bring immediate and deferred tax advantages to both you and your heirs.

It is vital that you use IPS to network. Look on the IPS website for news and resources and be sure to make suggestions and update contact information when needed. Read Dome-L, the IPS-sanctioned but privately run and moderated email information service for the world's planetarians. Subscription to Dome-L is free and open to anyone with an active interest in the planetarium profession. IPS has sanctioned Dome-

L as a worthy service to the profession; free and open discussion is encouraged and essential. You can find out more at www.ipsplanetarium.org/resources/dome1.html. Whenever possible, attend our biennial conferences, which bring together hundreds of planetarium professionals for paper sessions, invited speakers, workshops, panel discussions, vendor demonstrations, and exhibits. You can volunteer to present a paper, a workshop, or chair a panel. The next IPS Conference will be held at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, Illinois, USA from 15-20 June 2008. There will be an information link soon on the website.

You also can find colleagues to network with by using the IPS Directory of the World's Planetariums and the IPS Resource Directory. Members receive a comprehensive CD catalog of planetariums and IPS members worldwide. Also on that CD is a resource directory that is a "yellow pages" listing hundreds of companies and organizations that are in business to provide services for the planetarium community.

And lastly, you are strongly encouraged to voice your opinion. Your IPS affiliate representative will present your opinions and concerns at IPS council meetings and during the year through email with council, or you can contact any officer directly to make sure you are heard. Members can also nominate other deserving IPS members for awards that recognize contributions they have made to our organization and to our profession.

As you can see, there are many opportunities for you to reap the rewards of belonging to the International Planetarium Society. Please avail yourself of these powerful ways to develop professionally and to stretch beyond your own universe. Make the most of your IPS membership!

The New Presidency

It is with an awesome sense of responsibility, excitement, and determination that I take office as president for these next two years. I realize that I have "big shoes" to fill, as do each of the presidents in turn. Your support and ideas will certainly be appreciated as we tackle the challenges of future development of IPS.

One goal of this presidency is to make communication more efficient and to increase participation of members by clearly presenting opportunities for you to contribute your special talents in small or big ways. None of us has a lot of free time, but we all have something to offer and a little discretionary time. My job is to inspire you and define easy ways in which you can more fully become participating members. Don't wait for us to ask; speak up if you have an idea.

Another goal is to continue the important work of past presidents: to bring new affiliates and new members into the fold, to support colleagues in developing nations, and to make IPS more responsive to your needs and the changing technologies.

Lastly, for now, I want to see more emphasis on making educational resources available and on setting guidelines for making our shows age appropriate. I realize that many facilities have expanded their domes to become virtual reality chambers of all kinds. I feel strongly, as you know, that there is always an element of education in a presentation, even if the focus of a particular program is primarily entertainment. We must try to understand exactly what impressions we are creating and what learning is taking place. To that end all planetariums will be encouraged to work together and share experiences, both successes and failures, so that we may all grow in understanding and maximize the impact we deliberately seek. Creativity in science and technology is our universe and it is this "hook" that will inspire students to entertain the idea of becoming the new generation of creative scientists and engineers that the world desperately needs.

Next Council meeting

The next council meeting will be held during 4-5 August 2007 at the Rio de Janeiro Planetarium in Brazil. Members: please contact your affiliate representative, me, or any other officer well before those dates if you have information, questions and/or concerns that need to be addressed. Do not forget to inform your representative of your preference for the 2010 conference site so that he/she can vote accordingly. ☆