

# Past President's Message



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## Dear Colleagues,

It has been a busy year, as always! Aside from the usual officer's duties and housekeeping (making sure we keep the bylaws, standing rules, standard operating procedures and conference guidelines updated), a few other items crossed my desk this year. Many communications I received were from members who enjoyed and learned from their attendance at the International Planetarium Society's 2008 Conference.

In October, I responded to members' concerns about the U.S. presidential campaign rhetoric of Senator John McCain by organizing the Official Statement on the Role of Planetariums in Education

Throughout the year I wrote several letters in response to planetarium closures and potential closures and some letters to support grant applications for initiatives that were important to the planetarium community as a whole.

All of these correspondences were accomplished with the guidance and assistance of my fellow officers and sometimes also with help from the IPS Publicity Coordinator, Jacques Guarinos.

In an effort to make IPS visible to members and potential members, I attended seven conferences this year and plan to attend two more

in the last months of 2009.

In 2008 I was a delegate at the following conferences:

- The Canadian Association of Science Centres Annual Conference, held 12-14 June at the London Regional Children's Museum, Ontario (Canada).
- The 19th International Planetarium Society Conference, 27 June-2 July at the Adler Planetarium, Chicago (USA). Of course, this was the most awesome conference I experienced in 2008, all because of the excellent variety of sessions and presenters and the record number of delegates that were graciously and skillfully accommodated by Paul Knappenberger, Larry Ciupik, Mark Webb and all the rest of the Adler staff. There were some specific new initiatives associated with this conference that may bear repeating in future conferences: the program for scholarships, the Vendor Award and the remembrance tributes for colleagues who have passed on.
- The 5th European Meeting of Small and Portable Planetaria located in the Centro Multimeios Espinho, Navegar Foundation and the Center for Astrophysics of Oporto (Portugal), 9-11 October.
- The Great Lakes Planetarium Association Conference, 29 October-November 1 at the Milwaukee Public Museum Planetarium, the Gary Sampson Planetarium and the Charles Horwitz Planetarium in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (USA).

## In 2009 I attended:

- The Italian Association of Planetaria National Conference, 18-19 April in Naples at the City of Science (Italy).
- The Middle Atlantic Planetarium Society Conference, 13-16 May at the Howard B. Owens Science Center in Lanham-Seabrook, Maryland (USA).
- The Southeastern Planetarium Association conference, joined by the Western Alliance Conference (GPPA, SWAP, RMPA, and PPA), 16-20



What a privilege to stand between these two! On the left is NASA Astronaut Scott E. Parazynski (M.D.), and on the right, Paul Knappenberger, president of the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum in Chicago. Photo by Tom Button

June at the Sudekum Planetarium, Adventure Science Center, Nashville, Tennessee (USA).

The next two conferences I will attend in 2009 are:

- 1-4 September. 6th European Meeting of Small and Portable Planetaria at the M. Copernicus Planetarium and Observatory in Chorzow (Poland).
- 21-24 October. Great Lakes Planetarium Association 45th Annual Conference at the Delta College Planetarium, Bay City Michigan (USA).

As I travel to these various venues, it has been quite a surprising revelation to learn that many IPS members and other colleagues



Delegates—including one dreaming about becoming a future planetarian—to the 2009 Italian Association of Planetaria National Conference. Photo by Tom Button



After delivering the prestigious Margaret Noble Address at the 2009 MAPS banquet, Lee Ann Hennig (IPS Secretary) receives congratulations from friends, Jan and Steve Russo. Photo by Susan Button

have the impression that IPS pays for all officer travel! The comments that people make at regional conferences and even the IPS Conference, when I discuss my travels, inform me of this widely-held misconception.

Just to clarify, I am privileged to represent IPS at as many conferences as I can through the generous monetary support of my husband and our own family budget that provides almost all of the funding for travel, registrations and room and board.

It is true of all IPS officers that our personal finances and/or work facilities support us in most of our work for IPS. We enjoy doing what we do and we are richer for the experience, both professionally and personally. For me it is a perfect opportunity to repay IPS for all that I have gained from this organization.

Under the president's directive, there has been a recent addition to my duties as past president. At my own suggestion, I will serve as overseer for committee chairs. I am tasked to remind committee chairs to get their reports in to Council on time, to post information on their web pages, to update their postings and to keep working; in other words, I will be a basic pain in their neck! I feel that this is a vital task for the past president because she/he is familiar with the objectives of the committees and has more time to devote to recognizing and encouraging the important contributions that are made by committee members and their initiatives.

I would be remiss if I did not reiterate that all that I accomplish for IPS is supported by the efforts of many dedicated individuals. Officers, council members, committee chairs and members work as a strong team to serve all of us in our mission to help planetariums be the best they can be! ☆

## (IMERSA, Continued from page 36)

to support it, or, in certain presentations, to replace it? Finding a balance between maximizing theater capability and flexibility, preventing the technology from intruding into the show experience and predicting how the facilities programming needs will adjust over a five-year period are all crucial."

Global Immersion recently introduced the Zorro® projector in the "true-black" category, and, in June, demonstrated at SEPA the company's Fidelity GO™ system, which uses new high-contrast projectors with LED-based light engines having lamp lifetimes said to exceed 100,000 hours. Currently this technology is limited to domes up to 13 m, but Caskey indicates that LED-based projectors are something for the planetarium community to watch as their available brightness levels increase.

Also claiming a place in the true-black video category is Sky-Skan, reporting a 30,000:1 native contrast ratio for its Definiti D-ILA high-contrast system, which is installed at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago and was demonstrated at IPS 2008.

### Keeping the best seats

Ryan Wyatt, director of digital visualization and director of the Morrison Planetarium for the new California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, says, "Modern science is digital, so the modern planetarium needs to be digital, too. We chose to keep the best seats in the house—in the center of the dome—and eschew a starball. That said, we have also reinterpreted the traditional optomechanical console to give analog control over our fully digital sky."

"Chabot Observatory & the American Museum of Natural History Rose Center have all but retired their starballs, and Denver and the California Academy skipped them altogether," observes Dan Neafus, director of the Gates Planetarium at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. "From over 1,000,000 visitors to the digital Gates, I have received only three written complaint letters from the public about the lack of pristine stars—and none since we updated the system in 2007."

That said, Neafus added, "there remains a wide range of opinions on the topic of digital vs. analog—a hearty debate that has its roots in the early 1970s when the first Digistar replaced a starball—and one that will likely continue for decades more."

In future columns we will continue to explore this issue with additional input from users, vendors and audiences.

### Upcoming events

If all goes according to schedule, the new Zeiss planetarium theater in Fort Worth will be the setting for a screening during ASTC

2009 (October 31–November 3) of the full-length version of the new fulldome show *Touching the Edge of the Universe*, for which Zeiss is the U.S. distributor.

The show boasts live-action footage captured with a special new fisheye camera developed specifically for this purpose. The full show will also screen for attendees of the GLPA meeting in Bay City, Michigan, October 21.

*Touching the Edge* was produced at the University of Applied Sciences in Kiel, Germany for ESA (European Space Agency) in cooperation with a number of planetariums in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

After its premiere in the German speaking planetariums in May and June, the show is now available for distribution in fulldome format and as a digital kit for classical planetariums.

The show, made for the 2009 International Year of Astronomy, tells an exciting story comparable to a motion picture with live actors and stunning visual effects, conveying concise information about the Herschel-Planck space missions to the general public.

The trailer for *Touching the Edge* will be shown during the annual Fulldome Showcase at ASTC on the morning of Monday, November 2. The Fulldome Showcase, organized every year by Spitz, is a sampling of what's available in the fulldome content library and a must-see for anyone having or considering a fulldome system.

Shuttle buses will run from the convention center to the nearby University of Texas (Arlington) planetarium. (Note: it will be important to pre-register if you want to attend the Fulldome Showcase, because they tend to book the number of shuttle buses based on advance signups.)

### DomeFest is coming!

DomeFest 2009 is nearly here. This annual celebration of the digital dome, with sessions, screenings and socializing, organized by ARTS Lab in Albuquerque, New Mexico, takes place September 25–27. The festival will include the world premiere of J. Walt Adamczyk's real-time performance *The Omnicentric Universe*, as well as the 2009 DomeFest Juried Show with the presentation of this year's Domie Awards.

Other highlights include the U.S. premiere of *Touching the Edge of the Universe* and a "making of" screening of *Fragile Planet*, and special sessions by IMERSA. Details at [www.domefest.org](http://www.domefest.org)

Looking further ahead, mark your calendars now for the German Fulldome festival to be held May 7–8, 2010, and of course, IPS 2010 in Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria Egypt. Details to come. ☆