



# President's Message

**Dr. Tom Mason**  
**Armagh Planetarium**  
**College Hill, Armagh BT61 9DB**  
**Northern Ireland, United Kingdom**

+44 (0)2837 524725  
+44 (0)2837 526187 fax, +44 (0)771 0013453 cell  
tom@armaghplanet.com

## Dear Colleagues and Fellow Planetarians:

I am writing this last president's message to you as a valedictory, as it is almost time for the baton to be passed on to our incoming new president, Dave Weinrich.

Before I write any further I must acknowledge once more in this note the work that happens behind the scenes and my friends and colleagues, Lee Ann Hennig and Shawn Laatsch, our sheet anchors who serve as secretary and treasurer: and, of course, Past-President Susan Button and President-Elect Dave.

The work is especially intense in conference years, as conferences don't just happen, they are organised. So my very sincere thanks to them for helping to spread the load and in making my job easier.

The recent Bibliotheca Alexandrina-hosted conference in Egypt was a very successful international event, and this is something that I think will continue to grow for IPS. While we may think that we have all bases covered, in fact we still do not represent all of the planetarians who are scattered around the planet.



Gwacheon Planetarium and Observatory, Korea. Photo by Tom Mason.

## First Korean show festival

For example, I am writing this in a 747 somewhere over Mongolia, on my way back from a visit to Korea. I was invited there by Dr Hwan Kang Lee to represent the IPS at the first Korean festival of planetarium shows, which start-

ed on October 27 and ran until November 7. The festival involved the screening of 37 local and foreign science fiction movies and 28 full-dome planetarium shows.

These were shown in the new planetarium, which is part of the Gwacheon National Science Centre that is set in a spacious park in Seoul. The Science Centre is a huge building and has many striking exhibits displayed in separate areas over two floors. To see the building check out [www.360cities.net/image/natural-history-exhibition-gwacheon-national-science-museum-seoul#0.00,0.00,70.0](http://www.360cities.net/image/natural-history-exhibition-gwacheon-national-science-museum-seoul#0.00,0.00,70.0).

As the national science centre of Korea, it does a fine job of exhibiting the achievements of the country's science and industry. They process over a million visitors in the planetarium each year and can seat 270 at each show. Their theatre is a hybrid system with a Minolta Geministar opto-mechanical and a digital system in the same space.

It was opened in 2008 and the science centre has 200 staff working on site. There are outdoor exhibits, including two rocket models, and a public observatory with multiple telescopes, which is sited on a small hill adjacent to the striking planetarium dome that is separate from the main building.

While I was there I talked to the vendors who have been busy installing new planetarium projection systems in Korea and I understand that here have been many new planetariums, at least 14, opened in the past few years, so clearly the Korean state has

made the same decision that was taken during the Kennedy presidency following the surprise launch of Sputnik.

During a short talk I encouraged Dr Lee and his colleagues from other planetariums around Korea, as well as when I met them in-

dividually, to consider establishing a new Korean affiliate, and cited the successful launch of the Brazilian affiliate and our hope that the Chinese one will be formalised soon.

So I suppose the best message that I can give you from this event is to watch this space. I hope that President Dave will be able to report progress in this region in the future, and of course I have let Martin George know about these developments as our international development chair.

I must mention that as part of my swansong I will also be visiting Brazil at the end of November along with President-elect Dave: we have been invited to attend a meeting of the Brazilian IPS group at the Planetarium in Rio de Janeiro. This will take place at the end of November 2010, so by the time you read this we ought to have been and gone.

## "International" comes first

To return to my main theme, I passionately believe that it is very important that we continue to nurture the IPS' international profile. It is a measure of the maturity of our organisation that we have made much dramatic progress expanding our worldwide presence over the past few years.

I must also remind you that a further outcome of the Alexandria conference was the meeting that was held during the conference to progress the formation of an Arabic-speaking affiliate group, which will be another milestone in our history.

Armagh Planetarium has started to work with programmers on collaborative projects using iPhones, iPods and iPads to bring basic astronomy to everyone. We recently have launched Pocket Sky, a free version of a bigger application called Pocket Universe.

We are also launching a free quiz application called Space Brains, which we have created with our friends at the Blackrock Castle Observatory in Cork in the south of Ireland.

My interest in promoting this thrust towards new ways of spreading the word about astronomy has been reinforced and underpinned by my observations of small children (2-year-olds) interacting with iPad applications.

The thing that is most impressive, and due in no small part to the skills of the programmers, is the almost instant response to a finger on the touch screen. One of my small guinea pigs calls this her magic finger, as it enables her to bake virtual cakes, match tiles, and make jigsaws and a host of other things, including a cartoon hippo who echoes anything she says.

I tested this with some international friends in Korea last week, and what makes the hippo's simple echolalia most impressive is that it is truly multilingual, and echoes all languages. Just think about that for a moment, this is a

*(Continues on Page 46)*

dome to wider circles beyond planetariums. The Symposium provided tremendous opportunities for outreach and bridge building.

"I thought we had a pretty good idea of what we could do with our new digital dome, but the Fulldome Summit completely blew me away," commented Terry Burton, Digital Media coordinator at the Fort Collins Museum & Discovery Science Center, which is building a brand new museum facility—including a 36-ft digital dome theater. "To have the opportunity to spend three days in the world of immersive media was not only hugely inspirational, it came at a perfect time in the development of our project."

David Pentecost is project manager at the Center for Community, a new science center being built in New York that will include a planetarium. He found inspiration in the photography workshop given by Greg Downing and Eric Hanson, principals at xRez Studio and producers of *Crossing Worlds*, a contemplative sequence of landscapes shot in the southwest United States and set to music.

"They used some techniques, little 3D tricks, that are complex to pull off shooting still photography," said Pentecost. "They are very skilled photographers and it was great to hear them explain what they did and then participate in the Spherical Panoramic Photography

and Composition workshop with them."

Pentecost further commented regarding the fulldome community: "It is a hearty group of pioneers. The halls should be packed at the next Summit." IMERSA's board members agree that the Summit and Symposium presented fulldome at its best and was a high point in the positioning of the format and its potential.

The content showed well on the Gates Planetarium dome, and the presentations demonstrated significant attention to the aesthetic aspects of the medium, not just the technology. The bar continues to ascend for top shows in production and for the caliber of producers and suppliers working in the fulldome medium.

**Note:** Most of the Fulldome Summit sessions were videotaped and will be accessible on IMERSA.org in the near future. ☆



Above: Tito Dupret during his Spherical Panorama talk at the Gates; Right: The IMERSA Fulldome Summit workshop with Bob Patterson. Photos all rights reserved, DMNS



*(President, continued from Page 6)*

stunning achievement.

I am just waking up to the possibilities of using iPad technology to interact with children with special needs, and with those with cerebral palsy and other debilitating diseases.

**Leaderless, but not for long**

Finally, I want to leave you with an intriguing thought. Owing to the nature of the workings of our planet's time zones and the geography of where I will be at midnight on December 31st, I will become past-president before Dave takes over as president. Shock horror!

We will be leaderless for some hours, as I will be on New Zealand's east coast as the

year changes, so I will pass on the responsibility to Dave at 00:00 Auckland time. But because Dave will still be in a North American time zone, I am idly speculating that during this interregnum, we will be technically leaderless for some hours. I promise to remain as vigilant as possible in case there are any potential coups or kidnaps by disaffected Little Green Men.

So as president of the IPS, and personally to all of you living around our beautiful, fragile, blue dot of a planet, I wish all of you well. I hope that all of your personal plots and plans gain much traction, and that your politicians and local government officials will see the wisdom of investment in knowledge at times of crisis.

And I hope that you all continue to enjoy living in these amazing times and enjoy the stunning images and data that is flooding in from our observatories and space based telescopes. I'll look forward to saying hi to you all at our next conference at Baton Rouge in 2012. ☆

*(Jack, continued from Page 13)*

As reported in the September 2010 issue of the Astronomical League's magazine *The Reflector*, Jack Horkheimer's "Award for Exceptional Service" is for high school age League astronomers. Entries were judged by members of the Astronomical League; winners were announced in this issue along with a description of the activities for which the awards were given.

There are actually three service awards; each winner received a plaque and \$1000. A fourth Youth Journalism award of \$1000, which was open to writers ages 8-14, was also announced in this issue.

In preparation for his death, Jack had his tombstone erected several years ago in Wisconsin. It says:

*"Keep Looking Up" was my life's admonition I can do little else in my present position.*

So, wherever we planetarians gather and drink a toast to him (preferably champagne, his favorite), we will raise our glasses and say, "Keep Looking Up!" ☆

WALNUT, CALIFORNIA

**Supervisor,  
Planetarium &  
Astronomy Observatory  
Center**

Mt. San Antonio College

\$6,483/mo + 6% shift differential. Apply by 4 PM, 1/10/11 at:  
**<http://hrjobs.mtsac.edu>**  
**Only online applications accepted.**  
App/info: 909.594.5611, X4225  
An Equal Opportunity Employer