



President's Message

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Dear Friends and Fellow Planetarians,

Wow! The accolades are still pouring in for the fantastic IPS 2012 conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Conference host Jon Elvert and his marvelous team put on an amazing conference! One hallmark of an expert is to do something so well that it looks easy. That's what we observed at this year's conference.

Planning a large conference is never easy. An incredible amount of advance planning and preparation takes place. During the conference people were still registering. By the last day, 701 people had registered, but due to various factors, 689 people attended one or more days of the conference. That is the largest number, by far, for an IPS conference.

Even though it was our largest conference ever, the atmosphere was extremely warm and friendly. Much of that tone was set by the tradition of "southern hospitality" of the city. During the opening ceremony, the mayor of Baton Rouge told us that we were now part of the Baton Rouge family and were welcome in the city during the conference and any subsequent visits.

The words "hospitality," "friendship," and "networking" were prominent in the welcome messages that Jon and I wrote for the conference program that was distributed to each delegate. It was my desire that the meeting be like a big family reunion. With that in mind, I wrote the following paragraph, which I believe applies to all of our planetarium meetings, whether they be IPS or regional affiliate conferences:

The need for fellowship

A very important part of each conference is the fellowship and networking that takes place informally. Reach outside of your comfort zone. Meet new people. For veteran conference goers, remember what it was like at your first conference and make a special effort to meet delegates attending their first conference. For those of you at your first IPS meeting, take the plunge. We are a friendly group. Please get to know us and make your contribution.

On behalf of our society, I want to convey a heartfelt "thank you" to all of the conference team, keynote speakers, delegates, hotel

and catering staff, the large group of volunteers and to all the people of Baton Rouge who worked together to make this year's conference so memorable.

Council meeting decisions

The IPS Council, consisting of 22 regional affiliate representatives and 5 IPS officers, along with some IPS committee chairs and other special guests, met for two days prior to the official start of the conference. The business of the IPS could not go on without the work of these dedicated volunteers.

I must give special kudos to the fine set of officers that I am privileged to work with. We communicate often by email, Skype and phone calls. They are an immense help to the president during the Council meeting, the IPS General Assembly meeting, and indeed throughout the entire presidential term. It is a great pleasure to work with such a dedicated team of officers.

The minutes from the Council meeting and the General Assembly meeting will be published in a subsequent issue of the *Planetarian*, but here are some highlights. At each IPS conference we must start planning the conference that occurs four years in the future. The bidders make presentations during the Council and General Assembly meetings. For 2016, the bidders are the TELUS World of Science in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; Cité de l'espace, Toulouse, France; and Copernicus Science Centre, Warsaw, Poland.

Your local affiliate rep will be sharing additional information about each site with you; there will be articles about each of the three sites published in the March 2013 *Planetarian*; and information will be posted on the IPS website. The Council will choose the 2016 conference site at next year's IPS Council meeting. Please consider the merits of the sites and inform your affiliate rep of your preference.

The Council voted on some changes to

the by-laws and standing rules. You can read the details in the Council minutes, but one change I would like to note involves the election procedures. In the past, only the names of the successful candidates were announced after elections. No vote counts were published.

There are good arguments on both sides of the issue of whether or to publish the numerical results. On one hand, a candidate might feel badly if he or she ran for office and only received a few votes, and an individual with few votes might be reluctant to run again in the future. On the other hand, it is more open and democratic for the results to be published. The Council discussed the issue and made the decision that vote counts will be published after each election.

Every two years we have elections for president elect, secretary and treasurer/membership chair. At the conference, each candidate gives a short presentation. Statements by all candidates, including the secretary and treasurer/membership chair, will be posted on the IPS website. at www.ips-planetarium.org/?page=statements.

Most of you will be able to vote online during the election process in October and No-



Friends from around the world: myself with Jane and Jacob Ashong from Ghana. Jacob presented the paper "Ghana Planetarium—Turning Our Dream into Reality" at the IPS Conference in Baton Rouge. Photo by Adam Thanz

ember, but paper ballots will be available for those who need them. Please vote. Historically we haven't had a high percentage of members voting. This is your society. Please help determine where you would like to see it go in the future.

Awards luncheon highlight

So much else goes on during our conferences, but I would be remiss to not mention the awards luncheon. Many volunteers have served our profession and our society over a

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long period of time. We have no paid positions. Every two years, we recognize people who have served and made exceptional contributions.

This year we presented a number of Fellow awards and two IPS Service Awards. Awards chairperson Lars Broman will report more fully on the awards, but I want to name the two recipients of the Service Award, the highest award that IPS gives. This year we presented it to Sharon Shanks and April Whitt. Congratulations to both!

New Fellows of IPS are: Bart Benjamin, Gail Chaid, Alexandre Cherman, Alex Delivorias, Björn Hedén, Tom Mason, Christopher S. Reed, John Schroer, Sharon Shanks, and David Weinrich.

Learning at LIPS

I am finishing this column during the Live Interactive Planetarium Symposium (LIPS) at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. Over the years our planetarium presentations have changed. When planetariums first started, most of the shows were main-

ly lectures. Next came the era of prerecorded multimedia programs, followed by full-dome video. This evolution has occurred as our audiences, our technology and we ourselves have changed. Therefore, it is only natural that our programming has evolved as well.

Last year a group of vendors and planetariums decided to organize a conference devoted entirely to interactive programs. They wanted to explore methods that can be used to engage audiences so they are not just passively watching a presentation. Various planetariums have been using this approach for years, but there is still more that can be learned.

LIPS is a way of sharing what has worked in participants' planetariums and learning from each other. This year there were presentations on keeping audiences engaged, astronomical misconceptions, using LED cove lights to teach lessons on color, encouraging repeat attendance at planetariums, cosmology, guest speakers and funding.

There has been lots of excitement over the recent landing of the Curiosity rover on Mars. I was not able to watch the event live, but it

was marvelous to wake up in the middle of the night and find dozens of messages from my Facebook friends commenting on the successful landing with not a single post any other subject for the past 4 hours!

As I was driving down to LIPS, a reporter from my local newspaper called to ask what I thought about the landing. I answered that my hope is that it will excite our audiences as people of my generation were moved by the Apollo missions to the moon, that young people will be motivated to study science and technology and to pursue careers in those areas, and that somewhere there were large numbers of young girls and boys looking at that "red dot" in the sky, marveling at the fact that humanity had landed another rover on Mars and knowing that they, too, could share in humanity's ongoing quest to answer fundamental questions about our existence and explore the wonderful universe in which we live. ☆