

# President's Message



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## Meeting in Portugal

President Elect Tom Mason and I recently attended the 5th European Conference for Small and Portable Planetariums. We discovered that, of the 54 delegates, those who weren't already members were interested in joining the International Planetarium Society. We took the opportunity to encourage our new friends to join and share their experiences with the international community as well as reap the benefits of membership.



This is a photo of the Centro Multimeios de Espinho (Navegar Foundation) in Espinho, Portugal.

For more about this exciting meeting you can read Mobile News in this issue (see page 80).

## Evolution Position Paper

I recently attended a lecture sponsored by the Technology Alliance of Central New York (TACNY), given by Dr. Jason R. Wiles of the departments of Biology and Science Teaching at Syracuse University near my home.

The lecture described his journey from being raised in a family and church that taught him a literal interpretation of the Bible to his acceptance of evolution. Jason took us step by step through his higher education experience and how his mind was changed.

Afterwards I expressed my appreciation of his lecture and also mentioned the IPS position paper, "The Ancient Age of the Earth and Universe" and gave him my card.

Later he emailed me and asked for the address for the statement on our website (it's at [www.ips-planetarium.org/pubs/age-of-universe.html](http://www.ips-planetarium.org/pubs/age-of-universe.html)).

He replied, "Awesome. Thanks. I've sent the URL along to the folks at the National Center for Science Education, and they are more than pleased with the statement. They will be adding it to their Voices for Evolution page ([www.ncseweb.org/article.asp?category=2](http://www.ncseweb.org/article.asp?category=2)). I'm not sure whether they will log it as a statement from a scientific/scholarly organization (like the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Astronomical Society) or an educational organization (like the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association of Physics Teachers, or various museums on this list).

"Either way, your organization will be in good company and a valuable addition to the list. Now that it will be on the "Voices" list, and the NCSE (the organization at the front line of nearly all evolution education battles) knows about it, my guess is that your statement will be one of the first items referred to if any planetarium, member or not, is challenged by pseudo-scientific and/or religious intrusion into science education. Good show! Thanks again, and let me know if I can ever be of service to you, TACNY, or IPS. Jason"

On October 3 I received another email

confirming that the National Center for Science Education mentioned us in their newsletter. Jason reported, "This message went to thousands of people today and will be re-posted on blogs and teacher support websites all over the world. Your statement and website should see wide exposure from this. I told you NCSE would be pleased. Jason"

You never know what will transpire from a simple conversation and an effort to connect. I am glad I spoke with him!

## Political Rhetoric

As I write this column a team of IPS members and IPS Media Coordinator Jacques Guarinos are developing a statement that addresses the comments of U.S. Senator John McCain, a candidate for president of the United States in November's election. His denigration of planetariums as "foolishness" presented an opportunity not to be missed. IPS will seize this opportunity to raise public awareness of planetariums and their value to society! It is not the place of IPS to comment on the politics of any country or to promote any candidate, but we do have an obligation to correct the record if planetariums are demeaned in any way. Hopefully we will increase the profile of planetariums in some way by availing ourselves of this occasion to speak out.

## The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is Upon Us

Do not forget to visit our IPS web page for the IPS Outreach Committee's latest news about IYA 2009 ([www.ips-planetarium.org/or/comms/outreachcom.html](http://www.ips-planetarium.org/or/comms/outreachcom.html)).

During the latest conference call of the IPS Working Group, under the direction of Peter Michaud, we discussed the "100 Hours of Astronomy" initiative. This is a cornerstone project for IYA. 100 Hours of Astronomy, set for April 2-5, is a round-the-clock, worldwide event with 100 continuous hours of a wide range of public outreach. For more details go to [www.astronomy2009.org](http://www.astronomy2009.org). A suggestion: have a parallel opening event for 100 Hours of Astronomy at your science center/planetarium.

Members of the IPS Working Group discussed the following interesting suggestions for complimentary initiatives and extending the impact of IYA throughout the year:

- Explore making presentations and observing sessions in unusual settings, such as hospitals, bus/train stations, airports, other museums (such as Greek and Roman sky stories at an art museum), shopping malls or outdoor parks/plazas in a neighborhood;
- Take advantage of morning dark hours for





Part of the conference in Portugal involved networking while cruising along the beautiful Rio Douro! (Photo by Patricia Reiff.)



Tom Mason - He's a man ready to take charge. You will be seeing a lot of this posture! Photo by Susan Button

"Bus Stop Astronomy." Children waiting for school buses have a several minutes to notice and enjoy the morning sky with your help;

- Network with local community colleges, universities and observatories;
- Network with libraries by initiating community reading programs, through which age-appropriate books are selected and read, followed by get-togethers where people can discuss the book(s);
- Involve families, like through a monthly community night (work with church and community groups can have a monthly astronomy theme). During these nights you could conduct scavenger hunts, tell stories, and invite community members to bring their questions and receive discounted admission or a tee shirt as a reward. Play games or pose questions such as: "How many products can you name that have an astronomical reference?" Hold a planetarium astronomy quiz program. Suggestions for family programs can be found at NASA sites, and activity kits are available from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.
- Connect your activities with the International Day of Planetaria, March 22; Earth Hour, March 28 ([www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org)); Globe at Night, March 16-28 ([www.globe.gov/GaN](http://www.globe.gov/GaN)); and activities sponsored by Astronomers without Borders ([www.astronomerswithoutborders.org](http://www.astronomerswithoutborders.org));
- Invite community members to bring their telescopes for an observing night, or hold clinics for people to learn how telescopes work, how to by one and/or how to use the one they already have;

- Pair up with your local observatory or amateur astronomy group for local speakers;
- Obtain and show programs designed for the occasion, such as *Two Small Pieces of Glass*, *Let There Be Night*, and *The Quest of Our Cosmic Origins*.
- Use the IYA2009 trailer in your dome and museum; see [www.astronomy2009.org](http://www.astronomy2009.org).
- Remember to inform others about your activities. Some avenues for communication of IYA and 100 Hour events at your location include:  
The *Planetarian* and IPS website;  
Electronic sites, including IPS News, Dome-L, [groups.yahoo.com/group/fulldome](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fulldome), the Planetarium Network ([planetarium.ning.com](http://planetarium.ning.com)), and the IYA website.

### Conference 2010

The 20th International Planetarium Society Conference (IPS 2010) will be held at the Planetarium Science Center at the Library of Alexandria in Egypt, 26-30 June 2010.

The conference website is up and running; make sure to visit it often as plans for our next meeting develop. Go to the IPS website for a link, or go directly to [www.bibalex.org/IPS2010/home/home.aspx](http://www.bibalex.org/IPS2010/home/home.aspx).

### Some Final Words

My dear colleague and mentor, Martin George, I cannot thank you enough for the wisdom and guidance I received from you during the last four years. As president, you were a shining example of what IPS needs in a president and as past president, you continued to serve me and our members well. Thank you for being my right hand as you spread the

good word of IPS during your extensive travels.

Thank you also for initiating and writing your Past President's Message. It is a wonderful addition to our journal. However, I will not continue that column since I am already able to present news in the Mobile News column and I will also keep our new president posted on any news I have for the general membership through his column. I do invite you to continue with your excellent column, only under another name, perhaps something like the International Relations Report. We certainly look forward to all the news you can share on that front.

Lee Ann and Shawn: I absolutely would not have been able to succeed in my work during this presidency without the both of you. You are and have been, for so many years, essential in helping IPS provide the services that are so important to our members. I appreciate how much effort and perseverance it takes to hold the positions that you do. Thank You!

And, finally, this is the time when I am delighted to say that we are in for a real treat over the next two years under the presidency of Dr. Thomas Mason! I am truly looking forward to his term of office and you should be too. He has been exceedingly helpful during my presidency. During Council meetings he was ever alert and at my elbow, offering to assist me with some task. It was as if he could read my mind and accurately anticipate the assistance I would need every time! IPS members are sure to benefit from the attributes, knowledge, and experience of Tom Mason. Congratulations Tom, and I hope I can be an effective assistant during your presidency. ☆