



President's Message

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Dear Friends and Fellow Planetarians,

This week reminds me why I love my job so much. I have been giving school shows to some enthusiastic 8- and 9-year olds. They are so curious and have so many questions after the show. Their delight as they learn about the universe inspires me!

I remember discovering astronomy when I was just a few years older than they are. But it's not just the young that can be awed by space. A grandmother came to our public show and it was evident that she was just as fascinated as some of the children. Often adults will not respond to questions that I ask during my live presentation, but this visitor was just as responsive as the children and afterward asked question after question. As she left she kept repeating, "How fascinating it all is!"

I had the opportunity to participate in the Live Interactive Planetarium Symposium (LIPS) at the University of Notre Dame in August. The focus of LIPS is on live, interactive planetarium lessons that can be used in any planetarium, regardless of size or projector.

Some of the themes of this year's LIPS were connecting with your audience, enhancing performance skills, and managing classrooms. One of my favorite quotes by presenter John Kaufmann was "It's not canned versus live, but rather there is a scale between the two extremes." Notes from 2011 and 2012 LIPS sessions can be accessed at lipsymposium.org/LIPS/node/48.

Colleagues in South Korea

In October, I was invited to address the International Planetarium Movie Festival at the Gwacheon National Science Museum in Seoul, South Korea. In conjunction with the event, Dr. Kang Hwan Lee, the director of the planetarium, decided to host a meeting for South Korean planetarians.

Many new facilities are being built in the country. It's great to have a planetarium, but the staff may not know the best way to use it. Planetariums in the United States faced similar problems during the decades of the sixties and the seventies. At this time the U.S. regional affiliates and IPS were forming, in large part, to address these issues.

Planetarians attended professional development activities and discussed the possibil-

ity of forming a Korean planetarium group. I spoke to them about the history of IPS and how they might benefit from affiliation with us. I am quite sure that they will form their own local group and perhaps, in a few years, we will have a Korean IPS affiliate.

As I spoke to the group in South Korea, I was reminded of the goals of our Society. As you can read on our website, "the primary goal of the Society is to encourage the sharing of ideas among its members through conferences, publications, and networking. By sharing their insights and creative work, IPS members become better planetarians."

This goal is a distillation of the original purposes that our founders wrote 41 years ago. Last year I did some research on the origin of the International Society of Planetarium Educators (ISPE), which was later renamed IPS. In our historical archives, I found the original guidelines that the constitutional committee formulated in March 1971 at their meeting in Baton Rouge. They are six in number. Let me list them just as they were typed on the original copy that I held in my hands last year.

- The purpose of this Society shall be:
- To promote the spread of knowledge through planetarium education.
- To improve the quality of instruction in astronomy and related sciences.
- To promote and co-ordinate free exchange

of ideas and in [sic] information between planetarium institutions.

- To improve the professional standards of planetarium education through publications and conferences.
- To support and strengthen the activities of planetarium orientated groups, especially the affiliates defined within these bylaws.
- To improve free co-operation and continual dialogue between planetarium education and professional related individuals and groups.

This document is as relevant today as when it was drafted. Most of these points apply to our regional affiliates as well as to IPS. For example, many of our regional affiliate meetings have some type of astronomy update, fulfilling purpose number two. There was an astronomy update at the South Korean meeting. Every year at the Great Lakes Planetarium Association (GLPA) conference that I attend, the astronomy update is one of the highlights of the meeting. I shared the six parts of the original IPS purpose with our colleagues in South Korea and emphasized the benefits that a national organization would bring to them, even if they never become affiliated with IPS.

Passing time, and the baton

This is my last President's Message. It has been a pleasure to serve all of you in this capacity. The time has passed quickly. Four years ago, as I assumed the office of president elect, December 2012 seemed a long ways off. Now it is time for the baton to be passed to the next president.

I especially agree with the sentiments of Ron Hartman, one of the *Planetarian's* early editors. In the December 1981 issue he wrote "In any professional society, the work is shared. One makes his contribution, then turns over those duties to the next generation."

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South Korean planetarians at a regional meeting at the Gwacheon National Science Museum near Seoul. Photo provided by author.

There are still challenges and opportunities ahead for the planetarium community. We need more research to show the efficacy of planetariums in education, both formal and informal. Our *Planetarian* editor wrote about this in the March 2010 issue and later presented a paper on the subject at a GLPA conference. Yes, planetariums are inspiring, but administrators want hard data in order to provide continued funding.

IPS should take a lead in refining the questions that need to be asked about the educational efficacy of planetariums and to encourage the research necessary to determine the answers.

There are also opportunities for IPS to reach out to colleagues in developing countries and to find ways to do more collaborative projects. Jim Sweitzer was deputized to serve as the IPS representative to an IAU Office of Astronomy for Development workshop in Cape Town, South Africa last December. As this IAU program progresses there are important ways in which planetariums and IPS can help.

I want to especially thank my fellow officers. They have been a wonderful team to work with and so much of the work of our Society depends upon their contributions. On January 1, 2013 Thomas Kraupe will assume the presidency, we will have a new president elect, and I will serve as past president. Lee Ann Hennig and Shawn Laatsch will continue as secretary and treasurer/membership chair, respectively.

I also thank our affiliate representatives, committee chairs and committee members.

And finally, thank you to each of you, the members of IPS. I am so impressed by the wonderful work that you are doing, especially what I heard from many of you at the IPS conference and what I read in the *Planetarian*, *Dome-L* and other sources. I have enjoyed meeting many of you during my term as president and look forward to visiting and learning from you in the future. I extend best wishes to you for a productive 2013. ☆