

Let's have a Centennial!

Projects for the 100th Anniversary of the Planetarium

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Abstract

The 100th anniversary of the first planetarium—the Planetarium Centennial—will be observed as a nearly-two-year-long, global series of events and activities, celebrating our history, presenting what we have become, and highlighting what we plan to achieve in the future. The Centennial will showcase to the world what planetariums offer to their patrons and to society as a whole. We, the IPS Centennial Working Group, are now launching multiple projects for the Centennial, and we invite everyone to discuss with us how to best present the Centennial in social media, in print, in planetarium shows, in public events—and more!

I. Background

The first public presentation of a planetarium projection took place in October 1923, and the first permanent planetarium opened to the public in May 1925. The upcoming 100th anniversary of these events, the Planetarium Centennial, is a unique opportunity to highlight what planetariums are offering today. The IPS Council has thus determined, back in 2017, that IPS should use this opportunity to attract public attention for the planetariums around the world, and to showcase what planetariums today can do for society. In a word, the Centennial should be employed as a large “marketing” initiative for the planetariums.

With this aim in mind, the IPS Centennial Working Group was formed in late 2017, during the Pleiades National Planetarium Conference in St. Louis, USA. One early discussion was whether to celebrate the Centennial in 2023, 2025, or both years, or all of 2023–2025. After collecting much input and in-depth discussion of the benefits, we arrived at the current plan:

The Centennial celebrations and projects should start in October 2023, the anniversary of the first demonstration of a planetarium projector (in a temporary setting), last through 2024 and into 2025, and culminate on May 7th, 2025, the anniversary of the opening of the first projection planetarium. Projects such as exhibitions, shows, etc., could thus

launch in October 2023 and run until mid-2025, with a final “100th birthday of the planetarium” ceremony on May 7th, 2025.

II. Planned projects

In 2018, brainstorming sessions were held at the IPS conference in Toulouse as well as at some affiliate conferences, collecting input and ideas from the community and resulting in a list of more than 100 concrete ideas for projects and activities. Further input was collected online.

Since the working group is not able to work on that many projects, instead all proposals were discussed, and ranked, leading us to a two-tier shortlist of “core” projects that we want to focus on:

1st tier

- Centennial Website / Centennial on social media: YouTube, Twitter, Instagram
- fulldome teaser
- Centennial-branded t-shirt / apparel
- “digital exhibit” (poster design to reprint by everyone)
- at least one global celebratory event, e.g., on May 7th, 2025

2nd tier

- planetarium show
- planetarium history textbook / image-heavy book on planetariums of the world / booklet
- TV documentary
- online calendar of astronomical discoveries 1923 - 2023, “calendar of planetariums”
- domecasting series (100 domecasts)
- travelling exhibit, organized by IPS or by affiliates
- establish a new “IPS day of planetariums”: May 7th, the “birthday of the planetariums”
- more than just one celebration event, e.g., a launching event in October 2023

This list does not mean that we want to limit ourselves to just these projects. In fact, each and every project for the Centennial that someone wants to work on is most welcome! This list is merely that of “core” projects that we think should be realized in any case, thus we are currently focusing on these.

These are “global” projects that should be available, once they’re finished, to every planetarium in the world. But we also invite everyone to think about creating your own regional, or local projects! We plan to highlight such projects in your region or your city on

a “Centennial World Map” on the upcoming website. Thus, please work out *your* ideas and get in touch with us!

III. Laying the foundations

As a foundation for all further activities, the Centennial needs a slogan, logo; as well as as a website URL that’s easy to memorize. That URL is: planetarium100.org
Versions of this website in different languages should use the same “planetarium100” line, but under different top-level domains (e.g. “.cn”, “.ru”, “.fr”, ...).

The slogan to be used by all Centennial projects should be:

“Centennial of the Planetarium — the stars were only the beginning.”

This line captures the main “ingredients” of the Centennial: There’s an anniversary, it’s about stars, but also about more than “just” stars; today, planetariums do offer so much more than back in those days; and they’re striving to offer even more in the future.

Even more important than the slogan and URL is a logo. IPS held a logo design contest, and chose the winning design in late 2019, submitted by our member Emily Hromi:



IV. Current work

Before starting these projects, however, the working group needs to find financial support, and hands-on help from the community for each individual project. It is very helpful that the Society of German-Language Planetariums (GDP) formed its own Centennial Working Group in 2018: They have started to prepare regional projects for the anniversary, but they have also launched a fundraising initiative to even help fund the global “core” projects together with IPS. We are now negotiating with several foundations and companies, and are hopeful that the money will be there to realize most, if not all, the projects on our list.

So far, the IPS and GDP groups have done preparatory work “only”: We’ve determined slogan and logo, identified the “core” projects, have started to find funding, are currently preparing a “flat” trailer video to be released shortly, have laid the foundations for a Centennial website also to be released shortly, and are currently running a series of *#MilestoneMonday* posts on IPS’s social media channels to raise awareness of the upcoming Centennial.

V. Launching the projects

After laying the foundations, now is the time to launch the “core” projects, so that they are ready to be presented in October 2023!

For this—for every project on our shortlist—we are currently looking for hands-on support from the community:

- Who is interested in helping us to program, write, and edit content for a website?
- Who is interested in planning, editing, and coordinating the release of a planetarium history textbook, or other printed publications for the Centennial?
- Who is interested in working with us on the “Domecast 100” project, i.e., find, plan and coordinate opportunities, speakers, and content for a year-long series of Domecasting events? Who is interested in working with us on any technological hurdles that may arise during this project?
- Who could work with us on a “digital” (poster) exhibition on the history of the planetariums, or even on “physical” (traveling) exhibitions, ideally one for each affiliate region?
- Who can offer help in planning, designing, and preparing the launching event (October 2023) or the final “100th birthday” event (May 7th, 2025)?

Ideally, each of those core projects would be prepared by one “sub-group” of our Centennial Working group. We ask everyone who is interested in working with us on any of those projects to get in touch with us!

Also, if you have your own idea for a project in your region, or “just” in your planetarium or your city, please work out your ideas and let us now! We plan to highlight *your* projects in 2023–2025 on our Centennial website world map.

Let’s work together on making the Centennial a global success, with one clear aim: In 2023–2025, everyone in the world should hear about planetariums, and learn what awesome experiences they are offering *today*!