

IPS UPDATE 2004

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Abstract: The International Planetarium Society (IPS) is at an organizational crossroad as it considers major restructuring to address challenges of the evolving planetarium community. Meanwhile, expanding IPS services continue to benefit members.

IPS at Organizational Crossroad

The International Planetarium Society (IPS) is at an organizational crossroad. Recently a consultant reviewed the IPS structure, operations, budget, and member services. Many issues colored the spectrum of IPS strengths and weaknesses. At the biennial conference in Valencia, the consultant presented the results of surveys, interviews, and analysis, with an implementation plan for two courses of action. See *Executive Summary Excerpt* below.

The recommendations essentially were for IPS either to remain as it is, or to “professionalize” the Society. The latter suggestion includes hiring a full-time secretariat to facilitate streamlined committees, systematic database management, professional accreditation, membership acknowledgements, and expanded member services. The secretariat position would give the planetarium community a dedicated advocate, but it would come at a cost that would likely require a sliding scale for membership dues.

As the GLPA regional representative to IPS, I solicit input from GLPA members at the Detroit conference regarding the current and future roles of the IPS in the planetarium community, the implications of proposed changes, and general feedback. During this conference (and afterward) please share your opinion about these ideas.

“Under the Southern Skies” in 2006

The XVIII IPS Conference will be in Melbourne, Australia. Get down under July 24-27, 2006, at the Melbourne Planetarium in the Scienceworks Museum, with pre- and post-visit trips to observatories, to astronomy centers, and to Tasmania.

The conference hosts write: “Don’t miss this fantastic opportunity to see the Southern Skies! At the Dark Sky site tour you will be able to look up and see the centre of the Milky Way directly overhead. The Conference program will include the latest advancements in astronomy, theatre management and technology, while providing a great forum

for the exchange of ideas and views on astronomy education and visitor experience.

See <http://www.ips2006.com/> for details.

Where Do You Want To Be In 2008?

Four sites have submitted bids to host the 2008 IPS Conference:

Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Chabot Space & Science Center, Oakland, California, USA
Glasgow Science Center, Glasgow, Scotland
Lic Felipe Rivera Planetarium, Morelia, Mexico

Please let me know your preference.

Benefits of IPS Membership

Benefits of IPS Membership include, but are not limited to:

- The full-color quarterly journal *Planetarian*, filled with insightful articles and news pertinent to the planetarium community;
- Journal inserts and CDs from NASA, the Planetary Society, and others;
- Outstanding biennial conferences around the world;
- *Proceedings* of all talks presented at conferences;
- Free publications, including the *Directory of the World’s Planetariums* and the *IPS Resource Directory*;
- Discounted subscription rates to the IPS slide service and IPS video compilations;
- Networking on all scales, from local to global.

IPS dues are only \$50.00 a year, or \$90.00 for two years. Institutional and Corporate levels are available.

For more information or to join, please contact:

Shawn Laatsch
IPS Treasurer
P.O. Box 1812
Greenville, NC 27835
USA

Finally, ask me about advertising in the *Planetarian*, for I am the journal's advertising coordinator. Rates, deadlines, and mechanical requirements are at <http://www.griffithobs.org/IPSratesheet4.htm>.

Executive Summary Excerpt

The excerpt below is a partial, preliminary summary from the consultants, Ian C. McLennan & Robert J. Ballantyne. Note that there are two main scenarios.

IPS Study 2004
International Planetarium Society
Planning Report
Executive Summary
02 June 04

Principal Options for IPS Council and Membership Consideration. Note: There is an incremental cost-of-membership for each recommendation beyond the status quo.

Scenario #1: Consider maintaining the status quo

IPS is a volunteer organization plus a Journal (Four issues per year)

Membership fees pay for:

- o Mainly the subscription to "The Planetarian" and some other publications*
- o A small number of expenses such as Directors' Insurance and conference support*

There are little or no resources to make substantial changes to IPS or to deal with broader, policy matters

The work of IPS is carried out by volunteers

- o Most of the volunteer work is excellent*
- o Some committees seem to languish – however, this is not unusual in an organization of this size.*
- o IPS is a club, not really a professional society. This may be satisfactory to a majority of the membership – but could be tested against alternative options*

Reasons to accept this scenario:

- o No increase in fees (other than inflation). Many members pay out-of-pocket, or from modest*

- budgets and may find an increase a hardship.*
- o For many members, "The Planetarian" is helpful, and a satisfactory enough membership benefit*

Reasons to reject this scenario

- o IPS will remain limited to about 600 members*
- o IPS' future will depend on the stability of the industry – without the means to influence it, as a collective organization*
- o IPS will not be a global, professional society*

Scenario# 2: Consider transforming IPS into global society for planetarium professionals

Consult with members and prospective members about the possibilities and expectations of a professional society

Change the governance structure

- o Council is gradually replaced by a small Board (7 or 9 members) elected directly by, and accountable to the membership*
- o A broader Advisory Council made up of regionals and international reps could provide overview/institutional continuity*

Offer a new membership structure – sliding scale

- o Individual membership rate – based on size of institution and ability to pay*
- o Institutional membership with an increment for additional representatives*
- o Affiliate membership for vendors and other professionals – with full participation opportunities*
- o Effect the proposed transition over time (2 to 4 years) to minimize any negative impacts*

Welcome/recruit a wider cross-section of planetarium professionals

- o IPS is perceived as a club of planetarium directors/managers*
- o Recruit everyone in the planetarium profession and business*
 - Planetarium directors (certainly)
 - All of the skills employed by planetariums (e.g. artists, technicians, front-of-house, administration, producers, musicians, astronomers, etc.)
 - Vendors and suppliers to the planetarium industry. (The prejudice against this sector is not productive and should be recognized and abolished.)
 - Board members
 - Executives and governors of institutions that host a planetarium. Include those who devote any significant amount of their job to the planetarium (e.g. the head of purchasing or the CFO of the parent organization)

- When recruiting, be inclusive, not exclusive.

- o Attend to and understand the reasons people join a professional society
 - Networking (learning new about industry developments, about colleagues and events, and sharing new ideas and concepts)
 - Career advancement (employers learn of suitable candidates, job seekers find opportunities for advancement or new business)
 - Recognition of peers

Hire a small secretariat

- o *To ensure rigorous membership recruitment and renewal; maintain an up-to-date data base*
- o *To maintain and communicate an awareness of members' issues and problems*
- o *To provide some support for committees and Board (formerly Council)*
- o *To ensure appropriate care and recognition of volunteers*
- o *Secretariat could be 'hosted' by an institution... IPS Board would solicit and accept best offer*

Run IPS conferences every year (alternate years in North America)

- o *To ensure continuity of action and facilitate on-going communication*

Reasons to accept this scenario:

- o *Membership renewals and promotion pursued with a vigour similar to magazine subscriptions*
- o *A complete history and electronic database of membership, volunteer, and budgetary records*
- o *Daily support and attention to the work of*

committees, the Board, and to current global planetarium issues

- o *IPS can be active and effective on major planetarium issues*
 - Standardization and program exchange
 - Planetarium closures
 - Accreditation (professional and institutional)
 - Compensation and similar personnel concerns
 - Identification of long term trends affecting members' interests
- o *Appropriate attention to the recruitment, training, support and recognition of volunteers*
- o *Volunteers can focus their valuable time on issues-of-substance to the profession, rather than administrative matters*
- o *Support of a small board is less expensive than a large council*
- o *A small governing board can be attentive to more issues, and meeting time is more effective*
- o *The Board is clearly a fiduciary for the members, not representative of regional organizations. The board's first loyalty is to the membership*

Reasons to reject this scenario:

- o *The cost of the secretariat will result in an increase in membership fees*
- o *Those who are satisfied with the status quo, or feel they cannot afford the increment in fees may choose to resign as members. This (perhaps temporary) slump in membership may make the transition to a professional society a difficult period*
- o *The alternate year conferences (North America) may clash with one or more of the regional meetings in North America*

Recommendation: Consider creating a comprehensive online community for IPS members

Consult with members regarding the benefits of an online community...

[The summary continues with other recommendations related to the online community.]