



Benefits of Attending a Great Lakes Planetarium Association (GLPA) Conference

*“If I were to go into a room with **everyone** from my entire district who does anything close to what I do, I would be standing in a room all by myself.”*

Sue Batson, Planetarium Teacher
North Hills High School, Pittsburgh, PA

Top 10 Reasons to Attend a GLPA Conference

1. **Professional development** significantly enriches the professional life of a planetarian, leading to success and greater job satisfaction at his/her home planetarium.
2. **Networking** and informal sharing among colleagues is frequently cited as one of the most valuable experiences of a conference.
3. **Conference attendance** inspires, rejuvenates, and energizes delegates.
4. **National and regional science education standards** are interpreted and relayed to delegates by GLPA representatives who keep pace with new and evolving information.
5. **New technologies and products** are demonstrated side-by-side with new educational techniques and innovations.
6. **Commercial and peer-produced planetarium shows** that span a range of programming complexity and cost are presented.
7. **Up-to-date astronomical discoveries** are featured in talks by experts.
8. **Ideas for integrating non-astronomy disciplines** with astronomy or presenting them independently in the planetarium are conveyed.
9. **Programs and teaching techniques** are demonstrated in different-sized domes and with different equipment to give delegates different perspectives.
10. **Resources** that relate to delegates' responsibilities outside the dome (such as budgeting, purchasing, administration) are available at conferences.

Currently, there are more than 1,000 planetariums in the US serviced by seven regional planetarium associations. The Great Lakes Planetarium Association (GLPA) is the largest and offers the greatest number of member services. In its almost-50 years of existence, GLPA has maintained a record of providing excellent leadership in all facets of the planetarium profession. The GLPA Executive Committee and conference host institutions consistently have worked to establish guidelines that maintain and expand the quantity and quality of offerings. A comprehensive Proceedings encompassing all papers, posters, and workshops is provided to attendees after every conference.

Elaboration of the Top 10 Reasons to Attend a GLPA Conference

1. A planetarium conference is the best and most appropriate type of conference a planetarian can attend. Any other type of professional development only covers tangentially aligned topics at best. All the attendees work in similar environments and experience the same problems, concerns, and opportunities. Conference attendance by staff helps parent institutions retain creative and knowledgeable employees.
2. Delegates share best practices, test ideas, find solutions, and learn from others what works and what doesn't. Finding another colleague with similar problems or concerns creates an invaluable connection that can seldom be developed by e-mail or a phone call alone. The colleague gives feedback, offers a second opinion, and helps solve problems. This connection serves as an important resource between conferences.
3. Delegates frequently state on their conference evaluations that they take back to their facilities not only new ideas, but renewed determination and motivation for delivering excellence in job performance and student achievement.
4. GLPA, a leader in researching and analyzing science education standards, has constructed a grade-specific concept scope and sequence document for astronomy literacy, and used that document as input into the design of the new science standards. The document will be aligned with the new standards (when finished) and will continue to be of great service to K–12 teachers. GLPA provides workshops and talks about the new science standards.
5. Comparing and contrasting equipment, in place, helps ensure appropriate and financially sound decisions regarding equipment upgrades. In addition, seeing new technology often generates ideas not only about equipment, but also on how to better use current technology.
6. Watching others' planetarium shows provides opportunities to evaluate programs that can be added to a repertoire. It also sparks creative ideas for in-house productions. Additionally, conference participants may receive free planetarium shows and materials when available.
7. The annual Astronomy Update Lecture covers most major discoveries that have taken place during the past year, as well as explores the frontiers of astrophysics and cosmology. Since knowledge about scientific topics is constantly changing, the lecture updates what had been current thinking and clarifies misconceptions so delegates can incorporate the most current information into their teaching and programming.
8. Seeing how colleagues incorporate a wide range of topics (such as physics, chemistry, biology, geography, math, language, history, and health—as well as astronomy) into the planetarium provides delegates with ideas on how to serve a broader, more diverse audience. Multidisciplinary programming covers a wide range of standards, thereby benefiting student achievement. Papers, posters, and shows illustrate how these unrelated subjects can be linked.
9. Access to a variety of planetarium forums helps delegates learn how to utilize their home planetariums in the best possible ways.
10. Planetarians wear many hats in addition to their planetarium responsibilities (i.e. budgeting, purchasing, administration). Conferences provide delegates with resources on these topics to supplement their scientific and technical knowledge.