Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan

Besser Museum, Museum of Alpena Michigan

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Enc: (1) October goals

(2) GLPA

(3) Mercury Transit plans

(4) Headland's Dark Sky Park

(4) Attendance

(5) November goals

1. October 2019 was an unexpected month of absence. During the month of October, I came down with an illness, hurt my leg while working at home, and attended the 2019 GLPA conference. All in all, about half of the normally available time for work was actually accessible this month. In spite of this time handicap, I was still able to accomplish some of my goals for the month, as well as objectives I had not planned on in the previous month. A couple of projects that fall into this category are the boy scouts show and the establishment of collaboration with the headland's Dark Sky park, both of which required extra work that was not expected at the end of September. While overall work time was not as high as some previous months, the few projects that I've been able to work on did see success.

    a. Boy Scouts show. I was notified during the days leading up to my departure for GLPA that the boy scouts group wanted a planetarium show that was similar to Michigan Skies Live, except covering all 4 seasons. At the time of the request I did not have anything like this created and trying to manually run an hour-long show without an ATM-4 script can be challenging and prone to issues. This led me to create a changing season show based around the concept of MSL. Since I did not have a lot of time to produce and plan for this show I stuck to topics and objects that I was already familiar with. While the show was not as good as I would have liked, it was more than satisfactory for the situation and based upon the natural discussion that the boy scouts created, I believe that they thoroughly enjoyed the program too. I can use this show again in the future but I'll have to edit it a little bit to remove segments I thought unsatisfactory.

2. Great Lakes Planetarium Association conference. At the end of the month I had the pleasure of attending the 2019 GLPA conference, in Toledo, Ohio. More prepared and experienced this time around, I was able to make the most of GLPA 2019. I managed to attend more of the conference, network with more people, and learn more about the incredible things others are doing inside this community. Since writing a full report on GLPA would be rather time consuming, I will instead do a brief overview of each day and discuss some of the highlights that stuck out in my mind.

    a. Day 1. The first day of GLPA for most people is rather uneventful, the typical schedule is for people to show up and attend the introductory dinner where GLPA event staff and committee members give brief oversight about the conference. At the end of the dinner the sponsors supporting GLPA get time to discuss what their products are for the year. However, my time was mostly spent at GLIPSA, an optional event that covers most of the morning and afternoon, with a focus on live education inside the planetarium. Some of the highlights of the event saw professional educators giving lectures on how to best use questions (from yourself and the audience) to enhance the education experience. There were also several small education "games", one of which had us group up and teach the rest of the program attendees about a topic that we received a random. During this "game" we only had a couple minutes to plan out our class and then another minute to actually teach complex astronomy topics. I really liked this "game" because it showed me that sometimes all your audience needs is the how and not the why. While the GLIPSA program may cost $30 extra it has proven to me once again to be more than worth that fee, as the skills and knowledge I've gained from this session distinctly stand out in my mind, and I'd gladly go back again next year.

    b. Day 2. The second day of GLPA had the paper session presentations, as well as the guest speaker Robert Dempsy, a NASA ISS flight director. While no single person can attend all of the papers, videos of all the sessions are online for viewing and I will observe them at a later date to catch up on what I missed. What I participated in though had some interesting content from several planetariums. One paper of note that day focused on children's programs in the planetarium. these programs are a mix of live interactive shows and prerecorded shows. While I am unsure if I could produce a pre-recorded show by myself at this point, the ideas to integrate interactive elements into children's programming was inciteful.

    Guest Speaker Robert Dempsey. Having attended the University of Toledo, Robert Dempsey, a UT alumna, is someone who I've heard talk before. The man is not in the field of informal education, technically speaking, but his job does require him to be able to clearly and concisely communicate with the astronauts aboard the ISS, which gives Mr. Dempsey a very engaging style of speech. Listening to Mr. Dempsey speak is not only entertaining but also educational, as listening to a master storyteller inspires me to improve my own oration ability.

c. Day 3. The third day of GLPA saw another round of paper sessions, as well as the 2019 astronomy update. The papers on day 2 stood out as being more useful to me than those of day 1, as the content seemed more relevant to our own capabilities here at Besser. For instance, the main paper that I wish to cover here was about The Astronomy in Chile Educator Ambassadors **Program** (**ACEAP)**, which is a collaboration between AUI, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, National Optical Astronomy Observatory, and Gemini Observatory, and is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF 1439408). This program is a 10-day trip to Chile, where I would learn about the research, technology, and educational possibilities of the observatories in Chile. Those in the past who have taken part of the program said that the cost for taking part was only that of the plane tickets, a cheap price for such a vast wealth of knowledge and experience. This program also ties in perfectly with a free fulldome program being released next year about the Chile telescope program, which was created by a group of planetarium workers who took part in the ACEAP. While I have not begun work on submitting my application as of yet, I do intend on doing so for the 2020 trip.

   It was also during this paper that I learned about some 360 cameras that the presenter used to gather full dome pictures and videos while on this trip. The presenter had two different cameras that they used while down there, but my interest was torn towards the Insta 360x, a 360-camera capable of recording both video and pictures that can easily be converted to a dome format. I will look into this camera more and see how it compares to competitor cameras in quality, utility, and price. I will present this list later in November if everything works out. John French, from the Lansing planetarium also mentioned to me that if we would like to test this camera out in person, he'd be more than willing to lend one from his planetarium, as they have several.

   Astronomy update 2019. The astronomy update is a special segment of GLPA where a list of astronomy news and events from the past year is covered in detail. My main take away from this event is the plethora of fascinating astronomy news that I might have missed throughout the year, as well as updates all of those I didn't. This information is useful for me because it's not only fascinating to myself, but what I imagine is also interesting for the general public too. One of my commonly asked questions in the planetarium is based on information like this, stories and papers about astronomical events that make the headlines. It's also really fun for me to be able to have an open dialogue with guests about a topic that interests us both, which is always a positive experience.

   On a less positive note, the end of the third day is also when the special banquet is held, the one that costs an extra $50 to attend. This was my first time attending the banquet, so I'm not sure if the quality of this year's is any indication of others, but overall, I can't say I'm very impressed with it. The meal itself was mixed in quality, and the banquet speaker's speech seemed rather inappropriate, some people

discussing how they could write formal complaints about the whole ordeal. This was all a little surprising to me to be honest as the GLPA organization is making a huge push to teach and practice inclusiveness and diversity whenever they can, so I can't help but feel that this segment is not a reflection of the organization as a whole.

On the bright side though, I met a planetarium worker from the Detroit science museum who wanted to come up to Alpena and observe at our dark sky parks. This turned into us planning on making the outing an official event for both of our organizations. If all things go well, we'll have another partnering organization in the region we can work with. Honestly, despite the rest of the banquet being unappealing, the whole thing worked out in the end. So maybe I'll give the banquet another shot next year.

d. Day 4. The final day of GLPA was originally going to have a 3rd paper session, but this segment was removed right before the conference began, due to a lack of papers to fill the two-hour time slot. This left extra time for other events happening on the final day, such as the business meeting and end of conference events, like door prize giveaway. I actually won a signed copy of a book that Mr. Dempsey partook in creating, which is a solid improvement over last year's pair of socks that are too small for me. This extra time also let me sit down and talk with more people at GLPA, getting to know my peers a little better and hopefully making lasting impressions on all of them. The whole day wasn't fun and games though, as it's through the business meeting that I learned about some free resources that GLPA offers, such as planetarium shows and even small grants for planetarium projects, both of which I intend to take full advantage of.

   All things considered, I really enjoyed GLPA 2019, both on a personal level and a professional one and I believe that the information and contacts that I made at this year's event will be useful for me and the Besser planetarium as we go forward.

3. With November 11th approaching quickly, the Mercury Transit event is ever present on my mind. I want to make this event a memorable one for people, and I also want to use it as a recruiting opportunity for the astronomy club and the planetarium as a whole. This year's transit of Mercury is an exceptionally rare event and will likely be the last opportunity for many people to see a transit in their lifetime. It is due to this exceptional circumstance that I have set forth several events to make sure that our transit party is a memorable experience for everyone who attends. The events I plan on having are as follows:
   a. Transit viewing outside. I will have two solar safe telescopes set up outside in the parkin lot, where we will be observing the transit all throughout the morning, and up to the end of the event. The only other resource I will need for this part will be a cordon of the back half of parking lot out front, on the side closest to the main road and our sign. While we may be set up in the grass next to the parking lot, I want to make sure that people coming and going to our telescopes

are not having to interact with cars and traffic, so hopefully we can keep everyone safe throughout the event.

b. JNKS planetarium video. Dan Zelinski has released a short video about the Mercury Transit, and on 11th I will et it up to where the planetarium doors will be open, and the video will play on loop. I don't plan on charging anyone for this video or any subsequent aspects of the event, but I figured that if these people will be wandering around the museum then we should at least charge them museum admission fees.

c. At the same time as these two events are taking place, I want to have a live stream of the transit up and running in one of the galleries. This will simply require the projector, a laptop (presumably my work one), the folding screen, and some chairs. My idea is that we setup the live stream on laptop and simply have it projecting onto the screen, and with a few chairs set up people can come and go as they please. This will be especially important if the weather is anything except favorable on that day, as without a direct line of sight to the sun, we'll be unable to properly view the transit. There's actually a funny story about Guillaume Le Gentil, an astronomer from the 1700s who traveled thousands of miles and spent 8 years of his in an attempt to view two separate transits of Venus (an event even rarer than a Mercury transit) but failed to view either due to bad weather. It's actually a little dark, but it makes for a good story the none the less, and I'm sure our guests will find it entertaining at the very least.

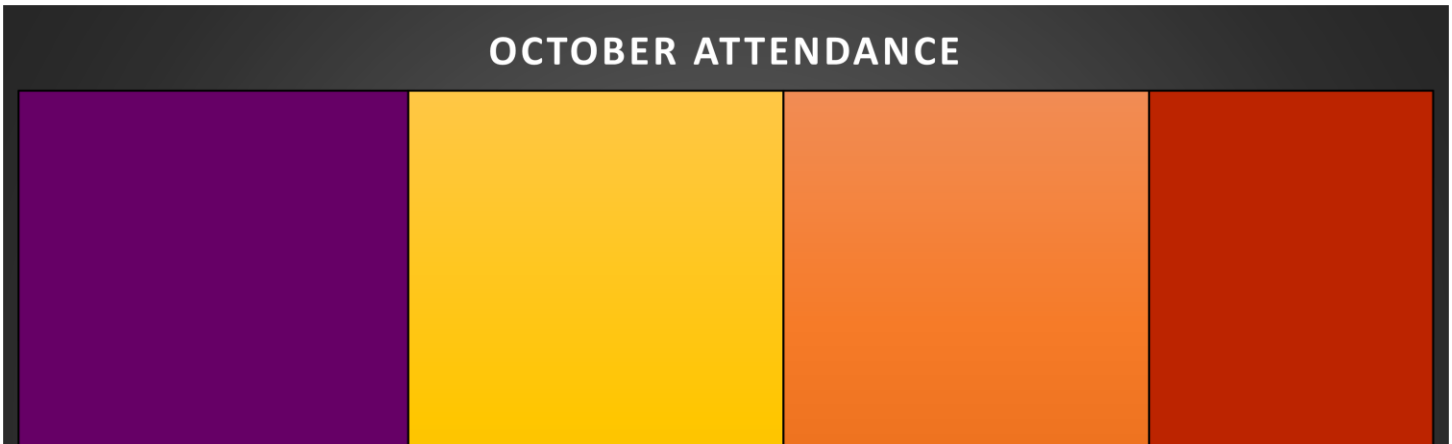
d. Lastly, during the event I would like to have flyers for the Geminids meteor shower created and printed out, distributing them to anyone who shows up for the viewing. I also want to craft a small astronomy club card, the size of a business card, and hand them out to anyone who fills out a basic form that lets us contact them with astronomy club events and news. I should hopefully have these two items fashioned and printed out by 11th.

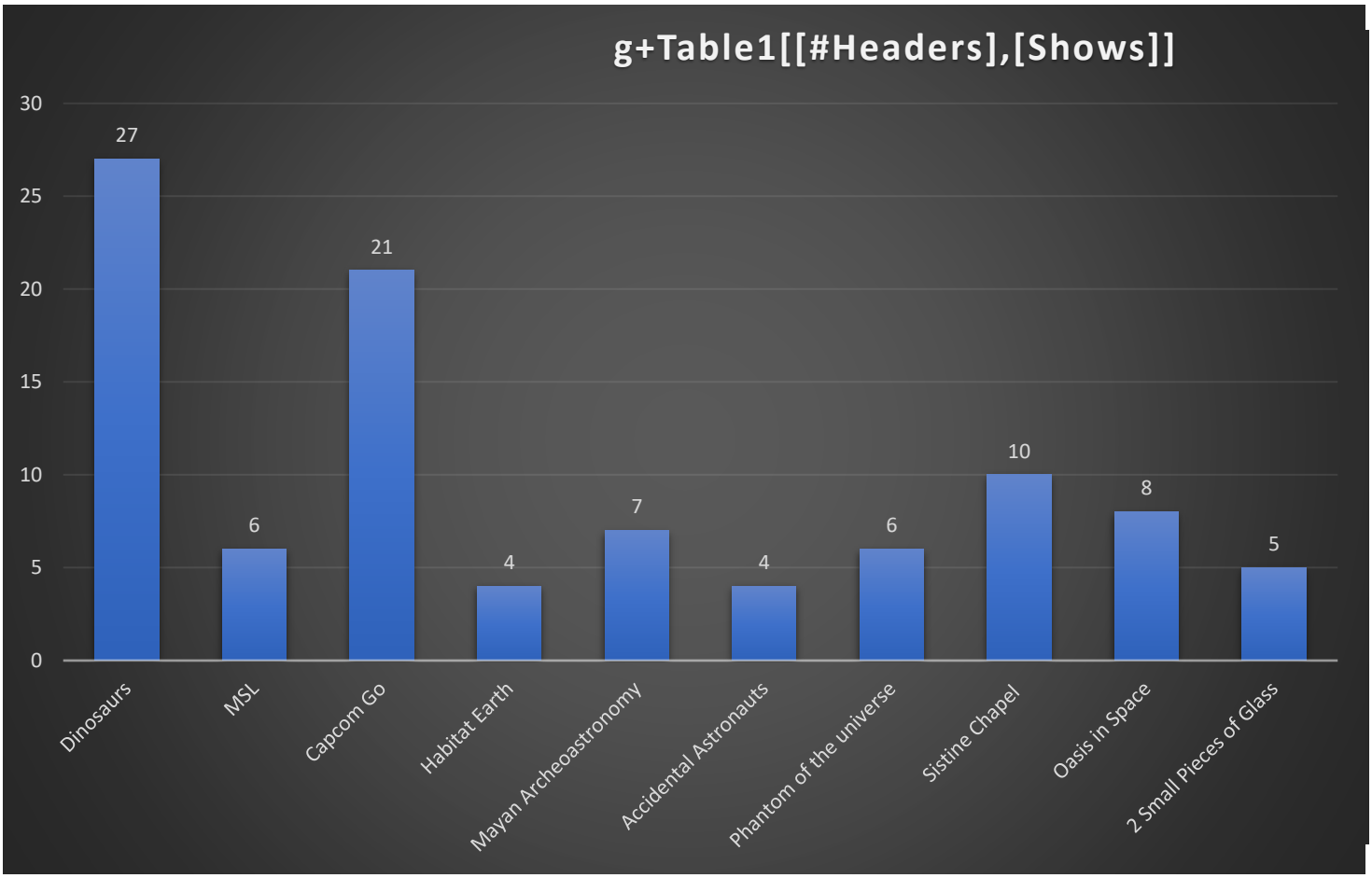
4. Collaboration with Headland's dark sky park. As of right now I have gone up and met most of the staff at the headlands, getting an assessment of their situation and staff. The headlands seem to be in a bit of an interesting situation, they have the facilities and resources to present their dark sky and astronomy to the public but are lacking any trained astronomical professionals to operate their equipment or to educate and engage guests. This situation works in our favor w can provide them with my knowledge and experience, and they can work with us to help promote our planetarium. Building a lasting relationship with this park will work well for us in the long run, as we currently both fill a niche for the other, and even in the future will likely compliment each other. Their telescope and dark skies, and our planetarium go hand in hand.
    a. Geminids meteor shower. Our current plan for the Geminids is not overtly complicated as of right now. So far, the objective is for me to travel up to the park the night of the meteor shower, whereupon I will give a short speech about

meteor showers and the Geminids. This will be followed up with observing the night sky in a manner similar to our other meteor shower events, I stand by at the telescopes and use them to point out and observe objects with anyone interested in seeing them. This will go on from 9pm-11pm, after which the event will be over, however, the staff said people tend to stay all through put the night, so I may simply spend more time hanging around and observing if I have the energy for it. I intend on staying up in a cabin at the park itself, where I will rest and then return home the next day. As Sunday is a slow day, and since John Heath won't be able to run all of the shows that day, we will simply not have any planetarium programing on Sunday the 15th. This is just an outline for now about these events, and discussion with the Headlands park will continue on throughout the month until we finalize everything. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

5. Attendance in October was a slow for general admission. There wasn't a lot of general attendance for the planetarium this month, as only **98** people showed up for regularly scheduled planetarium shows. Despite poor general attendance, group and event attendance was decently high this month, with **161** people showing up for group events and **195** people for Fall Harvest Day. In total **454** guests attended planetarium shows this month.

6. November Goals. For November I have 3 primary goals, the successful completion of the transit of Mercury event, the completion of the majority of Michigan Skies Live Winter, and the disposal/ donation of all of the old planetarium equipment. There are of course smaller objectives, such as finishing up the logistics of our upcoming Geminids shower party at the Headland's park, but that is mostly finished anyway and isn't expected to require much more time on our behalf. If I can complete these objectives before the end of November, I will simply move onto smaller projects that I would like to work on, such as the scale solar system model and enhancing the contents of older live programs.

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