



Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan

Besser Museum, Museum of Alpena Michigan

Museum of Alpena, Michigan, 491 Johnson Street 49707-9998

From: Planetarium Coordinator of Besser Museum

To: Executive Director of Besser Museum

Subj: December Action report

Ref: Space is the Place

Keeping Up With the World

Hawaiian Islands Live summary

A&A

Enc: (1) February goals

(2) Space is the Place

(3) Art & Astronomy

(4) Attendance and scheduling

(5) March goals

1. February 2019. This overall goal of this month has been consistent with the overall goal of the planetarium Coordinator at this time, that being, the production of live shows. The purpose of creating live shows is to facilitate a larger and more diverse library for the Besser Museum's planetarium, without the need to spend tens of thousands of dollars on fulldome productions. Live shows also have the benefit of being more flexible in their substance than those of their fulldome counterparts, allowing the Coordinator, or any other planetarium staff to alter the shows as necessary.
 - a. While live-shows are beneficial, there are several downsides to live-shows, meaning that an ideal library has a mixture of both fulldome and live productions. Negative of the live-show format are that the one(s) presenting the show need to be skilled and experienced with live audience interactions, as well as being familiar with the SPITZ Sci-Dome system which is used to run the shows. In comparison to fulldome shows, where one simply needs to press a few buttons, and the audience is presented with a high-quality show. Another down side to the production of these live-shows is that to get them up to a point where they can be consistently replicated, requires a rather significant amount of time. This time sink takes the form of research, script writing, and Sci-Dome scripting, which can be both tedious and technically difficult to accomplish.
2. Despite the difficulties involved with live-show production, the Coordinator was able to further their goal this month with the creation "Space is the Place", as well as continuing work with Hawaiian Islands Live. "Space is the Place" is a program originally designed for Art & Astronomy as a 15-minute intro to Accidental Astronauts. However, the 15-minute pre-show quickly evolved into a 40-minute program. While there are a few hurdles to overcome before the Coordinator feels comfortable putting Space is the Place on the schedule, a good portion of the work to get there is complete. As of right now, a little bit of trimming to the show's substance is needed, to keep more in line with audience attention spans. On top of this, the show requires a cohesive script, which will allow the show more replicability. If necessary, the show could be given at this time, but the Coordinator believes that the show will be enhanced by these measures, and time should be given to their design. As far as when this

can be expected, the Coordinator would not like to deliver any promise of a date as of this time, as the Hawaiian packet of shows are going to the Lion's share of work in March.

3. The Art & Astronomy program for this month had a large increase in attendees, 6 boys and 1 girl showed up this time around. The child from January's program, Rider, came back to the February showing, which means that we saw 6 new participants for the event. While Coordinator cannot speak on the art portion of the program, the Astronomy section seemed to go well. The Coordinator was able to present the show in a more involved manner, allowing the students to ask questions and speak their mind more freely throughout the show. This seemed to keep most of the kids engaged throughout the program, Space is the Place, but the it was obvious that around the 35-minute mark, that even the most interested kid was losing focus. The Coordinator decided to cut the show short at this time, leaving out additional information that was unnecessary for the show's composition. The children were then presented with the Mars rollercoaster ride and were then free to ask any other questions that they had.
 - a. The information gained from this viewing has showed the coordinator which aspects of Space is the Place are superfluous or boring and has given them a more cohesive idea of what they want to do with the show.

4. Attendance for February is as follows. For all of February, there were a total of 149 guests that came and saw planetarium shows, including one group of 48 on the 18th and 8 people for Art & Astronomy. While attendance was horrendously low at the start of the month, as February slogged on, people dragged themselves through the cold and snow to come see us. The Coordinator believes that this is likely due to the hazardous weather that filled in between January and February, and by February's end, people were sick of being kept indoors. Out of all the days this month, Thursday seems to have been the popular day to see planetarium shows, with only 4 people attending shows on Thursday all throughout the month of February. Saturday was the busiest day of the week, with people coming in to see our shows then more than any other day. In further detail, Saturday's 3 early shows outperformed the later 2, with most of the 3:00pm & 4:00pm slot being unattended. Surprisingly, Sunday did really well this month, although, 9 people did attend a special 1:00pm show on the 17th, after the Coordinator presented the option for the early attendees of the museum. This trend of people not wanting to wait until 2:00 pm to see planetarium shows on Sunday has happened before in the past, so it is the Coordinator's belief that a 3rd time slot may need to be added to the schedule once more. Over the next month, the Coordinator will inform the front desk that the planetarium will be open for a show at 1:00pm, and then gauge interest over the span of the month. If at least 3/5 of the Sundays yield results, it will likely be added to the planetarium schedule come April.
 - a. Attached on the last page are 2 separate graphs which show attendance by day and show throughout the month, as well as any special groups or programs that went on during February. This section on attendance as well as the aforementioned graphs will henceforth be added to the monthly report.
 - b. As can be seen, Saturday was overwhelmingly the most popular day for the planetarium, having 3 times more attendees than any other day. During that day, the first three times (12:00, 1:00, 2:00) are the most popular, with most guests attending those shows. In the future, it might be better to move everything a couple hours ahead, that way guests attending the museum in the AM will have shows that they can attend and less popular showings in the late afternoon can be played on an as-need basis.
 - c. Sunday had a sizeable attendance this month, partly due to a group of 9 which attended a special 1:00pm show of Dinosaurs on the 17th. This, plus other incidents of museum patrons not wanting to wait until 2:00pm for a show, has led the Coordinator to believe that reinstating the 1:00pm Sunday show would be beneficial for attendance numbers. The Coordinator will look to implement this, and other schedule changes in April.
 - d. On a per show basis, Dinosaurs was by and far the most popular program for the museum. While Dinosaur's numbers are impressive, it's hard to say whether people came to see dinosaurs specifically, or whether they were just attending the 2:00pm show. This information will become clearer as following months receive the same scrutiny over their schedule.

5. February is a short month, and as a result, all of what the Coordinator wanted to work on was unable to be achieved. The overall goal for February was to finish Space is the Place, the summary Hawaiian show, as well as the “Keeping Up With the World” news show. Unfortunately, Space is the Place just took too much time to complete, and as a result, minimal work was done for Hawaii, and next to nothing was accomplished on Keeping Up. For March, the hope is that the group of Hawaiian shows can be mostly finished, and any extra time can be dedicated towards Keeping Up and Space is the Place. As of right now though, it is not looking as if there will be any extra time as the Hawaiian summary show is needed by the end of the month for A&A. The summary show has still yet to have its contents solidified, there is a rough outline, but until an idea of how long the show will last, there is no real concept of the show’s length, and thus what should be scripted. The completion of this summary show shouldn’t be overly tasking though, as actual script and outlines for some of the other Hawaiian shows have been worked on in part, and their resources can be reused for the substance of the summary show.

