



Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Besser Museum, Museum of Alpena Michigan
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From: Planetarium Coordinator of Besser Museum

To: Executive Director of Besser Museum

Subj: September Action report

Ref: Ares Express proposal

DARKD proposal

Powers of Ten Script

Enc: (1) Projects

(2) Full dome productions

(3) Group visits

(4) Public Outreach

(5) Conclusion

1. During the month of September 2018, there were two main projects being worked on for the period September. These projects will henceforth be known Powers of Ten, and Pokémon Skies Live. Both of these projects are scripted live demonstration shows, as opposed to full dome productions. These shows have been developed/ are developing 100% in house and are intended to be used as supplements to the Besser Planetarium's existing retinue of shows.

a. Powers of Ten. Powers of Ten began production at the start of the month of September when information regarding Fossil day/ Fall Harvest festival was relayed to the Planetarium Coordinator. The show Powers of Ten is 20 minutes long and is designed to highlight the scale of stars and how they compare to the Sun, as well as the overall scale of the universe as a whole. The show begins above the sun and slowly pulls outwards, stopping to highlight different stars as they would appear in the terrestrial solar system, as well as stopping at key distances from the sun. The show pushes the limits of what the Scidome system is capable of, and a lot of the work on the show was working around those limitations to make a qualitative production. While under production, Powers of Ten ran into several delays caused by bugs and inconsistencies within the Scidome system, preventing even simple functions from operating properly. Through hard-work, determination, and some creativity, Powers of Ten was finished in the last week of the month. For more information regarding Powers of Ten, a demonstration and the script will be available upon request.

i. While Powers of Ten was finished in time for Fossil Fest, it has come to the Coordinator's attention that the show will not be necessary for the event. Due to the Planetarium Coordinator's lack of experience with working at Besser Museum, and a lack of definitive stipulations given to the Coordinator early on, the Coordinator was under the impression that they were making a 20-minute program for another event, known as Log Cabin Day. As a result of this misunderstanding, the show was developed with the idea that it would need to be 20 minutes long and be released for public viewing on the 6th of October. This resulted in the production of a scripted show almost exactly 20 minutes in length. This however is not a setback of the Coordinator's time, as the format of the show lends itself to that of a longer show. What this means is that with minimal adjustment, Powers of Ten can be turned into a full 30+ minute production, available for viewing on a regular basis. Likewise, the 20-minute production itself can be utilized for next

year's Log Cabin Day, as well as any planetarium show that would benefit from a shorter run time. In brief, while the production goal of Powers of Ten was produced due to a misunderstanding, the format of the show allows it to be utilized in the future for other events.

b. Pokémon Skies Live. Production of this show began in the final week of September, after the Coordinator had finished production of Powers of Ten, and until either the Director of the Museum has acquired suitable source materials for Native Skies Live (title is tentative), or until production has finished. The theme of the show is indeed Pokémon, with the intended goal of bringing Pokémon fans, and younger audiences into the planetarium and the museum. The show will be a scripted live presentation and is intended to last at least 30 minutes. As the show is directed at being for Pokémon fans, specifically more adult Pokémon fans, the desired time for the showings will be Friday evenings at 7:00pm, and weekends. Reasoning behind these times can be found in the section (4) public outreach section of this report. While the theme of Pokémon Skies Live will be Pokémon, it will serve as only a part of the show, with the Coordinator discussing Pokémon world lore and utilizing it in relation to subjects such as Astronomical observing techniques, Hawaiian native culture, observation of nighttime objects and the physics behind certain objects. There is no definitive release date at this time, but projections are looking at having the show completed by December. As there is no completed script, no further materials can be provided to supplement this aspect of the report, but oral discussion of what has been done so far is available upon request.

i. The only foreseeable delays or roadblocks in production of Pokémon Skies Live will come from the legal use of the Pokémon name and subject. Contact with the Pokémon legal team is being established, and more information regarding the legality of using this copyrighted material will be available as it is acquired by the Coordinator.

2. Details concerning Full dome productions for the Month of September are limited but are as follows. The implementation of the Mars coaster, Ares Express, has been completed, and the short video has been shown to several audiences with both warm and indifferent response. Overall, it is the Coordinator's continued belief that the majority of audiences genuinely enjoy the Ares Express.

a. "Did an Asteroid Really Kill the Dinosaurs?(DARKD)" Is still yet to be fully implemented as of the time of this report. The reason for such a delay can be attributed to the need for encoding of the video. Encoding is where a computer takes each frame of the video and stitches it together with the audio to make it into a full dome video. The technology behind this requires a fast computer capable of performing such a task, which is not something that the Besser Planetarium has easy access to. Methods for encoding available to the Planetarium were available, but either required patience, or extra sums of money, with prices likely comparable to the initial price of DARKD. Thankfully, due to the planetarium Coordinator's connections, the Ritter Planetarium from Toledo Ohio was able to send an already encoded video to Besser Planetarium via mail, expected to arrive on October 1st, 2018. In the future, Ritter Planetarium's Associate Director has offered to help with encoding, as their planetarium possess the capability to encode videos. However, this will likely not be a paid service, and instead be done for free or cheap, which means that there won't be a definitive deadline for their work. However, as the alternatives to Ritter's Help are expensive, it might be best to use their assistance again in the future, if ever there is a need for encoding of videos.

3. During the month of September, there were 2 scheduled group events for the Planetarium, the first being a senior group with a Ms. Maureen Castern-French, and the second being the planned school visits by the Cheboygan Middle School.

a. Ms. Maureen's group was intended to arrive on the 12th of September, bringing in over 20 Seniors to view our Michigan Skies Live production. However, due to unknown reasons, only 3 members of the group ended up arriving. Despite the low group numbers, a professional connection with Ms. Maureen was created, and work on public outreach with her has already began, please see section (4) Public outreach for more information regarding this aspect.

b. The Cheboygan Middle School Group ultimately did not see a planetarium show of any sorts. According to Besser Museum's Education Director, due to miscommunication and poor logistics, the school group ran out of time to use the planetarium and left without seeing one. Despite the school group's inability to see the show, several students remarked upon their desire to see the planetarium as they were walking by it. It is the Coordinator's hope

that this enthusiasm would remain even after the children left, and that they would return in the future to utilize the planetarium.

4. Public outreach for the planetarium has been significant for the month of September. Notable events include the Pokémon Go promotion, improved digital presence, and contact with Ms. Maureen, who the Coordinator is working with to create a public meteor shower viewing event. All of these processes have put the planetarium more in the public eye, which will be useful as the Coordinator produces more unique and engaging programs for said public.

a. The events concerning Pokémon Go at the museum have been part of a bigger effort to increase engagement from the young adult audience of the region. While there is a significant amount of people in this audience from the region, a good deal of these young-adults work and attend school during normal business hours. While there is the offer of weekend shows, it is the Coordinator's belief that people would currently prefer to use their time for other leisure activities, as the planetarium shows offered are either unknown or lack the ability to strongly engage this age group directly. It is for this reason that Pokémon Skies Live is being developed, and one of the desired times for it would be on a weekday evening. If evening showings of Pokémon Skies Live goes well, the Planetarium can use that time slot to further engage with the young adult community, by offering more shows and different events at those times. One additional plan is to eventually have an event where alcohol could be served on, or nearby the museum (possibly in collaboration with local bars/breweries) and people could take part in guided star gazing, planetarium shows, and Q&A segments. However, the viability of evening shows would have to be assessed first and foremost before continuing with these plans.

5. While engagement of the planetarium is overall still low, it takes time and consistent effort to build an engaged audience, especially within a digital age saturated with meaningful and qualitative entertainment. The steps taken now will help build up the planetarium's base, educating community members that museum is here, and that it is a legitimate source of entertainment and education for them. Continued production of new and exciting events and public outreach. These steps will help the planetarium reach this goal by engaging with community members who would normally ignore or avoid the museum and planetarium entirely.

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