Director's Matters

Energy on Capitol Hill

The current political debates in the 2008 Presidential Election often focus on highly publicized issues such as the state of the economy or the war in Iraq. Issues related to science and technology are often mere undercurrents in these debates. But, with the price of oil at record levels and the growing public appreciation of the possible harmful effects of climate change, science is entering the political stage more than ever.

AIP and its Member Societies contribute important resources to ensure that policy discussions on energy and climate are based on facts and the consensus of the scientific community. Last week, AIP and APS co-sponsored an event for Congressman Steve Israel (D, NY), to enable the Congressman and his key staff to question a group of experts on energy and climate issues. Rep. Israel is serving his 4th term in Congress and has established a reputation for encouraging bipartisan partnerships in the House. He has also demonstrated a sincere interest in sponsoring legislation that can address the country's energy supply problem. As a member of the Congressional Appropriations Subcommittee for Energy and Water, Rep. Israel has significant influence on funding for the Department of Energy's R&D programs.

At the Congressman's request and with the help of the APS Public Affairs Office, AIP assembled a small but highly credentialed panel of experts for an informal "energy round table," held last Thursday at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill. The panel included: John Holdren (from Harvard, one of the country's leading experts on energy policy), Rosina Bierbaum (from the University of Michigan, an equally distinguished expert on climate policy), Michael Tamor (who heads the development of hybrid electric vehicles at Ford Motor Company), and AIP's Phil Schewe (who has established a reputation for identifying problems with the nation's electric-power distribution system with the publication of his book, The Grid, in 2007).

Along with Michael Lubell (Director, APS Office of Public Affairs), I had the honor of moderating the lively morning-long session that, much to the Congressman's delight, did not feature a single PowerPoint slide. From Israel's standpoint, the session was very useful, and as a follow-up request, he asked the panel to submit summary recommendations based on recent studies authored by the panelists. He also requested that the panel be available for future enquiries. Israel thanked AIP and APS for organizing the event. As we left Capitol Hill during the first snowfall of 2008, we all felt that we had just delivered an important fuel shipment to Congress.

Sincerely yours,

Fred

Publishing Matters

Online Statistics & Analysis

Usage statistics are a key metric in determining the value of electronic products and services. The importance of collection and analysis of usage statistics has long been recognized by AIP, primarily driven by the needs of librarians. Michael Thamm has joined AIP as the new Manager of Online Statistics & Analysis, filling the position recently vacated by Tom Butkevich. Michael will manage the Scitation Usage Report Service (SURS) and abuse-monitoring policies and procedures. He will also oversee AIP's growing web analytics operation.

Podcasting and AIP journals
Further enhancing the visibility of our journals, AIP's Journal Development department has begun to produce podcasts. These brief audio interviews will serve as a starting point for the media and the public to dig deeper into articles published in the AIP Journals, which our editors believe have the potential to appeal to a wider audience. Newspapers, websites, and popular science magazines should find the pieces helpful in crafting news stories.

In the first podcast, we speak with Professor Paulo Costa Ribeiro of the Pontificia Universidade Católica in Rio de Janeiro. Ribeiro and his colleagues published an article "Magnetic memory of oil paintings" in the Journal of Applied Physics in which they discuss measuring small magnetic properties of oil paintings and then using those measurements for authentication purposes. Listen to this podcast via a link on the JAP home page.

Rubin honored, donates award to the History Center
The American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT) have honored renowned astronomer Vera Rubin with the 2008 Richtmyer Memorial Award. Rubin is donating the $7,500 cash portion of her award to the AIP Center for History of Physics, in honor of her husband, Robert. The award was established in 1941 by AAPT, to recognize outstanding contributions to physics and effective communication of these contributions to physics educators. As noted by Ken Heller, Chairman, AAPT Awards Committee, "Two of her early research results, the distribution of galaxies in the universe and the motion of stars in galaxies opened the door to arguably the most important topics of current physics research, the nature of dark matter and the evolution of the universe."

SPS reporter brings space news from Austin
"I was in awe . . . surrounded by reporters from big names like Science, Nature, BBC News, and Scientific American." That's what student reporter Therese Jones (right) said about her recent participation in the American Astronomical Society meeting in Austin, TX. Therese, an undergraduate from Penn State, presented her research on quasars and also served as a reporter for the Society of Physics Students (SPS). For more detail, check out Therese's detailed blog. SPS sends student reporters to most major Member Society (MS) meetings, where they are treated like other members of the press. Many ambitious student reporters succeed in securing interviews with MS leadership and prominent invited speakers on such occasions.

Celebrating diversity at AIP
As we celebrate and honor the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr., let's pause to appreciate diversity in our own workplace. AIP employs people of remarkably diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. AIP employees speak many languages, espouse diverse religious beliefs, and honor many traditions and customs, often representing a variety of nationalities from around the world. Yet, with all of these differences, we are able to work together toward the common AIP mission and goals. Our diversity makes us a stronger organization, enabling us to better interact with the world around us.

AAPT Winter Meeting
The American Association of Physics Teachers Winter Meeting is going on now in Baltimore, MD (January 19-23). AIP and SPS are participating; stay tuned for news of the event.

2009 declared the International Year of Astronomy
2009 has been designated as the International Year of Astronomy (IYA) by the
62nd General Assembly of the United Nations and UNESCO. The American Astronomical Society is coordinating a multi-organization effort to support and promote 2009 IYA. This international effort is being coordinated at the country level. The U.S. website is http://www.astronomy2009.us/. There is a range of programs and activities, from countrywide efforts to local star parties. As 2008 progresses, the various projects and programs will be announced, presenting opportunities for participation and support. Get ready for an exciting year centered on astronomy and remember that one sky connects us all!

We invite your feedback to this newsletter via email to aipmatters@aip.org.

For past issues of this newsletter, visit the AIP Matters archives.