Director's Matters

In this week's column you'll hear from Kendra Redmond of AIP's Education Division, who spearheaded AIP's participation in the second annual USA Science and Engineering Festival held in Washington, DC, last weekend. All told, more than 150,000 people turned out for this event; AIP and several Member Societies were proud to have been a part of the excitement. —Fred

Guest column by Kendra Redmond, Program Coordinator and Assistant Editor, Society of Physics Students

Big time outreach with "Big Top Physics"

Come one, come all, to the most spectacular physics show on Earth!

See a daring physicist lay on a bed of nails, try to keep your balance on a pair of towering stilts, attempt to lift a one-ton weight using only a small lever . . .

More than 50 staff and volunteers from AIP and five partner organizations helped thousands of attendees explore the physics behind circus activities at the USA Science and Engineering Festival (USASEF). The festival, which took place in the Washington, DC, convention center April 27–29, featured more than 3,000 interactive booths and 150 stage shows featuring science icons like Bill Nye and "MythBusters" Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman.

Some might wonder why organizations such as AIP and its Member Societies, who focus on supporting physicists and physics research, should invest in an event like USASEF. After all, our participation is not likely to draw in any new members or donations, and we will probably never know if anyone that we interacted with decided to become a physicist as a result of our efforts. In fact, most visitors to the "Big Top Physics" booth probably didn't even catch the names of the six organizations that put it together [AIP, the Acoustical Society of America (ASA), the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), American Physical Society (APS), The Optical Society (OSA), and the University of Maryland's Materials Research Science and Engineering Center (MRSEC)].

For AIP, participating in the festival was an opportunity to join...
forces with corporations, scientific associations, education groups, academic institutions, and others to create a vast, fun, interactive science experience for the public to explore. The event was not like a science fair where individuals display their own work; instead, it was a celebratory festival focused on the attendees—from the three-year-old visitors to their parents and grandparents—and their ability to participate in and understand science. Such public outreach enables the science community to open its doors and make science accessible, reinforcing the idea that all citizens are important to science and its future.

The joint booth enabled AIP to work with some of its Member Societies and other organizations in a very tangible way. For example, ASA and its volunteers helped hundreds of students explore sound waves by making their own straw flutes and trombones. APS wowed visitors with a bed-of-nails demonstration and a "strong man" exploration of levers. MRSEC attracted countless visitors by producing smoke rings with trash cans. This collaboration brought together staff and content expertise, making the whole much bigger and more fun than the sum of its parts.

And finally, events like USASEF give the physicists that we support a chance to share their experience and expertise with others, a chance to step away from their day-to-day frustrations and reconnect with the simple joy that comes from having fun with science and helping others experience those "Aha!" moments. Tens of members from among the six organizations spent an exhausting, yet rewarding part of their weekend volunteering at "Big Top Physics." Despite some sore feet and backs, the joy of helping kids (and their parents) try out the stilts, or cross a tightrope, or learn about sound and tuning forks was gratifying for the exhibit volunteers. The festival was a re-energizing affirmation of why we came to love science in the first place.

**Publishing Matters**

Committee on Publishing Partnerships convenes at ACP

As part of a reinvented Committee on Publishing Partnerships, representatives from five Member Societies who receive publishing services from AIP met on April 12th for a day of vibrant discussion and interchange.

The new meeting format provided an opportunity for a broad cross section of
attendees of staff, editors, and officers to mingle with each other and key AIP staff. This unique gathering combined plenary sessions and breakout groups. Included were sessions on effective publishing strategies, concentrating on the power of data and analyses and understanding your market, and a session on the migration to the new Scitation platform. Representatives outlined three- to five-year publishing goals for their societies. AIP will use these goals as a basis for designing individualized publishing programs to best satisfy each Member Society’s needs.

Participants and staff expressed that the day’s discussions enhanced their understanding and that they valued the interaction. In light of this positive feedback, we will continue to organize meetings of the committee with similar objectives in mind.

Physics Resources Matters

Learn how Dagwood splits the atom

The Niels Bohr Library and Archives has opened a new exhibit on comics and graphic novels in physics. Educational comics had become a popular new genre by the 1940s, and the library’s collection includes original comics on atomic energy and related topics published at that time, including *Dagwood Splits the Atom* (1949) by popular comic artist Joe Musial “with the Scientific Advice of Lt. Gen. Leslie R. Groves (Ret.), Dr. John R. Dunning, and Dr. Louis M. Heil.” Other comics include *Adventures in the Atom* (1948), one of the earliest titles in General Electric’s *Adventures in Science* series.

GE continued to publish comic books that introduced young people to science and the history of science through 1959, but the genre had become controversial by the middle of that decade and began fading away. The introduction of graphic novels in the 1970s, however, has revived interest in the comic genre in physics as well as other fields, and the library’s exhibit includes a survey of recent popular examples, including APS’ *Spectra* series. The exhibit will be open from now through November.

Talk and book-signing honoring Richard Feynman

All are invited for a public talk and book-signing of the smash graphic biography *Feynman*, sponsored by the History Center on Friday, May 11, starting at 6:30 pm. Jim Ottaviani and Leland Myrick, the writer/artist team behind the biography, will be at ACP to lead a discussion about their new work, followed by a reception for the authors.
Off the Press

Physics Today, May 2012

Cover: Scattered efforts are underway to transform data sets into sound and thereby take advantage of humans' natural aural filters in order to discover patterns, recognize events, monitor information streams, and communicate results. This abstract collage represents the power of the emerging field of data sonification.

Member Society Spotlight

OSA’s Liz Rogan testifies on the importance of NSF and NIST to US economic prosperity

From FYI #60: When testifying before House appropriators, Elizabeth Rogan, CEO of The Optical Society (OSA), urged "continued, sustained investments in R&D programs at NSF and NIST" that will, she said, "help revitalize US manufacturing, create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and spur innovations that will lead to a better quality of life for millions of people in the US and around the globe."

Rogan appeared before the House Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee on March 22 as appropriators were developing their FY 2013 funding bill. This subcommittee provides funding for the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The full text of Rogan's oral remarks can be found in last week's FYI science policy bulletin. Her written testimony is available through the OSA website.

Coming Up

May 6–11
- OSA CLEO/QELS (San José, CA)

Monday, May 7
• Enrico Fermi Award Ceremony honoring former AIP Governing Board Chair Millie Dresselhaus and former APS President Burton Richter (Washington, DC)
  (See the AIP Matters article from January 23, 2012.)

Tuesday, May 8
• ACP Art Exhibit, "Flow & Fluctuation," 5:30–7:30 pm (College Park, MD)

Wednesday, May 9
• May birthday breakfasts (Melville, NY, and College Park, MD)

Friday, May 11
• Public lecture, book-signing, and reception featuring the book FEYNMAN, 6:30 pm (College Park, MD)

May 14–18
• Acoustics 2012 (ASA 163rd Meeting) (Hong Kong, China)

Wednesday, May 16
• Brown bag lunch, "Programs and Benefits of the Social Security Administration" (Melville, NY)