



## The Universe Inside – Engaging a global audience in the Yorkshire Planetarium

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### Abstract

The Yorkshire Planetarium has a diverse audience visiting from all corners of the world. Our audience is unique; most people coming to see the shows are completely unaware that they are entering a science centre as the planetarium is in the heart of a visitor's attraction. Presenter led live shows that are built around the latest discoveries and seasonal objects given the time of year, the planetarium projector has the capability to project a staggering 4000 stars, over 20 deep sky objects, the Milky Way and meteor showers. The Yorkshire Planetarium is the only Zeiss ZKP4 in the UK, using a pair of binoculars or a small telescope inside the dome to view the planets and stars allows the viewer to see these objects as if they were in the real night sky, such is the quality of the Zeiss optics on the projector. During the International Year of Astronomy a number of outreach projects supporting the Cornerstone Projects were run throughout the year, aimed at young people and community oriented events. Cosmic Diary, UNAWA, Dark Skies Awareness and GTTP were embraced by the public who discovered the Universe during a very special year.

### 1. Introduction

The Yorkshire Planetarium has a diverse audience of visitors, from all corners of the planet. During IYA 2009 a number of outreach activities that aimed to engage all members of the community from the very young with Universe Awareness initiatives through to Dark Skies Awareness where the community were engaged in dark sky observing through a partnership with Yorkshire Sculptor Park. Jupiter and Saturn were visible during the observing seasons of Spring through to Autumn and remained major themes of

the planetarium shows. Every aspect of each planet's properties was discussed in the shows with audience members often opening debates during Q & A sessions. In July 2009 the Jupiter impact event brought home the importance of NEO observation and intrigued a number of visiting groups to participate in online observing programmes with robotic telescopes, giving young people the opportunity to contribute to global observing programme.

### 2. Conclusion

As part of the legacy of IYA 2009 and as an ambassador for space and astronomy within the UK community the Yorkshire Planetarium aims to continue engaging the community, both locally and globally to produce new innovative immersive shows and equally innovative education programmes which contribute to supporting teachers, students and lifelong learners. The use of planetaria in acting as virtual learning environments is also discussed.