



NEWS UPDATE

ASIA PACIFIC NETWORK
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
CENTRES

Information for ASPAC Members

May 2003

WELCOME TO THIS EDITION

This ASPAC News Update contains information on:

- **President's message**
- **ASPAC members host mind games on the world stage**
- **Hong Kong Science Museum's response to the SARS crisis**
- **ASPAC welcomes new members**

ASPAC is in one of the fastest growing regions of the world in terms of the development of science and technology centres. I am encouraged by the many new science centre projects in the region, the commitment to developing new and better science and technology centres, and the eagerness of many governments to promote science and technology for all. More and more people are recognising the importance of this regional network. We have lots to share and we can benefit much by working together.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Photo: The new ASPAC President, Mr YIP Chee-kuen, addresses the 4th ASPAC Conference.

On behalf of the new Executive Council, I would like to thank all those who took part in the election process, in particular our returning officer Ms Gaye Hamilton. I hope that the new Executive Council will serve the network to meet all of your expectations.

With over a hundred participants from more than 10 countries and regions, the 4th ASPAC conference in Kuala Lumpur was an outstanding success. We learnt much from the many discussions on the theme "Science Centres: Learning Centres". Our thanks and congratulations to Ms Tengku Nasariah Ibrahim, GM and CEO of PETROSAINS – The Discovery Centre, and her wonderful team of staff who organised the conference. Everyone who participated in the conference agreed that the venue for the conference was excellent and that all hosts were friendly and helpful.

Thanks also to Mr A. Jayanath, Director of the National Science Centre of Malaysia, and his staff for hosting the final day of the conference. Participants will remember the "Release of Butterflies to Nature" campaign. I have included a picture from that event,

which was reported in a Hong Kong newspaper.



Since the Conference, a contagious disease (SARS) has broken out and this has hit our region in a hard way. Even with all the advances in science and technology, we are still very vulnerable to such changes in our environment. As part of the global village, we are closely connected, and such a problem has made an impact not only on our region, but also the wider world. I hope that a cure will be found very soon. My museum was one of the first science and technology centres to recognise the impact of SARS, and I have included a short article on how we have been facing this problem.

The Executive Council is keen to set up a number of committees to assist with the growing work of ASPAC.

- Conference Committee
- Exhibition Exchange Committee
- Awards Committee
- Small Centres Committee
- Web Development Committee

We are about to contact members to help in these committees.

During the General Council Meeting at the Conference, the question was raised on why science and technology centres from India and western Asia were not able to join as members. When ASPAC was established as a network, the ASPAC region was defined as no further west than Thailand and Indonesia, no further north than Japan and Korea, no further south than Australia and New Zealand and no further east than the International Date Line. At this time, science centres outside of this region can become Associate Members. I would like to obtain your view as members. Should the region be expanded to include western Asia?

My thanks to Brenton Honeyman for preparing the ASPAC News Update. I look forward to members contributing their views and information about their activities to make this newsletter a forum for exchange of ideas.

Finally, I thank the outgoing Executive Council for their contribution to ASPAC. In particular, I thank our past President Dr Chew Tuan Chiong and our past Secretary Mr Geoff Snowdon for their excellent work during the past four years. They have paved the way for the growth and development of ASPAC that the new Council can readily follow.

YIP, Chee-kuen
ASPAC President

4TH ASPAC CONFERENCE

Reminder to Participants and Presenters

If you have not yet done so, please send your Conference Evaluation Forms and a copy of your Powerpoint Presentation file to:

Mr Geoff Snowdon
geoffre@petronas.com.my

ASPAC MEMBERS HOST MIND GAMES ON THE WORLD STAGE

Adapted from an article by Cassie Proudfoot and Lucy Dore, Questacon, Australia

On the 4th March, five science centres went online with IBM, as part of a web video collaboration with IBM TryScience. The event involved school students from Australia, Malaysia, Mexico and USA, testing their memories against the clock to solve a fictional crime scenario called 'Suspect Sketcher'.



Photo: Students at Questacon showing their poster and favourite food during the TryScience event on 4th March.

The ASPAC centres involved were PETROSAINS – The Discovery Centre, Malaysia and Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre, Australia. Other science centres involved were Papalote Museo del Nino, Mexico; ThinkPlace, USA; and New York Hall of Science, USA.

The online Suspect Sketcher activity challenged students to pay close attention to detail and demonstrate intuitive deduction – the basis of all scientific discovery. They saw an image of a 'suspect', and after the image was removed, they were asked to sketch the person by choosing different facial features.

They then compared their sketch with the original image. An IBM moderator facilitated the interaction and exchange among the different student groups.

For more information about TryScience, visit the website www.tryscience.org.

HONG KONG SCIENCE MUSEUM'S RESPONSE TO THE SARS CRISIS

By YIP, Chee-kuen
Chief Curator, Hong Kong Science Museum

You may already have heard of a new disease called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) or Atypical Pneumonia. For more information, the Hong Kong Department of Health has created a detailed web-page:

www.info.gov.hk/dh/ap.htm

The virus appears to be spreading through close contact only, but many of its properties are still unknown. There is evidence that the virus may change its form and travel through other means. This disease kills but so far the rate of total recovery is high. With the ease of international travel, it can board any plane and therefore is difficult to contain.

At Hong Kong Science Museum, we have implemented the following measures:

1. Close all those exhibits with close facial contact, such as things that you need to blow air into
2. Clean exhibits with diluted household bleach one to two times a day, in particular those involving close body contact
3. Clean the air-conditioning system
4. Prepare facemasks and plastic gloves for visitors
5. Ensure having sufficient paper towels in the washroom

In the longer term, we plan to install more automated facilities such as sensor water taps and dryers to reduce the health risk.

Despite these measures, our visitor numbers have dropped to less than a quarter compared with the week before the SARS crisis became known. For more information about Hong Kong Science Museum's response, contact:

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ASPAC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

ASPAC continues to grow! Since the last news update, two new full members (both from Taiwan) have joined ASPAC – National Museum of Natural Science (Taichung) and National Science and Technology Museum (Kaohsiung).

This brings the list of new members since the beginning of 2003 to ten ... 8 new full members, 1 new sustaining member and 1 new associate member.

ASPAC Website

The new ASPAC website is currently being developed. We plan to launch the new site **during May 2003**.

The ASPAC News Update will be available on the website.

Check out the site at:

www.aspacnet.org

What is happening in your science centre?

Please send news (and jpg photos) of activities which will be of interest to ASPAC members.

Please send to the ASPAC Secretary at the address below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about items published in this edition of the ASPAC News, or for publication of items in future editions, please contact:

ASPAC Secretary

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The Executive Council plans to distribute ASPAC News as an email attachment every two months. It will include news about ASPAC events and activities, issues impacting on the science centre industry in this region, and news about the people and activities of ASPAC member institutions.

Please ensure that the ASPAC Secretary is kept informed of any changes to your email contact details.