

September 16, 2011, a talk with David Weinrich, Coordinator at the MUSM Planetarium and current IPS President.

Magic number 100 – MSUM Planetarium

SCISS is very pleased to announce that we have broken the magic number 100 of Uniview installations! We welcome MSUM Planetarium at Minnesota State University Moorhead to our Uniview users group and I called up David Weinrich, coordinator of the planetarium and also the IPS President, to hear his view upon the upgrade and usage of their planetarium. I'm catching Dave in his office during morning hours:



- **Jessica:** Hi David! Congratulations to your planetariums upgrade and to being the number 100 Uniview installation! How does it feel?

- **Dave:** It is great, we're very glad!

- **J:** Tell me a bit about your planetarium.

- **D:** We have a 58 seats planetarium with a 40 year old and perfectly good Spitz 512 star projector at the Minnesota State University Moorhead, where we now will be upgraded during this autumn by Elumenati. Already today we have about 6000 school kids of

elementary and secondary schools coming every year plus public audience and of course our students at the university. With the upgrade in place, we will be able to increase our audience numbers a lot and bring in earth science classes and give enhanced shows for all. Perhaps also extend out outreach work, and we are joining the excellent Minnesota Planetarium Network of Uniview users, we will be number 8 in this group, and that enables a lot of Octopus remote dome cast sessions together, also with the Ghana Science Center and planetarium with Dr Jacob Ashong. I was very much involved in helping Jacob with that project and glad to see Uniview there for dome casts further on.

- **J:** We recently met you in Texas at the Uniview Users Group Meeting and WAC conference. What did you take with you from these two days together with all these Uniview users?

- **D:** It was great to be able to meet so many users and to hear them talk on what they are doing right now with Uniview and how they use it for their audiences. It was very interesting to see so many different users in the same room, and that several from the larger planetariums came, such as Adler, Hayden and Denver Planetarium, and also to meet John Young from Fleet Planetarium in San Diego, that facility is very well known of course. Interesting to hear them talk about their work. And also, even though I probably will have forgotten a lot of things about how-to of Uniview before I actually have it installed in the planetarium and can run it again, the meeting exposed me to its capabilities and I learned a lot during the user group from all the different sessions by you at SCISS. Now I know what to ask for and what is possible to do with the software, so the learning later will be much easier.

Earth Science in focus

- **D:** And I was also very much inspired by the World View Network, that Ned Gardiner from NOAA and Denver Museum of Nature & Sciences presented during the User Group Meeting. This is a very interesting work and I'm looking forward to take part when we have Uniview in place.

- **J:** Is Earth science something you are planning to bring forward more with Uniview?



MSUM Planetarium, Moorhead, Minnesota (before update)

- **D:** Yes, absolutely. We will have a focus on Earth Science in our planetarium and Uniview gives exciting possibilities for this. We want to work much more with sustainability and energy questions. It is so important on both a local and a global level. For instance, on a local level, here we have the Red River Valley, which has water flooding during spring time and it has gotten worse over time. Now this year it has been flood level during the whole summer since late Mars, except for 2 days in June. Roads are closed and it is causing a lot of trouble in the community, it is a serious concern cause if reaching the highest, it could cover the whole city. The actions that has to be put in place to help this situation out is causing a diversion in the community, since it will cause negative effects upstream when sorting out the issues downstream. The communication is breaking down; there is no talk about solutions, because opinions have already been decided. So, how do you consolidate this?

- **J:** How do you see your planetarium can take place in this?

- **D:** I believe Uniview and the planetarium as an audience space can play an important role here. It gives us a tool to understand our surroundings and visuals to initiate the discussion. With Uniview we can bring people together, show satellite data and scenarios on Earth over our city in order to start talking and come up with solutions together. It can help bring back the communication into the situation and lead us forward in questions like; Why is this happening? Are humans making the problem worse? You don't want to scare the people away by only showing facts difficult to take in and that could generate a negative feeling of hopelessness, you want your audience to start talking about what they get to see and to think; What solutions can we find?

- **J:** It's a very interesting way of using a planetarium, to provide a platform for local contemporary discussions, an empowerment for your citizens.

- **D:** Yes, it's interesting. We actually discussed the title "planetarium" during the Uniview Users Group Meeting, how this is a bit of a troublesome naming today. Cause now, with a modern, digital planetarium, we are so much more than just that. What should we call it today?