A Survivor’s Guide to the Public Understanding of Science

by

Sandra Preston
The University of Texas McDonald Observatory
Collaborating with South African Astronomical Observatory

Twin towns with Sutherland
What are some of the challenges we face?

- Funding
- Audience
- Programs
Tactics to Think About . . .

- Diversity
  - in Funding
  - in Audiences
  - in Programs

- Collaborations to help increase
  - Funding
  - Audiences
  - Programs
Diversity in Funding

- Revenues
- Membership donations
- Private donations
- Grant funding
  - Government
  - State
  - Private foundations
- Institutional
Example

- Revenue: $1,280,000 (70%)
- Grant funding 250,000 (14%)
- Donations 150,000 (8%)
- Institutional 150,000 (8%)
- Total $1,830,000
Diversify Audiences

- K-12 (70,000 a year)
- Teachers (700 a year)
- General public (1.25 million daily)
- Spanish-speaking public (500,000 daily)
- Amateurs (100 a year)
- Visitors (130,000 a year) 27%
- Total 1,950,800 people per year
Cost per person = less than $1
Diversify Programs

- Radio
  - English, Spanish, German (general public)
  - Working on Southern Hemisphere version
  - Send to classrooms

- StarDate magazine (general public)
- Friends of McDonald (membership)
Diversify Programs cont’d

- Visitors Center
  - Public Programs
  - teacher professional development
  - K-12 student field experiences,
  - Amateur Astronomy Center
Collaborations

- State of the Art Telescope Education Collaboration (international)
- Southwestern Consortium of Observatories for Public Education (regional)
- Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, the Nature Conservancy and Rural Systemic Initiatives in Texas (statewide)
What can we do today to make a difference?

- sandi@stardate.org
- mcdonaldobservatory.org
- stardate.org
- radiouniverso.org