Optics Education and Outreach

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Contents

vii Conference Committee
ix Introduction

SESSION 1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

7783 03 Active learning in optics and photonics (ALOP): a model for teacher training and professional development [7783-02]
M. Alarcon, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (France); Z. Ben Lakhdar, Univ. El Manar (Tunisia); I. Culaba, Ateneo de Manila Univ. (Philippines); S. Lahmar, Institut Preparatoire aux Etudes Scientifiques et Techniques (Tunisia); V. Lakshminarayanan, Univ. of Waterloo (Canada); A. P. Mazzolini, Swinburne Univ. of Technology (Australia); J. Maquiling, Ateneo de Manila Univ. (Philippines); J. Niemela, The Abdus Salam International Ctr. for Theoretical Physics (Italy)

7783 04 Optics professional development in North Carolina [7783-03]
P. O. Gilchrist, J. Hilliard-Clark, T. Bowles, North Carolina State Univ. (United States)

7783 05 Implementation stories from the PHOTON PBL project [7783-04]
J. Donnelly, Three Rivers Community College (United States); N. M. Massa, Springfield Technical Community College (United States); M. Dischino, Central Connecticut State Univ. (United States); F. Hanes, New England Board of Higher Education (United States)

7783 06 Piloting photonics curriculum in staff development [7783-05]
P. O. Gilchrist, B. Conover, T. Bowles, C. deDeugd, J. Hilliard-Clark, North Carolina State Univ. (United States)

SESSION 2 ASSESSMENT

7783 07 Light: connecting to the Connecticut science standards [7783-06]
N. Magnani, M. L. Blanchette Smith, EASTCONN (United States)

7783 08 Development of a biophotonics concept inventory for program evaluation [7783-07]
J. A. Galosy, M. Molinaro, M. McCombs, A. Corbacho, Ctr. for Biophotonics Science and Technology, Univ. of California, Davis (United States)

7783 09 The development of formative assessment probes for optics education [7783-08]
E. F. C. Dokter, The Univ. of Arizona (United States); S. M. Pompea, R. T. Sparks, C. E. Walker, National Optical Astronomy Observatory (United States)
### SESSION 3  K-12 PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors/Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7783 0A</td>
<td>Photonic games: hands-on challenges to spark teenagers’ interest in light</td>
<td>A.-S. Poulin-Girard, G. Thériault, A. April, S. Bassene, H. Dehez, A. Desbiens, G. Goubert, H. Lemieux, J. Lévesque, B. Roy, V. Zambon, Ctr. d’Optique, Photonique et Laser, Univ. Laval (Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0B</td>
<td>Lighting Up Science: novel education kits for grades 5-8</td>
<td>S. J. Davis, A. J. R. Bauer, Physical Sciences Inc. (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0C</td>
<td>Teaching adaptive optics concepts in the high school classroom using an active engagement, experimental approach</td>
<td>R. T. Sparks, S. M. Pompea, C. E. Walker, National Optical Astronomy Observatory (United States); E. F. C. Dokter, The Univ. of Arizona (United States)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SESSION 4  INFORMAL EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors/Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7783 0E</td>
<td>Learning by playing: how to create the perfect learning game for and with optics</td>
<td>T. Haist, A. Burla, Univ. Stuttgart (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0F</td>
<td>Experience the magic of light and color: outreach activity by Universidad del Valle student chapter</td>
<td>C. Valdes, C. Reyes, A. Osorio, E. Solarte, Univ. del Valle (Colombia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0G</td>
<td>An optics education program designed around experiments with small telescopes</td>
<td>S. M. Pompea, R. T. Sparks, C. E. Walker, National Optical Astronomy Observatory (United States); E. F. C. Dokter, The Univ. of Arizona (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0H</td>
<td>Teaching illumination engineering using light pollution education kits</td>
<td>C. E. Walker, S. M. Pompea, R. T. Sparks, National Optical Astronomy Observatory (United States); E. Dokter, The Univ. of Arizona (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0I</td>
<td>Magic of Light</td>
<td>D. Curticapean, Univ. of Applied Sciences Offenburg (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0J</td>
<td>Informal optics education and outreach programs in Southern California</td>
<td>D. M. Silberman, PI (Physik Instrumente) L.P. (United States); R. Cartland, Raytheon Space &amp; Airborne Systems (United States); B. Monacelli, The Optical Sciences Co. (United States); D. Whitmore, Univ. of California, Irvine (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0K</td>
<td>Optical demonstrations though science fairs</td>
<td>G. G. Gregory, Optical Research Associates (United States) and New England Section of the Optical Society of America (United States); D. P. Biss, Physical Sciences Inc. (United States) and New England Section of the Optical Society of America (United States); B. Darnell, ScinTech (United States) and New England Section of the Optical Society of America (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7783 0L</td>
<td>Stories from Laser Camp: outreach activities for kids</td>
<td>D. Tourangeau, J. Simoneau, Three Rivers Community College (United States)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SESSION 5  COLLEGE PROGRAMS

7783 0M  An inquiry-based course in nano-photonics [7783-21]  
C. Broadbridge, Ctr. for Research on Interface Structures and Phenomena (United States);  
J. Calvert, J. Donnelly, Three Rivers Community College (United States); J. Garofano, Ctr. for  
Research on Interface Structures and Phenomena (United States); N. Massa, Springfield  
Technical Community College (United States)

7783 0N  New optical engineering and instrument design programs at the University of California,  
Irvine Extension [7783-22]  
D. M. Silberman, Optics Institute of Southern California (United States), PI (Physik Instrumente)  
L.P. (United States), and Univ. of California, Irvine (United States); V. V. Doushkina, Optics  
Institute of Southern California (United States), Qioptiq Polymer, Inc. (United States), and  
Univ. of California, Irvine (United States)

7783 0O  Rethinking optical engineering capstone design experience [7783-23]  
R. M. Bunch, R. S. Lepkowicz, S. C. Granieri, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (United  
States)

7783 0P  Ten years of photonics education at the college level in Ontario: results and by-products  
[7783-24]  
M. Nantel, Ontario Ctrs. of Excellence (Canada)

7783 0Q  Introducing biophotonics to first year undergraduates in science and non-science majors:  
approaches and lessons learned [7783-25]  
M. Molinaro, J. Shackelford, Ctr. for Biophotonics Science and Technology, Univ. of  
California, Davis (United States)

7783 0R  Perspectives of mobile learning in optics and photonics [7783-26]  
D. Curticapean, A. Christ, M. Feißt, Univ. of Applied Sciences Offenburg (Germany)

Author Index
Conference Committee

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1 Professional Development
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2 Assessment
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3 K-12 Programs
   Judith Donnelly, Three Rivers Community College (United States)

4 Informal Education
   Marc Nantel, Ontario Centres of Excellence (Canada)

5 College Programs
   Barbara A. Darnell, ScinTech (United States)
Introduction

This year in San Diego, California, we held the first conference of Optics Education and Outreach. This conference focused on activities to share the wonder of science and optics to the formal processes used to educate the next generation of scientists and engineers.

The conference was well attended and included five oral sessions. The oral sessions had titles of: Professional Development, Assessment, K-12 Programs, Informal Education and College Programs. These sessions were held over one day of the entire Optics and Photonics 2010 meeting.

The professional development session covered programs to educate teachers who are beginning to bring optics to their institutions. The assessment session presented talks on methods to measure learning outcomes. The K-12 programs session shared experiences in introducing optics to pre-college aged students while the informal education session gave talks showing programs aimed at audiences outside of any formal structure. The final session on college programs covered undergraduate education in optical sciences.

For the previous four years, a session on optics education was included in the Novel Optical System Design and Optimization conference. The past interest led to the separate conference for 2010. The large number of submissions from a broad range of participants confirmed the need for a forum in this area for community interchange. The speakers included students presenting their first talks to educators reporting new successes to scientists sharing projects reaching out to students directly.

My thanks go to those who helped make this conference a success, especially the authors, audience, SPIE staff, and program committee. The authors share the credit for making this conference an unqualified success. The audience built upon this success by being active and asking engaging questions. The program committee provided excellent assistance to ensure the quality of the content while also presiding over a number of the sessions.

The conference will return in two years. If you would like to assist with the 2012 or later conference please contact me. We look forward to seeing you in 2012!

G. Groot Gregory