

ECO-FRIENDLY IMMERSIVE THEATER LAUNCHED AT NEW CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

New Green Morrison Planetarium Showcases Global Immersion Collaboration

West Sussex, UK --- 14 October, 2008 --- After years of planning and implementation, the new California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, has completed its \$488 million upgrade and relocation, with a grand public opening on Saturday 27th September 2008. Within the new 'green' Academy building is the Morrison Planetarium, which has seen the integration of a Global Immersion Fidelity Bright™ full-dome display solution that supports the Academy in its mission to educate visitors about our Earth and its surroundings.



Inside the Morrison Planetarium.
Image © Tim Griffith

After three years of construction, the Academy opened its doors to the public at the end of September with a weekend-long celebration to mark the launch of the only institution in the world

to contain a planetarium, an aquarium, and a natural history museum. Renowned for housing the first American-made star projector in 1952, the Morrison Planetarium is now entirely digital with all integrated technologies; ranging from the projectors and image mixing through to the fading between the three server and playback clusters, all running seamlessly on the newly-installed digital infrastructure.

Dedicated to providing a sustainable future for the earth and natural sciences, architects and designers devised a number of innovative ways for the Academy to become an environmentally responsible and eco-friendly addition to the city with features that include a 'solar canopy' around the perimeter of the roof, recycled blue jean building insulation, and a structural design that uses 100% recycled steel.

The 30-degree tilted, 90-foot diameter dome covers the 290 seats that make up the planetarium, which is cantilevered above the world's deepest living coral reef display. At 25 feet deep and holding 212,000 gallons of water, the coral reef display contains over 2,000 colorful fish, sharks and rays. Natural sciences have also influenced the exterior of the Academy building, with the design and construction of an innovative living roof. Blending well into its Golden Gate Park surroundings and consisting of 1.7 million native Californian plants and wildflowers, the 2.5-acre bio diverse roof was conceived by architect Renzo Piano of Genoa, Italy. This rooftop

rolls over the exterior of the Morrison Planetarium, and will soon help the Academy to secure the title of world's largest public LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certified building.

Morrison Planetarium Configuration

The Morrison Planetarium itself showcases a diverse range of technologies from a multitude of vendors and suppliers. Visual Acuity of Great Britain acted as technical visualization design consultants on the Morrison Planetarium project.

Global Immersion integrated six projectiondesign® F30 sxga+ projectors into the theater as part of the Fidelity Bright™ fulldome solution. The resulting display is bright, resolute and colorful with a low cost of ownership. The Fidelity Bright solution also includes Mercator™; a fully digital, high performance image processing system used to display the output of multiple computer clusters - providing a seamless image across the entire dome. The first input to Mercator™ is the Global Immersion Media Server cluster at the Academy, consisting of six high performance server machines used for displaying uncompressed, high resolution shows. These machines work alongside two additional cluster inputs; a SCISS Uniview™ solution, and a Sky-Skan DigitalSky 2™ source. This configuration allows theater staff to run a wide range of both real-time and pre-rendered content, permitting fast and seamless cross-fading between presentations and a providing a highly redundant solution.

At the hub of the theater, the Pilot Desk houses a comprehensive Global Immersion Theater Control system, including a wireless 7.5" AMX® touch-screen control panel, allowing staff to manage, maintain and manipulate functions including the presentation, lighting, audio or air conditioning from anywhere within the planetarium.

Speaking about the projection display system, Martin Howe, Chief Executive at Global Immersion explained, "Our image blending technique has been engineered, tested, developed, CAD modelled and then tested again over a number of years, giving us the ability to 'make the technology invisible'. Our extensive experience this field has created a rigorous process that produces seamless matching and blending of large images, and is arguably the best in the industry."

Global Immersion also helped with the making of "Fragile Planet", the new Academy's first in-house fulldome production. Working with Uniview™ to create large parts of the show, Global Immersion managed the installations of the real-time data visualization platform into the render farm and also facilitated the integration of the software into the production workflow. To further assist and support the team, Global Immersion provided a custom application that resides on the network, automating parts of the show production workflow to free up critical resources.



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“The California Academy of Sciences project has really been a step forward for us in terms of configuring our operational processes to ensure we are more considerate and respectful of the natural environment,” adds Alan Caskey, General Manager of the Americas at Global Immersion. “We worked hard to make sure that we were offsetting flights and sourcing local labor and supplies wherever we could. The Morrison is now one of the world’s flagship theaters, and we regard it as a breakthrough project that demonstrates our innovative, flexible, and dedicated approach to the market.”

About Global Immersion

With over ten years experience in the world of full-dome displays and scientific data, Global Immersion brings together a broad range of proven technologies, offers a variety of services and provides turnkey solutions from content through to completion. Our truly fresh approach brings a vast heritage to the party, this is coupled with our passion for building innovative, immersive theaters and puts us center stage as we work worldwide with our international partner network.

To find out more, [talk to us](#).

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