

# ASTC 2015 Annual Conference

October 17–20, 2015  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Hosted by the Montreal Science Centre

## About the ASTC Annual Conference

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) Annual Conference is the premier professional development event for the science center and museum field. Offering approximately 120 high-quality sessions, the conference reaches more than 1,800 science center and museum professionals at all career stages, representing the organizational and geographic diversity of the field.

**Conference Goals** - The program and content of the ASTC Annual Conference are designed to:

- **Inspire** attendees, both personally and professionally, through exciting and engaging speakers and experiences
- **Build capacity** through high-quality sessions that build on what individuals and organizations already know to generate new capacity
- **Strengthen relationships** that connect people and organizations in ways that advance informal science education
- **Highlight innovations** in every aspect of informal science education and museum practice
- **Focus on reflection and feedback** that strengthen the field by learning from past successes or shortcomings.

By submitting a proposal, you are contributing to the professional development of your colleagues and advancing the field of informal science education. Please reflect the conference goals in your proposal.

# What's New for 2015

**Poster presentations:** A limited number of poster sessions will be available to accommodate 10-15 presenters at a time in a central conference location. Presenters should staff their posters to provide interactivity and engagement. Additional instructions are described under Session Formats.

## Content Priorities – Future Trends

Science centers burst upon the museum scene and introduced a whole new range of attitudes and approaches toward visitors and informal learning. These approaches were systemic, affecting the way informal learning settings were operated and managed and how visitors were served.

Today, the pace of change in our industry is such that we no longer have the luxury of planning for years with no change in priorities, and in many instances this pace of change is driven by outside influences. Digital media and an explosion in social media are changing the way society interacts in groups and within organizations, and how the public interacts with science centers and museums. New sources of information gathering and sharing, and new ways for the public to spend their recreational time pose challenges to established models. In order to remain relevant and sought out as a viable popular source of information and entertainment, our field must be constantly aware of and responsive to future trends springing up within society.

How can our industry continue to evolve if we are not prepared to be flexible and to anticipate inevitable changes?

More and more we can see new forces affecting the ways that science centers and museums practice their craft. Among visitors geeks are no longer regarded as nerds, kids are no longer confined to gross motor skill activities as a means of fulfillment, adults increasingly find they are the ones needing special instructions or coaching from the side, and new identities and marketing niches appear and fade as quickly as this season's fashions. New practices and terms – such as “gamification,” “memes,” “flipping the classroom,” and “making” – emerge as the social landscape is shaped by science and technology, and as an increasingly distributed audience shapes and bends them to their will.

Within the structure of science center and museum organizations, the ways in which management conducts itself are changing as well. Just as social media and technology are facilitating decentralization in society, management structures are also adjusting to accommodate and leverage more distributed operational frameworks. New management models no longer emphasize top-down approaches, but advocate for organizational cultures and structures in which new managers are able to adopt a bottom-up approach that empowers and nurtures the science center workforce.

Finally, fundraising professionals at science centers and museums also point to a changing landscape. A new generation of donors is often more interested in supporting a specific program or project, leaving less unrestricted money to take care of ongoing operations. Science centers, like many other nonprofits, increasingly have to meet the expectations of donors who want to take a more active role in how their money is spent rather than simply letting the organization make the decisions. Science center leaders will be challenged to adjust to this paradigm.

Session proposals that concern themselves with future trends – those articulated above, and other relevant trends – are highly encouraged, and will be given priority by the Conference Program Planning Committee reviewers. Session descriptions should articulate:

- what trend(s) the session content responds to;
- why a response is of priority to the field; and
- how the session will provide support and/or guidance for action.

## Proposal Types

**Session:** Concurrent sessions are presentations 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) long; Flash sessions are 10 minutes long, and will be combined by the review panel into three 75-minute sessions placed throughout the conference. A limited number of extended sessions (2-hour duration) will be available and may be requested on the online submission.

**Posters:** Want to share project results, exhibition advances, or new ideas in a graphic format? Select this presentation style to have your poster included in timed groupings that will be placed in visible conference areas for limited intervals. Presenters are expected to attend their designated session time to engage with their colleagues.

**Preconference workshop:** A half-day or full-day paid workshop that takes place on Friday, October 16, 2015. All workshops include food and beverage and transportation if necessary. All presenters must pay registration fees for the workshop (if any), but session leaders are exempt. Preregistration required.

# Topical Tracks

In order to support the growth and development of both attendees and the field at large, ASTC encourages the development of session proposals that will advance the field in both thought and practice. The 11 tracks listed below reflect major areas of work in science centers and priorities for the field. Proposals that focus on operational aspects of science center practice are especially encouraged. These include sessions that present advances in Administration; Development and Member Relations; Communications; Public Relations and Marketing; and Staff and Workforce Development.

## Global Perspectives

Befitting ASTC's role as a global organization, and because many sessions would benefit from a geographically diverse panel of speakers, ASTC is interested in promoting topics, viewpoints, and speakers representing a global perspective in as many sessions as possible. We strongly recommend that session proposals include speakers from all over the world. For assistance in refining topics or identifying international speakers to add to your session proposal, please contact Walter Staveloz at [wstaveloz@astc.org](mailto:wstaveloz@astc.org).

Proposals must indicate which **ONE** of the topical tracks listed below best categorizes the main topic of the session.

- **Administration:** sessions focused on finances, business practices, facilities, risk management, etc.
- **Applications of Research and Evaluation:** sessions focused on research and evaluation methods and results and how they can be applied to mission fulfillment.
- **Communications, Public Relations, and Marketing:** sessions focused on techniques and results of organizational communications in science center practice via any media platform.
- **Community Engagement and Outreach:** sessions focused on programming to serve community constituencies, including teacher education programs and diversity & inclusion efforts.
- **Development and Member Relations:** sessions focused on general development and membership strategies, donor relations, etc.
- **Education and Programming:** sessions focused on models and outcomes from various programming, including demonstrations, theater, adult or youth programming, hands-on labs, etc.
- **Exhibits and Environments:** sessions focused on development and design of any science learning environment (physical or virtual, in museums or in public spaces), and trends affecting design and development approaches.
- **Immersive Media and Experiences:** sessions focused on development and programming related to planetariums, large-format films, stereoscopic theaters, simulators, and related environments. *If you wish to have your planetarium show or*

***film screened at conference, please contact ASTC's Conference Department at conference@astc.org.***

- **Innovations in Science and Technology:** sessions focused on research collaborations, emerging technologies, etc.
- **Leadership:** sessions focused on issues of governance, strategic vision, mission fulfillment, and organizational/field strategies for the future.
- **Staff and Workforce Development:** sessions focused on staff and volunteer development; visitor/customer service; etc.

## Formats

Review the list of available formats below to select which will best involve the audience and create the most effective learning opportunity based on the content of your session. All sessions are non-commercial and avoid endorsement of services or products.

- **Café:** A moderated session that opens with short presentations of 3-5 minutes per presenter (maximum of 3 presenters), followed by roundtable discussions so the audience can interact with presenters. Session leader articulates the issues, and facilitates both the discussion and wrap-up.
- **Flash Session:** A short (10-minute) presentation especially suited for reporting project results or presenting program outcomes. Presenters should submit Flash presentations individually using the online form, and be sure to select the correct duration option (10 minutes). Individual presentations will be combined by the program committee into a limited number of collective sessions based on theme or topic.
- **Forum:** An open discussion on specific issues with one or more session leaders to moderate group conversation.
- **Panel:** A session with three to four presenters in a moderated panel discussion, followed by 15-20 minutes of Q&A. Diverse panels should consider each participating institution's geography, size, type, and budget.
- **Hands-on, Minds-on Exploration:** A program for a relatively small group of people in a specific field, emphasizing participation in problem-solving efforts, with one or more hands-on activities; 60 maximum participants.
- **Posters:** The poster session is a visual presentation of an author's work—using graphs, photographs, diagrams, and any sample educational materials developed—on a poster board. Presenters are expected to attend their designated session time to engage with their colleagues.

## Proposal Submission Instructions

**Session Leader/Contact** – Each proposal must identify ONE session leader (contact) who will be responsible for the organization and management of the session, including logistics, requests for audiovisual equipment, communication with presenters and ASTC staff, and leading the session itself. All correspondence related to the proposal will be directed to the session leader listed on the submitted form. *NOTE: Individuals are limited to participating in*

*three (3) accepted sessions; you may be asked to replace a presenter who is listed for more than three accepted sessions.*

**Registration Fees** – Session leaders and presenters must register for the annual conference. Session presenter(s) may receive a free pass only for the session(s) in which they are participating upon request and approval of the ASTC Conference Department. If non-member presenters wish to attend other sessions, events, and visit the Exhibit Hall, they may register at the discounted member rate. Session leaders are responsible for making sure all of their presenters register for the conference and pay for any workshop with a fee attached.

**Session Room Logistics** – Sessions are 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) long; Flash sessions are 10 minutes long, and will be combined by the review panel into three 75-minute sessions placed throughout the conference. A limited number of extended sessions (2-hour duration) will be available and may be requested on the online submission form. All rooms will have a computer, projector and screen, and internet connection. Standard room set-up includes round tables and limited theater (row) seating. Poster presentations will be held in timed sessions in a specified area.

Requests for other options for room furnishings and layout or other needs **MUST** be indicated in the “Special Needs, Requests, and Comments” section of the online form. It is possible that requests cannot be accommodated, and may result in non-acceptance of the session.

**Proposal Criteria** – Prepare session content beforehand to ensure completeness, adherence to word limits and avoidance of typographical errors. Please note that special characters (i.e., #, @, &) and bullets are not supported in the online proposal form. **Incomplete session proposals will not be considered for review.**

Session proposals will be rated based on the following criteria:

1. The topic is of high intellectual merit and contributes to the advancement of the field.
2. Session content demonstrates timely, strategic, and/or innovative thinking.
3. The description clearly articulates attendees’ experiences and/or takeaways.
4. Speakers and panelists are appropriate for the session and represent multiple perspectives. It is encouraged that session participants are from more than one organization or institution, and should include diversity with respect to each participating institution’s geography, size, type, and budget.
5. Session actively involves the audience, in a manner appropriate to the session format and content.

Please contact Nina Humes at [NHumes@astc.org](mailto:NHumes@astc.org) with any questions regarding the proposal process or form.

# Online Proposal Form Overview

**Session Title:** 15-word maximum. Be descriptive but concise.

**Session Summary:** 50-word maximum. This paragraph will serve as your session's entry in both the preliminary and final conference programs. Please be clear about what you will cover.

**Presenters:** list information for all presenters.

**Session Description:** 200-word maximum. Describe the session in more detail for the Conference Program Planning Committee. Include the topics to be covered, what will happen during the session, expected learning objectives, and form of audience engagement.

**Session Track:** Must select the appropriate track for session content.

**Session Format:** Choose a session format that is appropriate for the intended audience and session content.

**Special Needs, Requests, and Comments:** Use this section to request options for room furnishings and layout or other needs, additional A/V equipment, or explain a special circumstance that the reviewers should know about as they evaluate your session proposal.

## Enter your proposal online

- Go to <http://conference.astc.org/conferenceprogram/futureconferences> to submit your proposal.
- Cut and paste your proposal into the appropriate fields of the online form.
- After you submit, print a copy of the confirmation, which will include your personal web link, login ID#, and password to edit your proposal at a later date. If you need to make changes to your proposal after the deadline, please email [conference@astc.org](mailto:conference@astc.org) with your changes.

## Dates to remember

Session Proposal Submission Deadline is November 17, 2014.

Notification of acceptance into 2015 program will be sent February 2015.