Contribution ID: **151** Type: **Keynote**

K01 - Looking Back, Looking Up: Celebrating the Historic 50th Year of PAGASA Planetarium

Monday, 23 November 2026 09:00 (20 minutes)

Planetariums play a vital role in astronomy education, science communication, and public engagement. This review traces the historical development of planetariums in the Philippines, drawing on government records, institutional publications, legal documents, and historical accounts. The earliest documented modern planetarium was established in 1954 at the Philippine Weather Bureau's Astronomical Observatory in UP Diliman, followed by the National Planetarium in 1975 and the PAGASA Science Garden Planetarium in September 1977—the country's first operational planetarium. Originally fitted with a Zeiss-type projector and an MS-8 Minolta projector, and designed with 88 seats symbolizing the 88 recognized constellations, the PAGASA Planetarium has served for nearly five decades as a cornerstone of astronomy education, delivering live shows and lectures to generations of students and the public.

The planetarium's evolution reflects the broader modernization of Philippine astronomy-learning facilities: from analog, mechanical star-projection systems to digital, mobile, and full-dome technology. A key milestone came in June 2014, when the PAGASA Planetarium transitioned to digital projection with the installation of a Panasonic DLP system—an upgrade that, through sustained preventive maintenance and careful equipment management, has continued operating well beyond its expected service life. Access to astronomy education also expanded geographically with the introduction of PAGASA's mobile planetarium in 1999 and the establishment of regional planetariums in Mindanao (2024) and the Visayas (2025), decentralizing services beyond Metro Manila.

As the PAGASA Planetarium approaches its 50th anniversary in 2027, this presentation reflects on its historical and technological journey while addressing the challenges of aging infrastructure and plans to procure a new digital projection system. Together, these developments underscore sustained institutional commitment to modernizing science education facilities, expanding public access, and strengthening scientific literacy and appreciation of astronomy among Filipinos. The lessons drawn from sustaining and upgrading a national planetarium—long-term planning, diligent maintenance, and continuous innovation—offer valuable guidance for preserving science education infrastructure that inspires curiosity and public engagement for future generations

Primary authors: Mr BALA, Michael (DOST-PAGASA); RAMOS, Ma. Rosario (DOST-PAGASA); MENDOZA, Lordnico; CORTEZ, Girlie; DELDA, Julie Ann; ADDURU, Jastine Michaela (DOST-PAGASA); AGUSTIN, Rizzalyn Joy (DOST-PAGASA); MOJADO, Roumjer Jomes (New Era University)

Presenter: Mr BALA, Michael (DOST-PAGASA)

Session Classification: Keynote

Track Classification: Engaging the Public via Planetariums