

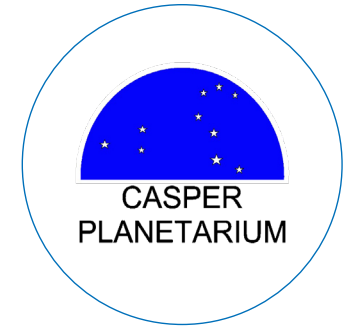
PLANETARIUM LEADER PROFILE

ROD KENNEDY

Casper Planetarium

◆ THE DIGITALIS PLANETARIUM LEADER SERIES ◆

Meet individuals who understand the power and potential of the modern planetarium and use this platform creatively to engage and inspire.



Overview

Coined as Casper's own "virtual starship and time machine," the Casper Planetarium was established at the height of the Space Age in 1966, making it the oldest planetarium in the state of Wyoming. During those decades, the planetarium has primarily focused on the support and education of K-12 students within the Natrona County School District (NCSD), designing shows and lessons to support classroom curricula and help students in the district meet grade-level standards.

Leading these efforts during the last 20+ years has been recently promoted Planetarium Supervisor Rod Kennedy. With a Master's degree in Science Education and 15+ years in teaching astronomy, Rod has the unique skill set required to help the planetarium and its initiatives excel. In his role, he oversees operations at the facility and was the main proponent of Digitalis solutions at the Casper Planetarium.

Planetarium Leadership A Profile

NAME: Rod Kennedy

ROLE: Casper Planetarium Supervisor

In his capacity as the facility's primary technician, Kennedy relies on his background in science and education to oversee operations, ensuring that the Planetarium delivers not only top-quality content for the NCSD throughout the school year but also five public shows a week for tourists and visitors.

"Human beings are visual creatures. Planetariums are a way to illustrate your thinking instead of just the written word. It's an investment, but it's an investment that does, I think, pay dividends."

— Rod Kennedy

CASPER PLANETARIUM SUPERVISOR



The Challenge

Seeking to optimize the planetarium's presentations, Kennedy recently undertook a search for a new planetarium system. The solution would need to address three central challenges the facility faced: flexibility, ease of use, and budget.

Flexibility and adaptability were a must for Kennedy and the planetarium, as they often had to change presentations in response to students' needs. A flexible system would also allow Kennedy to provide options that allow for various learning environments, like remote or hybrid instruction.



Ease of use was essential in the chosen system, as well. Since Casper Planetarium's main goal is to aid schools in meeting science standards and provide immersive, supplemental material to augment what is taught in the classroom, the selected system would need to be as user-friendly as possible and not require extensive training. Finally, budget was a central concern, too. Funding is a challenge for many public school districts, and the story was no different in NCSD.

Selecting Digitalis

In selecting Digitalis, the school district was able to secure a system that was:

- ◆ Easy to upgrade
- ◆ Delivered at a low cost per pupil, maximizing educational impact
- ◆ Provided multiple options for use, including a SkyBox, which can present planetarium content even when not in the dome

Kennedy had been familiar with Digitalis systems for years due to their prominence in the field. After running his research on Digitalis' solution, he found that it took a modular approach, allowing him to upgrade computers and projectors in stages and spread out costs for the district. In addition to its affordability, Digitalis provided the best ease of use compared to other systems. As Kennedy noted, "The Universal Console is very easy to use and learn quickly. I can teach it to my interns in about an hour."





The Solution

With the Digitalis planetarium system in place, Kennedy and the NCSD have been able to:

- ◆ Immerse students in an unrivaled simulation experience
- ◆ Transform students' thinking processes
- ◆ Create long-lasting memories that impact students far beyond their time in the planetarium

Above all, Kennedy is pleased with the flexibility delivered by the Digitalis solution. With the Digitalis planetarium system in place, he and his team are now empowered to adapt in real time to student curiosity and needs.

With Digitalis, Casper Planetarium is now the ultimate education tool and, as Kennedy puts it, "a great gateway to getting kids excited about other sciences." Presentations supported by the Digitalis solution have included everything from traditional astronomy based presentations to polar bears and their habitats to volcanoes.

Kennedy shared, "Digitalis has been absolutely great to work with. They have a real community feel...They are so easy to work with and so responsive to what people are asking for. Even if it's not possible, they let you know that... At Digitalis, they offer step-by-step help for everyone, from absolute beginners to those of us who have been doing this for 20 years. They are fantastic."

Discover how Digitalis helps K-12 schools build superior STEM learning opportunities.



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