

Director's Matters

By *H. Frederick Dylla, Executive Director & CEO*



Mr. Fresnel's gift to the world

Many of us will try to escape the heat this summer by catching the cool breezes of our shorelines. If you find yourself at the beach and want to enjoy something else that's cool (for science, history, and even art), I recommend that you seek out a lighthouse. Most of these structures that pepper the coastline are historic properties, once essential tools of commerce long ago replaced by automated hazard markers, radio beacons, and GPS receivers.

Lighthouses have been recorded in history since the time of the fabled structures built by the Greeks in the third century BC in Alexandria and Rhodes. For nearly 2000 years, lighthouses were simply towers or piles of rocks where a fire or torch was kept lit to guard a dangerous shoreline or shoal. By the early 18th century, both sides of the English Channel and much of the American coastline were dotted with grand lighthouses marking dangerous conditions. However, the persistent problem throughout most of this bimillennium was the all-too-short warning time. Wary sailors could not often spot the dim warning beacon in time and found themselves in the midst of the very hazard that they were being cautioned against. By the late 18th century, burning piles of wood had been replaced with a whale-oil lamp and simple, parabolic mirror, but the observable range in fair weather was still only a few miles. These beacons may likely have lured more sailors to their deaths than protected them. The situation changed radically by the invention by a young French engineer, Augustin Fresnel, of a compound lens that efficiently focused a large fraction of light from a single source into a concentrated beam. This famous lens bares his name.



First-order lighthouse Fresnel lens, on display at the Point Arena Lighthouse Museum, [Mendocino County, CA](#). Credit: [Frank Schulenburg](#); pulled from Wikipedia.

» [Read more](#)

Advertising sales need both new and evergreen approaches

Randy Nanna, *Physics Today* publisher, co-presented at a talk at the 50th Annual Association Media & Publishing (AM&P) Conference. The topic was “Current Trends vs. Tried and True: An Ad Sales Conversation.” It compared and contrasted the first-year ad sales experiences (tales/crazy happenings) of Diane Rusignola (left), associate publisher of *Independent Agent* magazine, with the slightly longer sales experiences of Randy Nanna (right).



» [Read more](#)

Off the Press

AIP Library Matters, spring issue



» [Read more](#)

Member Society Spotlight

US Physics Team visits Congress

The 19 students who emerged to become the US Physics Team took a short break from their two-week training camp to visit with their senators and tour Smithsonian museums along the National Mall. While on Capitol Hill, students were able to take photos with senators from California, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Indiana, and Illinois.



Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) center, with four members of the US Physics Team. Photo courtesy of AAPT.

On June 6, [AAPT announced](#) the five members of the Travelling Team to represent the United States at the International Physics Olympiad in Astana,

Kazakhstan, from July 13-21.

» [Read more](#)

Coming Up

June 23-26

- New Faculty Physics and Astronomy Workshop (College Park)

July 4

- AIP and AIP Publishing closed (College Park and Melville)

July 8

- Brown bag lunch. Jess Snyder, the Web Systems manager at WETA, will talk about their website: <http://weta.org/>. (College Park)

July 9

- Birthday socials (College Park and Melville)

July 13-21

- US Physics Team competes in the International Physics Olympiad (Astana, Kazakhstan)

July 14

- AIP Liaison Committee for Under-Represented Minorities meeting (College Park)

July 15-17

- Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives (CESSE) Annual Meeting (Spokane, WA)

July 20-24

- AAPM 56th Annual Meeting (Austin, TX)

July 21

- Brown bag lunch given by Alex Wellerstein on “John Wheeler’s H-bomb Blues: Searching for a Missing Document at the Height of the Cold War” (College Park)

July 25

- SPS interns program presentations (College Park)

July 26-30

- AAPT Summer Meeting (Minneapolis, MN)