

UNA Planetarium Newsletter

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From your Editor

2009 marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo's point his telescope towards the night sky. It marked a turning point in the history of astronomy and started a revolution in our understanding of the universe that has not ceased since. It also marks the beginning of what can be called the scientific age when increasingly the use of logic and evidence rather than conjecture and assumption dominated public discourse.

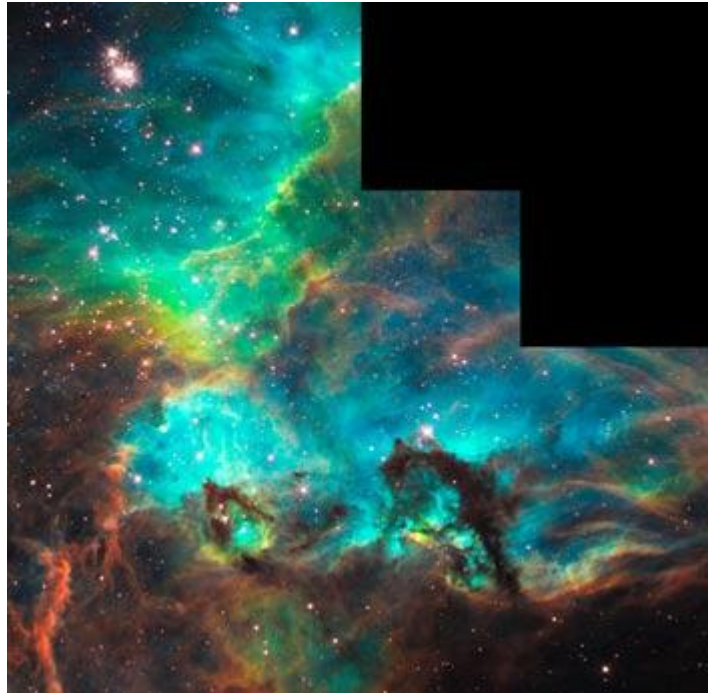
The revolution began by Galileo came at a price, and he was famously put under house arrest by the inquisition for violating his agreement not to promote the idea that the Sun was at the center of the universe. Galileo has been vindicated by history and is a perfect example of a scientist of conscience defending what is right. Science and reason are still under threat to this day.

The UN has declared 2009 the International year of Astronomy. The UNA Planetarium will be participating in national and international programs during the year. We will also be partnering with the UNA Art Gallery to present a winter exhibit displaying artwork by students and faculty inspired by space and astronomy. It will also include displays of meteorites and images from the Hubble Space Telescope and others. A perfect fusion of science and art! We will also be partnering with the Shoals Symphony who will perform "The Planets" by Holst, while images of each planet are shown. As other plans develop, we will keep you informed. Keep watching the sky!

Mel Blake

Director UNA Planetarium and
Observatory.

Image of the Month



The new year is a time of renewal. The universe likes to renew its self as well. New stars are constantly being born from the remains of old ones. This image from the Hubble Space Telescope shows an image of a star forming region that is among the most active in the local universe. There is a young star cluster at the top left, NGC2074, and the entire region is lit up with gas glowing due to the presence of hot young stars. Star formation generally is triggered by an event that de-stabilizes a gas cloud. The darker areas in the image are where the gas and dust is densest is where the next stars will emerge. We are made of this stardust. **Image courtesy NASA.**

*Astro Quote: Somewhere,
something incredible is waiting to
be known. " Carl Sagan.*

Observing Highlights

Look for the planet Venus in the west after sunset all month. It appears as bright "evening star" on your drive home from work.

Jan 9th, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter are visible in the west at sunset.

Calendar for Jan. 2009

Jan 2nd.....2004, Spirit rover lands on Mars

Jan 3rd. Quadrantid Meteors

Jan 4th. Earth at perihelion (closest to Sun).

Jan. 6th..... Planetarium Public Night

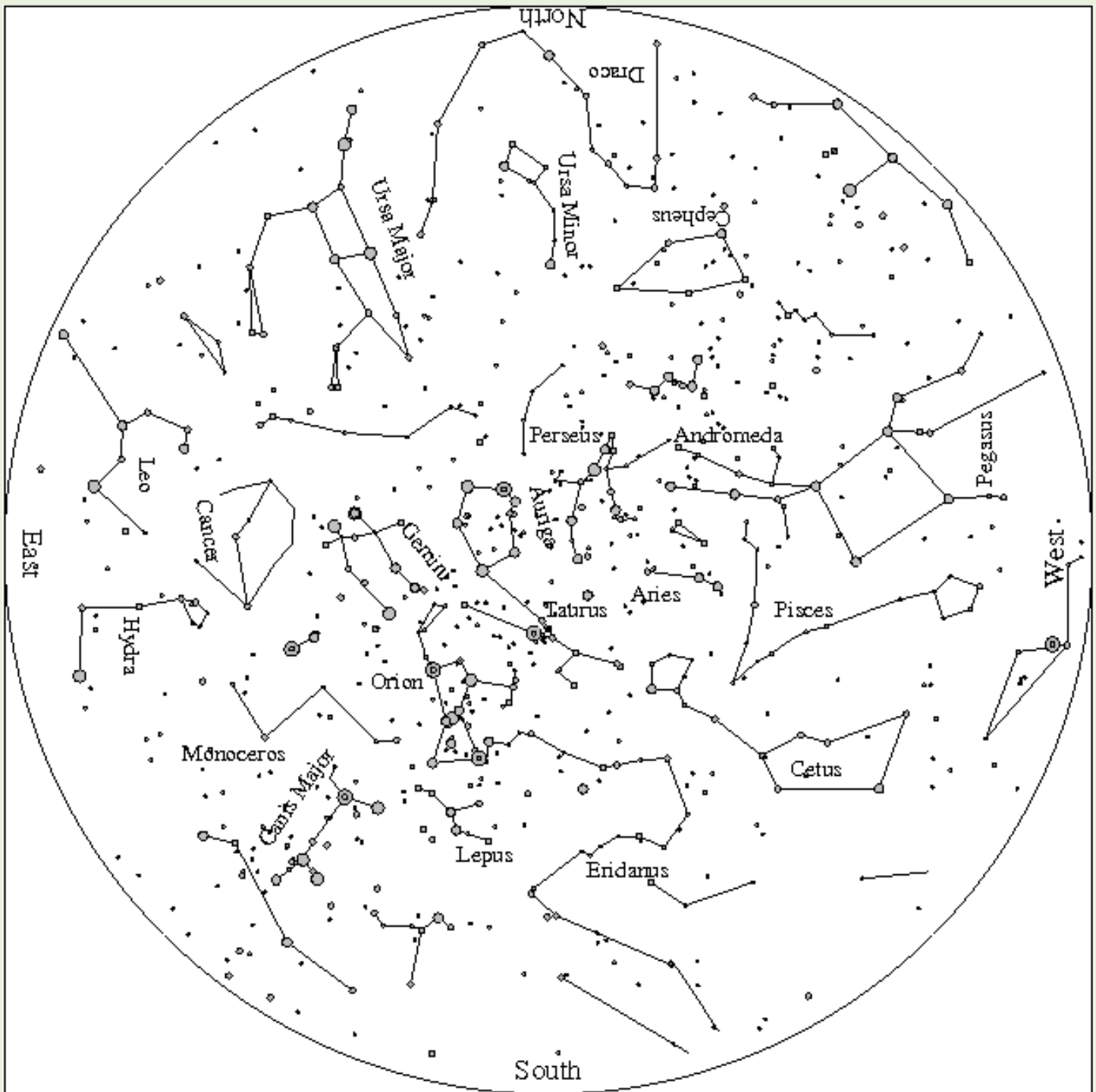
Jan 9th. Venus, Jupiter and Mercury visible.

Jan. 13th..... Planetarium Public Night

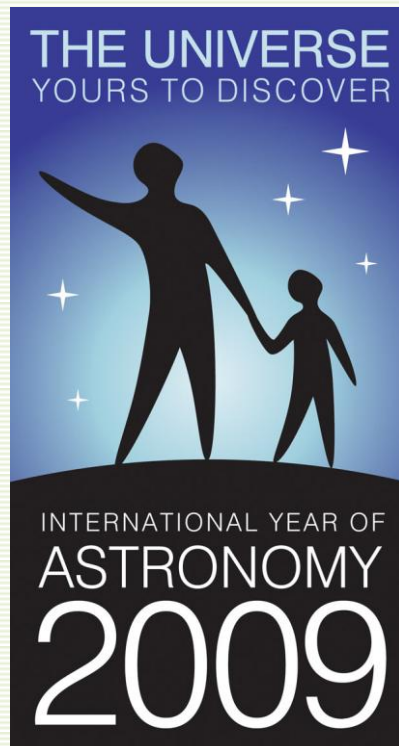
Jan. 20th.....Planetarium Public Night.

Jan 27th.... Planetarium Public Night.

The January 2009 Sky for North Alabama



How to use this Chart: The sky is shown for 8:00PM, January 15th for Florence, Alabama. It will appear this way one hour earlier for each week difference in time. The stars brightness's are represented by different sized dots. The faintest stars you can see are the small dots; the brightest ones are large dots. Hold the chart with the direction you are facing down. So if you are facing north, hold the chart with north down. The circle represents the horizon and the center of the chart the point directly over your head. So an object half-way between the center and edge of the chart is half-way up in the sky. This chart was prepared using the SkyNow software of R. M. Blake. This chart may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes with the following acknowledgement included: Courtesy UNA Planetarium and Observatory. <http://www.una.edu/planetarium/>.



UNA Projects and Initiatives

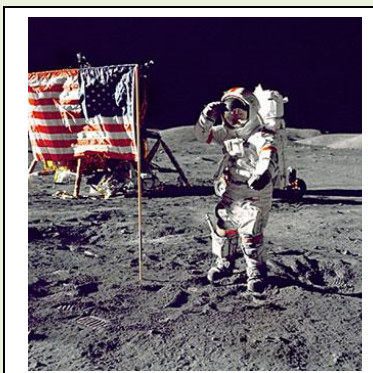
UNA Planetarium and Observatory aims to provide the community with access to a full range of local, national and international initiatives for the 2009 Year of Astronomy. We are still making plans for activities so we'll be keeping you up to date as our plans evolve. Here are some of the programs we will be bringing you. We still seek funding for some of these initiatives, so stay tuned.

Year of Astronomy Art Exhibit

In collaboration with the UNA Art department, a space and astronomy inspired art exhibit will open this winter displaying the artwork of students and faculty. These will be combined with science exhibits to provide insight into both our views of the universe and our reaction to them.

"The Planets" Symphony

The UNA Planetarium is collaborating with the Shoals Symphony for the spring performance of the symphony "The Planets" by Holst. The music will be accompanied by visual images of each planet to combine both music and science together.



International Astronomy Day

The UNA Planetarium and Observatory will collaborate with the Shoals Astronomy Club to bring our second annual International Astronomy Day activities. In addition to planetarium shows and a special invited speaker, we are hoping to bring the Galileoscope program to the Shoals area. This IYA key project is part of a national effort to put 1 million telescopes into the hands of school children who will construct the telescopes from a kit. The telescopes have a similar size to that used by Galileo 400 years ago. We are seeking funding for this project.

40th Anniversary of the Moon Landing

July 16th marks the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing on the Moon. In collaboration with the Shoals Astronomy Club we plan to have activities including sidewalk astronomy and presentations.