

MICHELLE NICHOLS
Aurora, Illinois, United States

EDUCATION

- National-Louis University, Major: Curriculum & Instruction; Degree: Master of Education, 2002
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Major: Physics and Astronomy; Degree: Bachelor of Science, 1995

POSITIONS & RESULTS

Employer: The Adler Planetarium, Chicago, IL (1995 to present)

Current position: Senior Director of Public Programs and Director of the Doane Observatory

Current responsibilities: Departmental leadership, staff management, budget management, program development, implementation, and evaluation. Leads a staff of 10 museum educators and 40 volunteers. Responsible for all public programs development, implementation, and evaluation.

Other:

- Organized the Adler Planetarium's first department specializing entirely in sky observing- and telescope-observing programs, initiatives, and events (2017 to 2026)
- Obtained significant budgetary support by donors and external funders (NASA, NSF, IMLS) (total: \$1,458,942).
- Selected, purchased, and installed a new 24-inch PlaneWave telescope for the Adler's Doane Observatory, partially supported by an Illinois Department of Natural Resources grant and funding from the Petrovich Foundation.
- Created and hosted an interactive live-to-YouTube educational show, *Sky Observers Hangout*, including program design, development, presentation, and evaluation, with over 1.5 million views of 47 episodes from viewers in 205 countries (2020 to 2026), with several episodes also earning paid sponsorship support (total: \$20,000).
- Implemented *Astro Road Trip* educational outreach program to downstate Illinois, resulting in almost 10,000 audience members reached since 2016.
- Implemented Adler Planetarium's first sidewalk astronomy outreach program, '*Scopes In The City*', resulting in over 13,000 audience members reached at nearly 200 events since 2014 through partnerships with the Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Park District, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and other local institutions, businesses, and organizations.
- Implemented programs in partnership with Southern Illinois University Carbondale and regional/statewide library-serving organizations in support of the 2017 and 2023/2024 solar eclipses, resulting in Adler-branded materials distributed to over 700 Illinois public libraries and 625 library staff served through 13 eclipse content workshops. Hosted onstage program for SIU Carbondale's 2017 and 2024 total solar eclipse stadium show, serving over 25,000 in-person audience members.
- Organized and implemented Adler Planetarium programs for the 2023 and 2024 solar eclipses.

Past experience:

- Team member for Interstellar Boundary Explorer (IBEX) Education and Public Outreach program (2008 to 2014). Developed lesson plans, lithographs, posters, and other related

materials, coordinated dissemination of over 250,000 printed educational pieces to individuals and institutions nationwide, developed web-based educational resources, coordinated distribution of *IBEX: Search for the Edge of the Solar System* planetarium show to over 100 planetaria, museums, schools, and scientific organizations worldwide, and coordinated IBEX EPO contributions to NASA Science Mission Directorate (SMD) EPO Heliophysics Educator Ambassador program.

- For NASA SMD Heliophysics and Astrophysics EPO Forums (SEPOFs), coordinated communications and professional development activities for approximately 400 NASA SMD EPO professionals, including conference activities and workshops and teleconferences; analyzed approximately 300 NASA SMD educational products and projects for alignment to National Science Education Standards and AAAS Benchmarks for Science Literacy; and developed frameworks for NASA Wavelength educational products online database.
- Led development and implementation for 6 NASA Education and Public Outreach programs (budgets ranged from approximately \$5,000 to \$25,000).
- Led development and implementation of a large-scale educational program, the *Mars Millennium Project*, including a temporary exhibit, webpages, curriculum development, and statewide teacher education program (1999-2000)
- Created the Adler Planetarium's first organized Telescope Volunteer program (2003) and the Adler's first organized Floor Demonstration Volunteer program (1997)
- Developed and implemented an extensive roster of several dozen teacher workshops, including graduate credit-earning programs through Aurora University, for several hundred teachers (1995 to 2014)
- Served on 10 planetarium show production teams, including 5 shows that were each sold/distributed to dozens of planetaria worldwide, and 16 temporary and permanent exhibit production teams; served as planetarium show presenter (1996 to 2000) and outreach/portable planetarium show presenter (2009 to 2013)

PUBLICATIONS

- Nichols-Yehling, M. (2024). *Eclipses Across Illinois*. Bulletin of the AAS, 56(9). <https://doi.org/10.3847/25c2cf6b.673927be>
- Nichols, M. *Caretakers of the Sky*, as part of Buhl, B. *et al.* (2024). People in the Planetarium. In: McMahon, M., Raposo, P.M., Smail, M., Boyce-Jacino, K. (eds) 100 Years of Planetaria. Springer Praxis Books(). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75496-8_4
- Nichols, M., et al. *Chicago Looks Up: Eclipse Excitement from Outside the Path of Totality*, Astronomical Society of the Pacific Conference Series, Volume 516 (2019).
- Bartolone, L., Nichols, M., Davis, H. B., Davey, B. *Summative Evaluation Findings from the Interstellar Boundary Explorer (IBEX) Education and Public Outreach Program*, Astronomical Society of the Pacific Annual Conference Proceedings (2014).