Library Learning Commons Update

Plans for the Library Learning Commons are being finalized and construction is projected to begin February 2010. Completion of the building is scheduled for September 2011. The Library Learning Commons will be a learning space for the digital age. It will integrate the library, technology, media creation, tutoring, testing and other campus services in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. A flexible design and a variety of furniture and study spaces will foster informal collaborative work, scholarship and social interaction. The beauty of the surroundings, the use of technology and staff to provide assistance will encourage and inspire creativity and discovery. The building will meet LEED Silver certification requirements for energy efficiency and sustainability. Wood reclaimed from the de-construction of Hale Manaele will be used as accents in the Hawaiian Collection room, coffee shop and other parts of the library. Large windows will allow nature and natural light into the building. For a virtual “fly-through” tour, go online to http://wccllc.blogspot.com/2009/03/blog-post.html.

Visiting Planets in our Solar System and studying their unique atmospheres is not yet possible for the average earthing, but if you pay a visit to the Magic Planet at Lanihuli Observatory, you can at least imagine it.

With the touch of a screen you can view the effects of climate change on planet Earth as if looking from space, or see what’s on the other side of the moon—the side we can’t observe even by telescope.

Magic Planet is a digital video globe with interactive multimedia features, and its purpose is to teach. A myriad of global data can be displayed on the 24-inch diameter sphere. For example, Magic Planet can show animations of changing global sea surface temperatures that can be used to study El Nino, or it can display elevation data of Venus obtained by NASA’s Magellan spacecraft as a way to teach about radar mapping in space. It can also present time-lapse satellite imagery to illustrate the development and path of Hurricane Katrina.

“Everyone loves it,” says Hōkūlani Imaginarium Manager Nancy Ali. “The touch screen technology is fun and visual, and brings planetary concepts to life.”

As a NASA-JPL Solar System Ambassador, Ali is privy to information about space programs that she can share with the public. She currently writes “Eye on the Sky,” a column about celestial observations for the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, and works with students and the community to encourage learning more about NASA and the splendor of our solar system.

Magic Planet was installed at the Lanihuli Observatory in June 2009. The Center for Aerospace Education at Windward Community College received private grants and donations from the UH Women’s Campus Club, Windward CC Professor Emeritus Jaqueline Maly and the “Friends of Lanihuli” to make the $42,000 purchase. It is used as a teaching tool for school groups, WCC students, K-12 teacher training programs and the general public.

The general public can view Magic Planet when the Lanihuli Observatory is open (around 8:00 p.m., weather permitting) after Imaginarium shows on the second and fourth Friday of each month. For more information, contact Nancy Ali at nancyali@hawaii.edu.