



# Six Honored with Leading Edge Awards at ASTC Annual Conference

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PHILADELPHIA, PA – Four ASTC-member organizations and two science center professionals were honored with *Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards* at the 2008 ASTC Annual Conference in Philadelphia. Now in their fourth year, the awards recognize both small and large ASTC members and/or their employees for extraordinary accomplishments in Visitor Experience, Business Practice, and Leadership in the Field during the past three years. The awards, presented annually at the conference banquet, commemorate the late Roy L. Shafer, a former science center director, ASTC president, and organizational coach. Recipients receive an etched glass award and a paid registration to the following year's ASTC Annual Conference.

The Leading Edge Award for Business Practice (Large Institution) was presented to the **Saint Louis Science Center**, Saint Louis, Missouri, for its *Strategy Playbook* for the *Body Worlds 3* exhibition. In addition to implementing a plan to fulfill visitor expectations and provide excellent customer service for the crowds drawn by the exhibition, the Science Center also reduced staffing expenses, raised staff morale, and created a sense of common purpose among staff at the same time. The institution's "Visitor Satisfaction Score" increased during the exhibition's 5-month run, which was experienced by more than 330,000 visitors.

The recipient of the Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (Small Institution) was the **National Canal Museum**, Easton, Pennsylvania, for its new permanent exhibitions, *The Science and Technology of Canals and Inland Waterways*. Since opening in 2006, the exhibits have been enjoyed by over 456,000 visitors and have transformed the National Canal Museum from a didactic, artifacts-based history museum for canal buffs into an interactive and engaging science and history center for visitors of all ages.

The Leading Edge Awards Jury chose to bestow two Leading Edge Awards for Visitor Experience (Large Institution) this year. The first was presented to the **Ontario Science Centre**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, for putting its *Agents of Change* initiative into practice with the *Weston Family Innovation Centre*, transforming not only the centre's physical space, but also its approach to visitor engagement. The new experiences encourage the attitudes, skills, and behaviors needed to address 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

The second Leading Edge Award in this category was presented to the **Virginia Living Museum** for *Survivor: Jamestown*, an immersive maze exhibition set in 1607 Tidewater Virginia, where basic game theory, history, free will, and the complexities of life and death decisions are joined to create a memorable and effective learning experience for role-playing visitors of all ages.

**Cynthia Graville-Smith**, education technology and development manager at the Saint Louis Science Center, received the Leading Edge Award for New Leadership in the Field. Smith designed, built, and managed the online community for the *Youth Exploring Science (YES)* program at the center, used Web 2.0 technologies as a vehicle for showcasing the work of YES teens, and aided the projection of 'at risk' urban youth as scientists to audiences inside and outside the institution.

**Ingit Mukhopadhyay**, director general of India's National Council of Science Museums, was the recipient of this year's Leading Edge Award for Experienced Leadership in the Field. Mukhopadhyay has addressed the critical professional development needs in developing countries where the demand for science centers is increasing while the availability of leaders to create and operate them have not kept pace. He has partnered with institutions and universities worldwide and engaged guest faculties to provide students with the widest possible exposure to some of the best pedagogical and professional practices in the science center field.

The Association of Science-Technology Centers is an organization of 438 science centers and museums in 43 countries dedicated to furthering the public understanding of science among increasingly diverse audiences. ASTC encourages excellence and innovation in informal science learning by serving and linking its members worldwide and advancing their common goals. ASTC provides professional development for the science center field, promotes best practices, supports effective communication, strengthens the position of science centers within the community at large, and fosters the creation of successful partnerships and collaborations.

Visit [www.astc.org](http://www.astc.org) to learn more about ASTC and the Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Awards, or to find a science center near you.

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