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A World In A Grain Of Sand

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Measuring Scale is Topic of February 21-23 U of Utah Symposium

To see a World in a Grain of Sand

And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,

Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand

And Eternity in an hour.

-- William Blake, from "Auguries of Innocence"

Feb., 2008 - From the vastness of the universe to the tiniest subatomic particle, the question of scale influences what we see, know and dream - not only in science, but also in art, poetry, architecture, economics, music and philosophy.

The influence of scale on how we experience the world will be the focus Thursday, Feb. 21 through Saturday, Feb. 23 during the Utah Symposium in Science and Literature at the University of Utah. The theme this year is "Measuring Scale: A World in a Grain of Sand"

The public is invited free of charge, but registration is required.

All the keynote lectures will be held in auditoriums at the Aline Wilmot Skaggs Biology Building

(ASB). Keynote speakers will discuss the effect of scale in poetry, physics and architecture:

* "The Scale of Habitation: The Body, the Cell, the City" by University of Michigan poet Linda Gregerson, 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21 in room 220 ASB.

* "What's So Small to You is So Large to Me" by Harvard University physicist Lisa Randall, 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, room 220 ASB.

* "Beat Science" by Rice University writer, designer and philosopher Sanford Kwinter, 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb.23, room 210 ASB.

Other main events include:

* The keynote speakers also will discuss the symposium theme during a live broadcast of public radio station KUER-FM90.1's "Radio West" show with host Doug Fabrizio at 11:00 a.m. Friday, Feb. 22 in room 210 ASB. Those attending the broadcast must arrive by 10:30 a.m. and be seated by 10:45 a.m.

* A roundtable question-and-answer discussion with the keynote speakers is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 23 in 210 ASB.

Admission is free for all events, but space is limited. So those who wish to attend should register. A registration form may be obtained online at <http://www.scienceandliterature.org/images/registration-07.pdf> and then should be faxed to Angela Allen at fax (801) 585-6212. Or she may be contacted at (801) 581-7236 or angela.allen@utah.edu

The Science and Poetry of Scale

The Symposium in Science and Literature series aims to "open lines of communication among thinkers in various fields [the sciences, arts and humanities] around scientific issues influencing all the fields" according to the symposium Web site.

Katharine Coles - symposium co-organizer, Utah's poet laureate, and professor of English at the University of Utah - says this year's symposium will focus on the influence of scale.

"The issue is, how does where you are standing and what you are looking at influence your perception of reality" she says. "This issue remains regardless of whether you are examining physics, biology, literature, architecture or philosophy"

"Look at the vast and enormous space of the universe through the eyes of an astronomer and you see the way stars and planets use the force of gravity to interact with each other" says Coles. "Look through the eyes of a particle physicist and you see the universe at a much smaller level. Physicists have discovered

particles we never knew existed ... and have discovered that at these very small scales the universe behaves much differently than it does when you are looking at very large bodies"

Coles says size scale is "an issue even in your everyday life. When you forget to turn off a light switch there may be a small individual consequence, but when millions of us fail to turn off the light switch, this may result in tremendous global problems in pollution and climate"

She adds that the issue of scale "isn't just about science. Poetry enables us to comprehend the way in which scales interact with each other and inform each other"

Panel discussions, tours and space traveler Jake Garn

In addition to the keynote lectures, two panel discussions are scheduled for 9:30-10:45 a.m. Friday, Feb 22:

* "The Lens: The Infinite and the Infinitesimal" in the Utah Museum of Natural History, room 319, with University of Utah faculty members Andrew Franta, associate professor of English; Jordan Gerton, assistant professor of physics; and Jessica Straley, assistant professor of English; and moderated by Fred Adler co-organizer and professor of biology and mathematics.

* "The Moral Dimensions of Scale in a Paranoid Age" in Utah Museum of Natural History's Anthropology Hall, with University of Utah faculty Leslie Francis, professor and chair of philosophy; Utah State Epidemiologist Robert Rolfs, an adjunct assistant professor of biomedical informatics; and Angela Smith, assistant professor of English; and moderated by Monisha Pasupathi, associate professor of psychology.

Friday afternoon, Feb. 22, symposium participants may attend various talks and demonstrations, including a 2 p.m. talk by former space shuttle passenger and U.S. Sen. Jake Garn titled "The Farther You Travel, the More (or Less) You Know;" a 2:30 p.m. demonstration titled "Powers of 10;" and a 3 p.m. architectural tour.

Keynoter Linda Gregerson is a professor of English language and literature at the University of Michigan. Her poetry collection, "Magnetic North" was named a 2007 National Book Award finalist. Her award-winning collections include: "Waterborne" "The Woman Who Died in Her Sleep" and "Fire in the Conservatory"

Lisa Randall is a world-renowned theoretical physicist and professor at Harvard University. Her book, "Warped Passages: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Universe's Hidden Dimensions" was one of the New York Times' 100 notable books in 2005. In 2007, she was named one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people.

Sanford Kwinter, an associate professor of architecture at Rice University, is an accomplished writer,

designer and philosopher. He is co-founder and editor for Zone Books at MIT Press and founder of the content and communications design firm Studio !KASAM. He has written numerous books including "Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture" and "Phylogenesis: Foa's Ark"

Meanwhile, the King's English Bookshop in Salt Lake City will help arrange book groups for people who want to read and discuss books by symposium keynoters. Call Anne Holman at (801) 484-9100.

For those attending the symposium, the Aline Wilmot Skaggs Biology Building is about a two-block walk from the TRAX light rail system's Stadium Station.

For those who drive, parking marked for symposium attendees will be available in the "A" lot just north of South Campus Drive and northwest of Rice Eccles Stadium.

The symposium is sponsored by the University of Utah's Office of the Vice President for Research, College of Humanities, Department of English, Scientific Computing and Imaging Institute and Utah Museum of Natural History. Co-sponsors include KUER-FM90.1, the Utah Humanities Council, the King's English Bookshop, the Utah Arts Council, and the Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks.

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