



# Patronage Prospectus

## Interstellar Research Group

### 9th Interstellar Symposium

*Distant Worlds, Neighboring Opportunities*

October 12-15, 2025

Austin, TX

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#### Contact

Website <https://irg.space>

Email [info2025@irg.space](mailto:info2025@irg.space)





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# Distant Worlds, Neighboring Opportunities

For the 9th Interstellar Symposium, The Interstellar Research Group is proud to partner with the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Planetary Systems Habitability. This is an amazing opportunity to showcase the talent that the state of Texas has to offer the interstellar community and our development goals.

Given our partnership with CPSH, we want to highlight the developments being made toward making off-Earth human habitation possible, but a part of that comes with recognition that our best model for emulation will be the ecosystems and climates found here on Earth. That is why the theme for this event is "Distant Worlds, Neighboring Opportunities."

The theme is emblematic of the concept that though we strive for the stars and the worlds that surround them, reaching that goal will chiefly be borne on hard work achieved on Earth, to benefit the people here too. Learning about the Solar System teaches us things about our own world in return, and the Interstellar Research Group works to bridge the translation of starshot missions to neighborly applications.

Part of the neighborly action that we aim to undertake this symposium is to provide scholarships to attend the symposium, allowing a broader array of attendees to participate in the symposium, that may have found themselves barred from entry before purely on a financial basis in the past. For that effort to be successful we are aiming to raise \$200,000 to fund the travel and symposium registration for up to 100 students.

The students that attend will have the ability to closely interact with senior research professionals from top international institutions, such as Caltech, Max Planck Institute, McGill University, and The University of Alabama at Huntsville. This close interaction is intended to foster professional opportunities for the students at these institutions, like research fellowships or junior faculty roles.

The Interstellar Research Group has long been focused on the distant missions enabled by realistic technologies we know today. The future will always belong to our junior participants, and it is never too soon to advantage more participants in that vision. There's enough room for everyone in space. Let's build that Ladder to the Stars, together. See you in Austin, October 12 – 15, 2025!



Joseph E. Meany Ph.D.,  
President  
Interstellar Research Group

1969. The only thing I remember from that year is my parents waking me up to watch Neil Armstrong step onto the Moon. That event has shaped my life in a major way. I was already obsessed with the space program and that in turn led me to being an avid reader of science fiction. From this point on each interest fueled the other in a virtuous(?) spiral. These two interests, in turn, led directly to my two careers – scientist and air force officer. About fifteen years ago these paths came together in my research beginning in space exploration, interstellar and SETI issues. I attended my first IRG (then TVIW – Tennessee Valley Interstellar Workshop) in 2016 and was captivated by the atmosphere and stimulated by the discussions, formal and informal. Since then I have attended all but one of the conferences and steadily became more involved.

I believe deeply in the mission of the IRG – to advance humanity to interstellar status. Organisms that stagnate, die. And the same extends to cultures and civilizations. It is essential, despite (or because) of problems here on Earth, that we continue to explore and expand. Far into the future, but perhaps sooner than we realize, Earth will become uninhabitable – if we do not move outward, we end.

What makes this time so exciting for me is that we have the beginnings of the scientific understanding and engineering know-how to realistically work on the myriad of challenges in reaching other solar systems. These very hard problems are what gets scientists, engineers, futurists, science fiction writers and business people excited and motivated.

The IRG 2025 conference, 12-15 October in Austin Texas will be the next, largest and most engaging conference focused on interstellar advancement. The conference venue is the ATT Center on the University of Texas at Austin campus. Austin is one of the most dynamic, fun and intellectually stimulating cities in the world. The university is a world leader in astronomy and space engineering and has a large engaged student body. Austin is also a space entrepreneurial center with more than a dozen companies from start-ups to multinationals engaged in space. Regionally SpaceX and Blue Origin have R&D/launch facilities in the state. Further supporting this ecosystem, the State of Texas recently launched a \$350 million space business and R&D fund. Of course, just down the road (in Texas terms) is the NASA – Johnson center – the home of US human space exploration.

Come join the exciting work of IRG 2025. Whether you are a professional in the field or an interested amateur, join us for a great multi-day conference of expert talks, social events, public outreach functions (including science fiction, art and topic workshops).

Dr. Ken Wisian,  
Organizing Chair, 9th Interstellar Symposium  
Interstellar Research Group



# About Us

The Tennessee Valley Interstellar Workshop (doing business as the Interstellar Research Group, IRG) is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) non-profit scientific, educational corporation in the state of Tennessee.

The Tennessee Valley Interstellar Workshop (TVIW) was an outgrowth of the Friday Night Dinner Club (FNDC), which has met in Oak Ridge, TN on Friday evenings from 2004 to the present. The attendees were mostly professionals in science and engineering, and conversation typically centered on contemporary research topics, particularly with regard to space missions. Evening discussions resulted in publications of several papers, preparation of proposals for innovative space missions and in 3 papers accepted to the IAA's 7th Biennial Symposium on Realistic Near-Term Scientific Space Missions, held in Aosta, Italy in July, 2011. It was on the patio of a charming little hotel in the ancient city of Aosta in the Italian Alps, that the idea of holding an Interstellar Symposium in the Tennessee Valley was conceived. The first Symposium proved an opportunity for like-minded people to get together and discuss how to move humanity into space, and to promote interstellar exploration, travel, and communications. Six very successful TVIW Symposia have been held. In August of 2020 the Tennessee Valley Interstellar Workshop reorganized as the Interstellar Research Group (IRG) to better reflect it's current goals and structure, which have expanded beyond being a regional organization in the United States to become a fully national and international group.

TVIW incorporated with an official founding date of January 18, 2014, and selected the first TVIW Board of Directors from FNDC participants: John Preston, President; Martha Knowles, Sect/Treasurer; Ken Roy; David Fields; and Robert Kennedy. Les Johnson was Advisor. Current Board Members are Doug Loss, President; Joseph Meany, Secretary; Lauren Randolph, Treasurer; Laura Montgomery; David Burke; Stephen Fleming; and Michael Birchfield. A current advisor is Les Johnson, who together with a separate advisory board that has been expanded to include professionals in aerospace, publishing, academia, and the United States military. John D. Rather was an advisor to the Board for the TVIW 2018 special symposium, "The Power of Synergy."

## Mission



IRG's mission is to facilitate interstellar research and exploration by hosting regular summit meetings, encouraging educational advances, publishing technical and scientific papers, and supporting literature and culture, all in the service of enhancing public understanding and dialogue toward interstellar exploration. IRG will assist in building a technological, philosophical, and economic infrastructure that advances the goal of establishing outposts throughout the Solar System and, finally, achieving a pathway to the stars.



# About Us

Though the original IRG concept was explicitly intended to be regional (viz., the American Southeast), it is now, in fact, an internationally recognized organization, with major speakers and attendees coming from all over the world. International participation has grown, for example, with the full involvement and support of the prestigious British Interplanetary Society, as well as the Initiative for Interstellar Studies and the International Space University.

IRG Symposia are opportunities for relaxed sharing of ideas in directions that will stimulate and encourage Interstellar exploration including propulsion, communications, and research. Why do we gather to discuss the challenges and opportunities of interstellar travel? Because we must. We are compelled by our nature to think positively about the future of humanity in a beautiful yet extremely hostile universe. Life on Earth is wonderful and we should do what we can to protect and preserve it here, but there is more. Among the billions of galaxies, stars and planets, we sense a call to explore. A call to disperse ourselves and settle a multitude of worlds in order to preserve and protect what must be very rare indeed: a bipedal species of intelligent tool-users who dare to dream, to love, to create and to aspire for more than mere survival. To do this, we must push boundaries and go. There are many challenges and some of them will take generations to overcome.

These efforts will take all of humanity. We need a unified effort. This will of course require scientists and engineers. But more than that it will take philosophers and artists and nurturing parents. We hope that one day we will see the great diversity that is the human race on the way to other planets and other stars. We invite all who are interested in using their talents to bridge the gap between here and our infinite future to join the IRG cause!



# IRG Board of Directors



**Joseph Meany**  
President



**Michael Birchfield**  
Secretary



**Lauren Randolph**  
Treasurer



**Stephen Fleming**  
Member At Large



**Laura Montgomery**  
Member At Large



**Doug Loss**  
Member At Large



**David Burke**  
Member At Large



# Past Symposia Keynote Speakers



John Culberson  
*TX Representative*



Esther Dyson  
*Philanthropist*



Lt. Gen. Steven Kwast  
*USAF*



Dr. Rebecca McCauley-Rench  
*NASA*



Dr. Peter Klupar  
*Breakthrough Starshot*





# Symposia Impacts

**IRG serves as a critical incubator of ideas for the interstellar community.**

IRG has hosted eight “main stage” symposia between 2011 and 2023, and two special topic symposia in 2018 and 2024.

Following the success of the 7th Interstellar Symposium in 2021, papers were submitted for consideration in publication within a special issue of *Acta Astronautica*, published in August 2022.

Papers from the 8th Interstellar Symposium in 2023 are currently in peer review for special issues in *Acta Astronautica* and *JBIS*.

With the success of these relationships, we expect similar cooperative agreements to be in place for the upcoming 9th Interstellar Symposium.

- Three-book series of technical monographs published by Elsevier
  - *Interstellar Travel: Purpose and Motivations*
  - *Interstellar Travel: Propulsion, Life Support, Communications, and the Long Journey*
  - *Interstellar Travel: After Arrival*
- Two Special Issues of *Acta Astronautica*, featuring papers from the 7th and 8th Interstellar Symposia
- One Special Issue of *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society (JBIS)*
- Three anthologies, *Stellaris*, *The Ross 248 Project*, and *Going Interstellar*, featuring contributors from IRG Interstellar Symposia published by Baen Books
- Ongoing YouTube archives of symposium presentations, professionally edited and available for free.





# Topic Areas of Interest



## Physical Sciences

Power, navigation, materials, extraterrestrial resource utilization, breakthrough physics



## Engineering

Propulsion, exoplanet terraforming, habitat architecture



## Astronomy

Exoplanet discovery/characterization, habitability, solar gravitational focus imaging



## Human Factors

Life support, worldships, population genetics, psychology, hibernation, finance



## Ethics & Philosophy

Sociology, law governance, astroarchaeology, cultural evolution



## Astrobiology

Technosignature/biosignature identification, SETI, Fermi Paradox, von Neumann probes

# 9th Interstellar Symposium: About The Event



## *Distant Worlds, Neighboring Opportunities*

This theme evokes the fact that while truly interstellar missions remain an aspirational goal, all steps that we take now can have far-reaching effects by coloring our immediate challenges. Just as habitat engineering studies have benefits for improving living in harsh earth environments; studies of culture, law, art, and governance here on earth will have lasting impacts on crewed interstellar missions.

We want to underscore how the breadth of the human experience will determine the success of our expansion to the *Distant Worlds* and stars beyond. *Neighboring Opportunities* reminds us that space is for all.

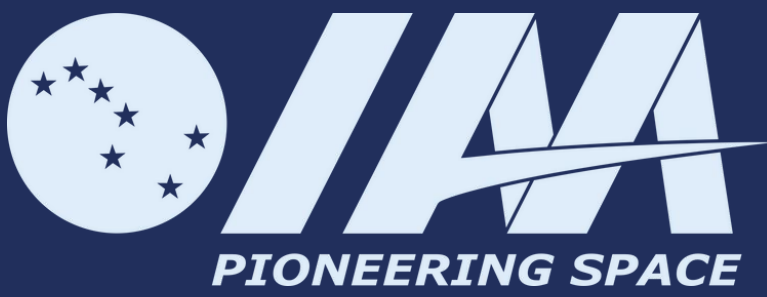


# Current Partnerships

For the 9th Interstellar Symposium, IRG is delighted to partner with The University of Texas at Austin, and their Center for Planetary Systems Habitability as co-hosts.



Furthermore, IRG is proud to continue our collaboration with the International Academy of Astronautics. IAA is committed to tackling groundbreaking challenges in the peaceful exploration and use of space, which strongly overlaps with the mission and ethos of the IRG.



We intend papers from the 9th Interstellar Symposium to be collated and published in another special issue of *Acta Astronautica*, as was the case for the 7th Interstellar Symposium at the University of Arizona and the 8th Interstellar Symposium at McGill University.



# Event Overview



## Pre-Symposium Seminars

- Events before the symposium
- 4-hour deep dives on focused topics from Subject Matter Experts
- Extra cost to attendees, but comes with the benefit of Continuing Education Credits.



## Academic Plenary Lectures

- Main programming of the IRG Symposia
- Peer-selected presentations on broad topics related to interstellar travel.
- Presenters come from government, industrial, and academic researchers.
- Each presentation is considered for publication in academic journals, collected as Special Issues.
- Each presentation is recorded, professionally edited, and available for researchers to freely promote their work.



## Student Poster Session

- Students have the opportunity to present their research.



## Sagan Sessions

- Special 90-minute discussion panel on a pre-selected topic for a deep dive.



# Event Overview



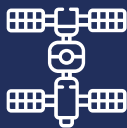
## Public Outreach Night

- Luminaries have topical discussions at levels accessible to the public.
- Free!



## Technical Tours

- Companies and institutions provide facility tours to IRG attendees as a unique attendance benefit.
- Tours offer both informational and networking opportunities for attendees.
- Offers a fun way to “wind down” from the events of the week to understand where the neighboring opportunities are.



## Hospitality Suite

- Echoing back to the IRG’s founding by a group of science fiction fans, IRG symposia specifically plan for a suite that offers attendees a chance to relax in a social atmosphere that extends the conversations of the day with food and other refreshments.
- In the quieter environment, students have the opportunity to sit with senior attendees for ad hoc mentorship.

# 9th Interstellar Symposium Organizing Committee



**Dr. Ken Wisian**  
Chair



**Cpt. Brent Ziarnick**  
Deputy Chair



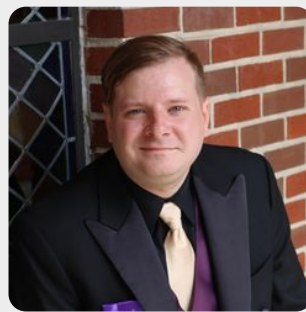
**Dr. Joseph Meany**  
Fundraising



**Martha Knowles**  
Volunteer Support



**Les Johnson**  
Programming



**Michael Birchfield**  
Publicity



**Lauren Randolph**  
Receivables





# Why Partner With Us?

Patronages allow us to maximize the quality of program offerings and maintain a high level of scientific benefit, while controlling costs to attendees. As a recognized 501(c)(3), your contribution may be tax deductible!



## Keynote Speakers

The IRG works with the foremost scientists, engineers, and other academics to maximize the breadth and depth of our programming. In the past, we have had speakers like Peter Klupar of Breakthrough Starshot, Esther Dyson of Wellville, and Becky McCauley-Rench of NASA.

We use Patronages to cover the travel and registration of these luminaries.



## Networking Opportunities

Many creative and scientific collaborations have arisen out of the intentionally close proximity offered by our programming. Careful curation of a timeline that promotes the formation of mutually beneficial connections.

We use Patronages to cover the cost of food and drink provided as a part of the symposium experience.



## Supporting Arts and Culture

From the inception of the organization, artistic and cultural elements have been a core part of the IRG symposium DNA.

We use Patronages to cover the travel and registration of science fiction authors, artists, and other inspiring individuals as a part of the free public outreach portion of the symposium.



# Galactic Patronage



**\$5,000+**

## **Benefits Include:**

- ② Two complimentary symposium registrations
- ② Two complimentary seminar registrations on Opening Day of Symposium
- ② Two invitations to VIP pre-Symposium reception
- ② Short address from podium at one plenary session
- ② Thank you letter from IRG President
- ② Logo recognition on landing page of Symposium website
- ② Logo recognition on front cover of Symposium program booklet
- ② Logo on signs for Patroned events (e.g. lunches, coffee breaks )
- ② Logo on title card of edited symposium videos (cataloged on YouTube)
- ② Recognition from podium at plenary sessions



## Specific Patronage Opportunities Include:



### VIP Reception

Patrons will get to meet with the IRG Board of Directors, Organizing Committee, and Honored Guests for a private catered reception before the Symposium begins.



### Plenary Session

The symposium is organized into five plenary sessions, representing the division between two and a half days of main programming. Each plenary session Patron will have the opportunity to speak within the block.



### Public Outreach Event

IRG works with local science, space, and engineering interest groups to host an outreach event that ties in with the symposium theme. In 2023, IRG hosted the panel discussion, *Interstellar Travel: Are We Ready?*



### Poster Session

IRG hosts a poster session for students and early career professionals to promote their work, and hopefully spark off beneficial collaborations!



### Keynote Lectures

Each day of the symposium is kicked-off by a keynote lecture by a leader in the interstellar community. We welcome the insight and encouragement of Patrons in the selection of keynotes.












# Interstellar Patronage



**\$1,000 - \$4999**

## Benefits Include:

-  One complimentary symposium registration
-  One complimentary seminar registration on Opening Day of Symposium
-  Two invitations to to VIP pre-Symposium reception
-  Short address from podium at one plenary session
-  Thank you letter from IRG President
-  Logo recognition on landing page of Symposium website
-  Prominent logo recognition in Symposium program booklet
-  Logo on signs for Patroned events (e.g. lunches, coffee breaks )
-  Logo on title card of edited symposium videos (cataloged on YouTube)



# Interstellar Patronage



## Specific Patronage Opportunities Include:



### Science Fiction Author Panel

Visionary ideas don't just come from practicing bench scientists, creating thinkers just as often need new ideas to tell captivating stories in new ways. IRG celebrates the fandom underlying its founding by hosting a panel of science fiction authors, free and open to the public.



### Breakfast Buffet

Each morning before the program begins, we are delighted to host a breakfast buffet. People need fuel too!



### Lunch Buffet

Each day between plenary sessions, we have a catered lunch with a topical speaker. One example from 2023, Michelle Hanlon from For All Moonkind present.



### Coffee/Snack Breaks

We break up the rigorous programming of the event to encourage networking during a generous coffee/snack breaks provided by the hotel.



### Evening Banquet

We celebrate the accomplishments of IRG's volunteers and the space community with a catered banquet and speaker. Typically, the banquet speaker is a space historian.










# Planetary Patronage



**\$500 - \$999**

## Benefits Include:

-  One complimentary symposium registration
-  One complimentary seminar registration on Opening Day of Symposium
-  One invitation to VIP pre-Symposium reception
-  Thank you letter from IRG Treasurer
-  Logo recognition on Symposium website
-  Logo on signs for Patroned events (e.g. lunches, coffee breaks )
-  Logo on title card of edited symposium videos (cataloged on YouTube)



## Specific Patronage Opportunities Include:



### **Student Registration Scholarship**

Enabling interstellar travel will require a consistent talent pool of creative minds, and IRG aims to find Patrons willing to reduce the barrier of entry to our events by Patroning some participants. This is especially focused on raising the participation of local student populations so that they can network to find new career pathways.



### **Professional Photography**

Capturing moments and memories of the Symposium help us communicate the value to a wide audience for the next event. The pictures are also hosted in a way for the attendees to use themselves, next time they need some professional promotional materials.



### **Professional Audio/Visual Services**

IRG cares tremendously about the broader impacts that the presentations have, and part of our effort to increase the availability of the information is to record, edit, and post the presentation videos. For this, we bring in a professional videographer and then video editor so that even if you missed the symposium - you don't have to miss the science!








# Lunar Patronage










**\$250 - \$499 or in-kind contribution**

## Benefits Include:

-  Thank you letter from IRG Treasurer
-  Logo recognition on Symposium Patron page
-  Logo recognition in Symposium program booklet
-  Recognition from podium at planetary sessions
-  Logo or name in credits of edited symposium videos (cataloged on YouTube)

## Specific Patronage Opportunities Include:

-  IRG meeting swag
-  Meeting stationary
-  Hospitality Suite refreshments
-  Technical tour transportation (Buses)
-  Symposium video editing
-  Official Symposium artwork
-  Animated transition graphics





# Orbital Patronage



< \$250 or in-kind contribution

## Benefits Include:

- ✖ Thank you letter from IRG Treasurer
- ✖ Logo recognition on Symposium Patron page
- ✖ Logo recognition on Symposium program booklet
- ✖ Logo or name in credits of edited symposium videos (cataloged on YouTube)

## Specific Patronage Opportunities Include:

- ✖ Program Booklet Printing
- ✖ Sign Printing












# Special Purpose Patronage



## Custom!

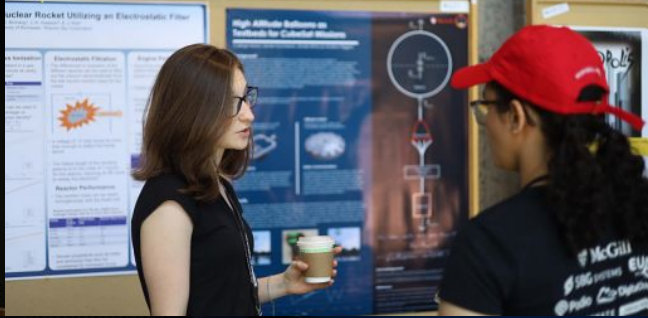
A Special Purpose Patron is a person or organization that contributes for a specific purpose such as collaboration on grant writing, assisting in exceptional promotional activities, or some other special combination of money included with a sustained level of effort to execute.

### Benefits Include:

-  One complimentary symposium registration
-  One complimentary seminar registration on Opening Day of Symposium
-  Two invitations to to VIP pre-Symposium reception
-  Short address from podium at one plenary session
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-  Logo on title card of edited symposium videos (cataloged on YouTube)

### Special Purpose Patronage Opportunities

If you or your organization are interested in cooperative special purpose Patronage opportunities, please reach out to IRG President Joseph Meany at [joseph.meany@irg.space](mailto:joseph.meany@irg.space). We can work out a Memorandum Of Understanding and discuss how we can all work together!





## Contact Us!



<http://irg.space>



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