

THE HUNTINGTON

Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Carolyn Porco Awarded Huntington Science Writer Fellowship



SAN MARINO, Calif.—Carolyn Porco, planetary scientist best known for her work in exploring the outer solar system, has been awarded The Huntington Library’s Science Writer Fellowship for 2010. The fellowship brings an official association with The Huntington as a science writer and intermittent residency at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Porco’s appointment follows that of Joe Palca, NPR science correspondent, who was at The Huntington as science writer in residence from June through September 2009.

During her stint as a fellow at The Huntington, Porco will be working on a book about the Cassini mission to Saturn, for which she serves as lead researcher on the imaging team. For the past five years, the Cassini spacecraft has been orbiting the planet, gathering data about its atmosphere,

rings, and moons. In addition to serving as an effective and ardent spokesperson for the project, Porco has led the team responsible for planning, designing, executing, and analyzing the imaging sequences coming back to Earth from Cassini. Many of Cassini's most notable discoveries can be credited to her and her team. One such discovery is the presence of jets of tiny ice grains erupting from the surface of Enceladus, one of Saturn's moons. Cassini scientists have determined that the spray accompanying these jets contains water vapor laced with complex organic chemicals, leading to speculation that Enceladus' environment might be suitable for supporting primitive life forms. Porco is also a member of the imaging team for the New Horizons mission to Pluto. That spacecraft is scheduled for a Pluto flyby in 2015.

"We are delighted to have Dr. Porco join us," said Robert C. Ritchie, W. M. Keck Foundation Director of Research at The Huntington. "Carolyn is amazingly imaginative and passionate and is a real tour de force when it comes to communicating about science to the public. We are thrilled to have a role in her work in that arena."

Porco will also be using the opportunity to work with individuals in the film and video industry on projects aimed at increasing the public awareness and understanding of science. "I look at the intersection between Hollywood and science and see it as yet untilled ground, a grand opportunity to energize and excite people about scientific exploration and discovery," she said. "The scientific enterprise is, at heart, a magnificent and very human story, with all the drama, surprise, heartbreak, and triumph of great theater. I am very much looking forward to involving myself in telling this story. And I'm also tremendously grateful to The Huntington for their generosity."

Porco was a scientific adviser for the movie *Star Trek*, which opened last May. She was also a consultant on the movie *Contact* (1997), based on the novel by Carl Sagan. She has been a frequent commentator on science for CNN and many other radio, television, and print media outlets. Her

writing has appeared in the London *Sunday Times*, *Astronomy* magazine, the *Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Arizona Daily Star*, *Sky & Telescope*, *American Scientist*, and *Scientific American*. She was selected in 1999 by the London *Sunday Times* as one of 18 scientific leaders of the 21st century.

Originally from New York City, Porco received her doctorate in planetary science from Caltech in 1983. In the early 1980s she served as a member of the Voyager imaging team, planning the encounters with Uranus and Neptune. Porco was on the faculty of the University of Arizona from 1983 to 2001. Today, she is a senior research scientist at the Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colo., where she directs the imaging team's center of operations, and adjunct professor of astronomy at the University of Colorado.

Porco begins her fellowship at The Huntington in February 2010. The fellowship is made possible by an anonymous gift to The Huntington. The gift followed the opening of The Huntington's Dibner Hall of the History of Science, which features a permanent exhibition displaying history of science materials from The Huntington and the Burndy Library, a collection of 67,000 rare books and manuscripts given to The Huntington in 2006.

More information about Porco can be found on the Web at <http://www.diamondskyproductions.com/CarolynPorco.php>. Images from Cassini, as well as Porco's "Captain's Log" documentary of the mission since 1999, Saturn-related space artwork, and more can be found at the official Cassini Imaging Team Web site, <http://ciclops.org>.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public. More information about The Huntington can be found online at www.huntington.org.

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Related activities at The Huntington:

History of Science Lecture Series

The following talks in Friends' Hall are free and do not require reservations.

Galileo and His Impact on Science and Astronomy

Sept. 17 (Thursday) 7:30 p.m.

In celebration of the International Year of Astronomy, which concludes in December, The Huntington is presenting a series of four special lectures on the history of this field of science. In the opening lecture, Noel Swerdlow, professor of the history of astronomy at Caltech, will discuss Galileo's pivotal role in the development of modern physics and astronomy.

Near-Earth Comets and Asteroids: Finding Them Before They Find Us

Oct. 13 (Tuesday) 7:30 p.m.

Donald K. Yeomans, manager of NASA's Near-Earth Object Program, will discuss the importance of comet and asteroid impacts in understanding the origin of the solar system and the evolution of life on Earth. NASA's current activities to prevent future Earth-threatening impact events will also be addressed.

What Do We Know About the History of the Universe?

Nov. 24 (Tuesday) 7:30 p.m.

Fourteen billion years of history—in one hour! Bahram Mobasher, professor of physics and observational astronomy at the University of California, Riverside, will talk about the evolution of the cosmos, from the Big Bang to present. Mobasher formerly represented the European Space Agency in NASA's Space Telescope Science Institute.

Life in the universe: Are we alone?

Dec. 10 (Thursday) 7:30 p.m.

Firouz Naderi, associate director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and the former head of Mars Exploration Program, will discuss current research to detect signs of life beyond Earth.

Visitor Information

The Huntington is located at 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, Calif., 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles. It is open to the public Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from noon to 4:30 p.m.; and Saturday, Sunday, and Monday holidays from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day through Labor Day) are 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Tuesdays and major holidays. **Admission on weekdays:** \$15 adults, \$12 seniors (65+), \$10 students (ages 12–18 or with full-time student I.D.), \$6 youth (ages 5–11), free for children under 5. Group rate \$11 per person for groups of 15 or more. Members are admitted free. **Admission on weekends and Monday holidays:** \$20 adults, \$15 seniors, \$10 students, \$6 youth, free for children under 5. Group rate \$14 per person for groups of 15 or more. Members are admitted free. Admission is free to all visitors on the first Thursday of each month with advance tickets. Information: 626-405-2100 or www.huntington.org.