From the IZE President, Rachel Lowry

Lifelong learning is widely accepted as a vital ingredient in capacity building for a sustainable future. In my term as President, I’ve valued the opportunity to witness the many incredible contributions that zoos and aquaria contribute to their communities. I remain resolved that zoos ignite a passion for lifelong learning and our natural world, and are fast becoming one of the most powerful groups within the education and conservation sector thanks to our collective reach, the animals that we are entrusted to care for and the quality of our education experiences. It was made clear at the 2014 IZE conference that one of the greatest challenges ahead for zoo and aquarium educators is to remain committed to evaluating our impact, so that we can continue to improve and celebrate what we achieve. I’d like to congratulate Stephen Woollard, IZE’s Journal Editor for generating the 2015 edition of the IZE journal, for it takes a significant step forward in rising to this challenge.

Miguel-Angel Vieyra-Guzman, IZE’s Regional Representative from Latin America reminds us via his publication in this journal that IZE has produced more than 37 annual journal publications. Across these 37 journals, more than 623 authors have contributed to writing more than 777 journal articles. Thanks to these contributions, IZE journals remain an incredible resource for zoo and aquarium educators, and provide us all with a valuable insight into how our practice as a community continues to change and evolve to ensure that we effectively fight the extinction of wildlife and wild places.

The shift away from zoo-based learning experiences that focus predominately on the acquisition of wildlife knowledge and towards influencing conservation sensitive attitudes and behaviors is incredibly exciting. Based on current trends, the Convention of Biological Diversity tells us that an estimated 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species – including one in eighth of the world’s known bird species currently face extinction. And as we know, this rate of extinction is not based on natural extinction rates but rather due to unsustainable human behaviors.

I look forward to sharing this journal with my peers to showcase how zoo-based education can play a role in ensuring that our communities actively value and work to protect our threatened species. As I head into what will be my final year as President of IZE before handing over to the very talented and committed Isabel Li from Hong Kong Ocean Park, I also look forward to seeing you at Tamaiken Zoo in October 2016, where we will once again join as a community to support one another in boosting the capacity and standards of zoo-based education. At next year’s conference, we will turn our attention to crafting effective narratives that serve the species that we are privileged to work and care for, a skill that we all place great value upon, and one that many from inside and outside the zoo community are increasingly recognizing as one of our signature strengths as zoo educators.

Rachel Lowry
President International Zoo Educators Association
Director Wildlife Conservation and Science Zoos Victoria

IZE Conference 2016: Fundacion Temaiken, Buneos Aires, Argentina
18-22 October 2016
Call for papers - November to 1st March
Early bird registration - 30th April
Final registration - 15th September 2016