



We are pleased in this news letter of the IBHA to begin with a note from our President, David Christian. We follow this with a piece on the newly launched, revised version of Chronozoom, information about the August 2012 IBHA conference, and conclude with a note on IBHA member Connie Barlow.

A Note from IBHA President, David Christian

By now, you will have seen an outline of the wonderful program of activities prepared for the Inaugural Conference of the IBHA in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in August of this year. The draft program is the result of a lot of hard work by our distinguished International Board, and particularly by our team on the ground in Grand Rapids, Leslye Allen (our spectacularly efficient administrator), and Craig and Pamela Benjamin. It is also a pleasure to thank our host institution, Grand Valley State University, for its generous support of the IBHA and its first conference. We will also have the pleasure of welcoming as partners to this conference, the Midwest World History Association, whose conference theme, “The Reshaping of Planet Earth”, picks up many Big History themes.

As anyone interested in Big History will know, this conference marks a sort of coming-of-age for our discipline. For twenty or thirty years, Big History has flourished quietly, and everywhere it has generated the same remarkable enthusiasm amongst both teachers and students, because it allows us to explore large, universal problems and questions that cannot be explored adequately within the silos of modern education and scholarship. But few educators outside of the field had any real idea of what was going on.

Now, suddenly, Big History seems to be on everyone’s radar. The creation of the IBHA, at Coldigiocco in Italy, in 2010 at a symposium organized by Walter Alvarez, was an event of great importance; so was the decision of Bill Gates to support the creation of an online Big History syllabus for high school students. Less obvious is the rapid expansion in Big History teaching in colleges and Universities in North America and elsewhere, a development tracked superbly by Barry Rodrigue and Daniel Stasko (in essays available on the IBHA website).

But it is the founding conference of the IBHA that will really mark the field’s coming of age. It has been exciting to see the rapid growth in membership of our new organization. (It was a delightful symbolic coincidence that John Mears, one of the pioneers of the field, was our 200th member.) And we have been overwhelmed and delighted by the large numbers of proposals for papers and panels. The remarkable range of papers of different kinds from different disciplines will make this conference quite unique. All in all, the August conference promises to provide a uniquely varied intellectual feast for those privileged to attend our founding conference.

Over the next few years we expect Big History to develop in many new directions. We expect it to evolve rapidly as a research field, bringing together researchers from many different sciences and humanities disciplines to explore how shared concepts play out across different research fields: themes from complexity, entropy and energy flows, to the role of information or “Universal Darwinism” or the deep question of how to define and explain the distinctive place in Big History of our own species, *Homo sapiens*. We are immensely privileged to have the distinguished geologist, Walter Alvarez, as our keynote speaker, not just because he is a fine speaker and one of the founders of the IBHA, but also because in the course of transforming his own field of geology, Walter demonstrated the remarkable intellectual and scientific synergies that can be tapped into by those willing to pursue fundamental questions across many different fields of scholarship.

We expect Big History to flourish in high schools, as high school curricula in Big History begin to be taught in many different countries, from Australia to the US to the Netherlands and Korea. Their appearance will mark a sea-change in education because courses in Big History will provide students with many of the intellectual tools they will need to tackle the huge global challenges facing our species in the next fifty years or so. We also expect Big History to continue expanding in colleges and universities as a field of undergraduate and graduate teaching.

These are exciting times for everyone interested in Big History, and I believe that in the future all those who attend our inaugural conference will feel privileged to have taken part in a seminal event in modern intellectual history! I know that I will personally take colossal pride in having been part of this conference, and I am looking forward to it with relish!

David Christian
Founding President,
The International Big History Association



ChronoZoom

[ChronoZoom](#) is an open source community project dedicated to visualizing the history of everything to bridge the gap between the humanities and sciences using the story of Big History to easily understand all this information. This project has been funded and supported by Microsoft Research Connections in collaboration with University California at Berkeley and Moscow State University.

You can browse through history on ChronoZoom to find data in the form of articles, images, video, sound, and other multimedia. ChronoZoom links a wealth of information from five major regimes that unifies all historical knowledge collectively known as Big History.

By drawing upon the latest discoveries from many different disciplines, you can visualize the temporal relationships between events, trends, and themes. Some of the disciplines that contribute information to ChronoZoom include biology, astronomy, geology, climatology, prehistory, archeology, anthropology, economics, cosmology, natural history, and population and

environmental studies.

Inspiration

In the spring of 2009, **IBHA member Roland Saekow** decided to take the Big History course from **Walter Alvarez, who is an IBHA Board member**, at the University of California Berkeley. Walter had created a series of timeline handouts created with a number of different methodologies. Fascinated, Roland was inspired to dedicate his student project to the study of timelines and thus sparked the inception for the concept of ChronoZoom as a way to examine the concept of Big History.

Roland and Walter began to discuss ideas for an interactive timeline application and often exchanged drawings on the blackboard after class or quick sketches during office hours. Walter soon began using Adobe Illustrator to create mockups with limited zoom capability, but quickly discovered that the current graphics applications did not have a fraction of the ability to zoom on the needed timescale.

Walter and Roland turned to an office on the Berkeley campus called the Office of Intellectual Property and Industry Research Alliances (IPIRA) and put together a description of the project and rehearsed a demonstration of the prototype that we had built.

The response from IPIRA group was phenomenal. “We are used to getting technical people such as chemists and biologists who come in and present their latest synthesized compound or chemical. Usually we just try to nod and pretend to share their excitement, but this is really cool!”

IPIRA helped Walter and Roland arrange a conference call with Microsoft Research. They produced a seven minute video that explained both the Big History timescale problem as well as an initial prototype and ChronoZoom was born.

A small but highly dedicated team at Microsoft Live Labs produced the first version of ChronoZoom. It was capable of zooming from a single day all the way back to the Big Bang. This impressive accomplishment was achieved in time for Walter's Faculty Research Lecture, where ChronoZoom made its worldwide debut. Walter had been selected as one of two faculty members to give the annual talk to the UC Berkeley community in 2010.

UC Berkeley wanted to create an intuitive easy to use dynamic cloud service that could have multiple data sets available. In the alpha attempt, we focused on an extensive back end that could handle hundreds of thousands of terabytes and multiple data types, but in the end was far too complicated in the front end.

The team changed focus to an intuitive user experience on a very easy to use tool and then expanded to include the community of humanities and scientists interested in using ChronoZoom for research and teaching.

Help ChronoZoom Grow

We envision a world where scientists, researchers, students, and teachers collaborate

through ChronoZoom to share information via data, tours, and insight.

Imagine a world where the leading academics publish their findings to the world in a manner that can easily be accessed and compared to other data.

Imagine a tool that allows teachers to generate tours specific to their classroom needs.

This can happen with your support. We need your feedback and support to continue to mold this project to suit your needs.

We will be focusing on community development of features, capabilities and content. We ask people to try ChronoZoom and then give us feedback in the survey and vote for features this will help us prioritize the next feature set. We are looking to work with two communities. One a community of content providers, humanities and science researchers, think tanks, schools and organizations that have digital libraries, digital content, and cultural content that can be viewed in a time-based tool that can help the history of everything come to life when you bring humanities and science stories together.

Examples: History of particle physics, history of chemical reactions, climate change, history of the Nile which could include cultural and scientific data, the history of Polynesian culture, etc.

We are also looking for computer science departments and schools that are interested in big data, data visualization, database design, and informatics who are interested in helping us build out the next set of features for ChronoZoom to support the needs of researchers and professors.

Some big questions we are trying to answer with ChronoZoom:

- How do you organize huge amounts (terabytes and more..) of data that are several different types of content—audio, video, txt, pdfs, images—logically and so they're easily consumable?
- How do you not sacrifice precision but show billions of years ago to a day on one scale?
- How do you prioritize content when you have multiple items for the same time period? For example someone may create Egyptian history timeline, Chinese cultural history timeline, Islamic history timeline, Japanese American history timeline and particle physics timeline and they all share a significant event on the date 1890- how do you show this on the timeline canvas?
- How do you efficiently draw elements on the canvas using html DOM graphical elements and not sacrifice CPU usage?
And how do you ensure the same experience on multiple devices, operating systems, and browsers—the exact same experience on a Mac, PC, iPad, iPhone, Windows Phone, and Android devices?
- How do you make a 3rd party authoring tool that serves as a peer review- editorial board approval process with annotations etc. to populate the timeline- as a new type of peer review journal?
- Do you require an author to build a timeline and create a story line or do you automate the pull of data from all creative commons freely available datasets and

libraries on the internet, how do you do this logically.

- How do you compare multiple timelines and data sets?
- How do you keep ambiguity there are many parts of history that are debated and not one answer is true, how do you help students to see the information but then interpret on their own and make their own decision on what happened and make sure folks understand this in not one factual story but the understanding of many researchers and experts and an ability to present various interpretations of an event in the timeline.

You can help!

Please complete the survey at <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EFZBLQL4B/> and encourage others to do so as well!



**2012 International Big History Association
Inaugural Conference Event
Grand Rapids, Michigan
August 2-5, 2012**

“Teaching and Researching *Big History*: Exploring a New Scholarly Field”

It is our honor to announce the **Inaugural International Big History Association Conference**, hosted by **Grand Valley State University** and the **Global Institute for Big History**, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The main theme of the conference will be "**Teaching and Researching Big History: Exploring a New Scholarly Field.**" The conference will offer excellent keynote speakers, a variety of interesting panels, and stimulating discussions. In addition to the largest *ever* gathering of Big History scholars, scientists, professors, teachers and graduate students, many other influential figures in the field of Big History will also be participating in the conference. The conference seeks to initiate and generate dialog through a series of panels, roundtables, workshops and general discussions with a significant focus on the expansion of scholarship in the pedagogy of Big History. Among the topics that will be addressed at the conference are:

- Graduate Work in Big History
- Research Agendas in Big History
- The History of Big History
- Little Big Histories
- Teaching Big History (all levels and formats, including E-learning)
- Big History and Ethics
- Big History and the Future
- The Politics and Future of Big History

The IBHA is excited to announce that the Midwest World History Association will also be

hosting their Third Annual Conference concurrently with the IBHA conference: "**The Reshaping of Planet Earth: Connections Between Humans and the Environment in World History.**"

Main Conference Events

Registration begins: Thursday, August 2, at 2:00 pm (All times Eastern Standard Time)

Thursday, August 2, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Combined Opening Reception, Grand Rapids Public Museum

Friday, August 3 – Sunday, August 5, (Sessions begin at 9:00 am)

Ongoing Panels, Discussions and Workshops, DeVos Center & Honors College, Grand Valley State University

Friday, August 3, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Combined Reception, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, featuring MWWHA Keynote Speaker, Dr. Lawrence Gundersen (Environmental Historian and Professor, Jackson State Community College, Tennessee)

Saturday, August 4, 5:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Combined Conference Dinner, Kirkhof Center, GVSU, featuring IBHA Keynote Speaker, Dr. Walter Alvarez (Professor of Geology, University of California Berkeley)

Sunday, August 5, 1:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Combined Wrap-up Session w/Keynote (TBA), followed by Combined After Glow Reception, DeVos Center, GVSU

Conference Registration Fees

IBHA Members: Early \$195 | Regular \$220 | Late \$245

Non-Members: Early \$335 | Regular \$360 | Late \$385

IBHA Full-Time Student Members: Early \$100 | Regular \$120 | Late \$140

Early Registration runs from **April 1 - June 1, 2012**

Regular Registration runs from **June 2 – July 19, 2012**

Late Registration *begins on July 20, 2012*

Guest Pass (good for entry to Evening Social Events only): Early \$105 | Regular \$130 | Late \$155

Conference Registration Fees include all of the following:

- Entry to all Conference Panels including the IBHA and MWWHA Essential Panels
- Attendance at the Opening Reception
- Attendance at the Friday Reception
- Attendance at the Conference Dinner
- Optional IBHA Business Meeting
- Lunch Provided for the 3 Full Days of Conference Activities
- Morning and Afternoon Coffee Breaks
- Wrap-up Session w/Keynote Address and Closing Remarks
- After Glow Reception
- And much more

Refund Policy

Conference Refunds for Presenters and Panelists: Presenters and Panelists who are unable to secure funding from their institutions to attend the conference may request a full refund if notice is received by **July 19, 2012**. After this date, a \$30 administrative fee will be applied. Requests must be made in writing or via email.

Conference Refunds for General Conferees: The last day for Conference Fee refunds (less \$30 administrative fee) is **July 19, 2012**. Requests must be made in writing or via email.

Housing Accommodations

All housing accommodations are in downtown Grand Rapids, close to Grand Valley State University and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum and Grand Rapids Public Museum. **The discount rates won't last. Please note: All Conferees need to make their own accommodations reservations.** [Show more](#)

Holiday Inn

The IBHA has a block of 60 double rooms at a discounted rate of **\$112** per night (single/double/triple/quad occupancy). Room Reservations are on an individual call-in basis at [888-465-4329](tel:888-465-4329) (toll-free) or [616-235-7611](tel:616-235-7611). In addition to a restaurant and indoor pool, more details of amenities can be found at the following link: <http://www.holidayinn.com/grandrapidsdt>. Reference: International Big History Association. **Discount rates are not guaranteed after JULY 2, 2012.** [Show more](#)

City Flats Hotel

The IBHA has a block of 8 double (1 w/handi-cap facilities), 5 King, and 7 Queen rooms at a discounted rate of **\$129** per night on Thursday and **\$155** per night on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (single/double/triple/quad occupancy). Room Reservations can be made by calling [616-451-1892](tel:616-451-1892). Reference: International Big History Association Conference. In addition to being a green/sustainable hotel, more details on amenities can be found at the following link: www.cityflatshotel.com. **Discount rates are not guaranteed after JULY 25, 2012.**

JW Marriott (Amway Hotel Collection)

The IBHA has a block of 20 double rooms at a discounted rate of **\$159** per night (single/double/triple/quad occupancy). Room Reservations can be made by calling [888-844-5947](tel:888-844-5947) (toll-free) or [616-242-1500](tel:616-242-1500). Reference: International Big History Association Conference. Rooms may also be booked online through the website at: www.ilovethejw.com. Enter Group Code: **ibhibha**. **Discount rates are not guaranteed after JULY 2, 2012.**

Experience everything Grand Rapids has to offer at www.experiencegr.com. We are looking forward to seeing you in Grand Rapids, Michigan!

Registration

Registration begins April 1, 2012. Please check the website on April 1, 2012 for mail-in PDF registration form and online-registration details.

Note re Membership: Although non-presenters do not have to be members of the IBHA to register for the conference, if you are not currently a member and would like to take advantage of

the discounted member registration fees, please consider joining the IBHA before completing your conference registration. Please note that all presenters and panel chairs and commentators **WILL** need to be members of the IBHA before we can confirm their participation.

For more information on the conference, membership, accommodations, transportation, extra activities, and the International Big History Association, check the IBHA website at www.ibhanet.org.

If you have any problems with registration or have any further questions, please e-mail us at: ibha@gvsu.edu.

Program Committee: David Christian, Cynthia Brown, Craig Benjamin, and Fred Spier

"The IBHA 2012 conference is intended to be a forum for open, honest, and wide-ranging academic discussions. All views and opinions expressed by participants during the IBHA conference are their sole responsibility. The IBHA does not assume any responsibility and/or liability for facilitating the expression of any views and opinions."



Connie Barlow posts video of bringing the Epic of Evolution to kids

Watch children experience the epic of evolution in 40 steps in a fun, interactive, and highly illustrated way. Connie Barlow has been bringing this curriculum to children since 2006. It is structured as a walk back through the timeline of life, using data presented by Richard Dawkins in his 2004 book, "Ancestor's Tale: Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Evolution." On our journey we stop at 40 "confluences" where we humans meet an ancestor that we share with other species alive today. For example, Confluence #1 happens 6 million years ago in our walk back through time. There we greet the great-g-g-g grandparent we share with chimpanzees.

Connie leads this program by using guessing games, rhymes, song, and movement. She gradually adds components -- including inviting volunteers to read scripts in character of a creature. The video is posted in two installments:

“Ancestor's Tale for Kids - interactive program based on book by Richard Dawkins”

<http://youtu.be/ueWvjUn5GiE>

<http://youtu.be/thcHtJjgZfc>

All the instructions, slides, and scripts are freely downloadable from Connie's educational website:

<http://thegreatstory.org/ancestors-tale.html>



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