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AAS Newsletter
A Publication for the members of the American Astronomical Society

President's Column

John Huchra, president@aas.org

As 2009, the International Year of Astronomy, draws to a close we have a lot to celebrate. HST is most definitely up and working again with the new COS (Cosmic Origins Spectrograph), the WFPC3 and the repaired and refurbished versions of the ACS and STIS. All is not perfect, but with a little luck, this will continue to enable some really great science for at least another five years. As a community we owe a great debt to the public, to Congress, to NASA, to the HST project and especially the astronauts who made this possible. Have a look at the new images available at the Hubble site: http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/ and I hope you will be as enthusiastic as I am! Kepler is up and running and has the capability to detect Earth-like planets. Its initial results, are impressive, as an old peculiar A star photometrist I thought I would never see the day when photometric errors were measured in micro-magnitudes but that day is here. Herschel-Planck is up and producing spectacular far-IR images, with spatial resolution similar to the IRAC camera on Spitzer. Results on the CMB are coming. And, as I write, the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE) is set to launch this December. Its survey of the near infrared sky is poised to open up the sky in four bands between three and twenty-three microns with four thousand times the sensitivity of IRAS over those wavelengths. Good Luck!

On the NSF side of our house, the Advanced Technology Solar Telescope (ATST) has been given a new start in the major facilities line. While it will take several years to construct, with its large aperture and adaptive optics capabilities, ATST will enable astronomers to study the fine details of the Sun's surface structure with unprecedented spatial resolution. Despite being "our" star, current optical telescopes only resolve down to ~500 miles on the surface of the Sun. ATST should resolve the surface of the Sun to better than 20 miles and allow us to see the fine details of flux tubes and magnetic recombination. Not quite Google Earth but getting there.

Now to a harder topic. A change of administration inevitably brings changes in direction for government programs and initiatives. Many of these directly or indirectly affect our field. In the last few years astronomy and astrophysics have fallen out of the "competitive" portfolio for US science, in part because most of what we do is truly fundamental in nature with what seems to be little direct connection to solving the immediate problems the Nation faces. For example, in the current NASA budget, resources have been moved from Astrophysics and Planetary Science to Earth Science and Heliospheric Physics.

However, astronomical research has a long history of producing both benefits and important insights to broader societal problems. From the link between solar energy generation and nuclear power, to the observational discovery and verification of the greenhouse effect in the atmosphere of Venus, to technical spinoffs such as high sensitivity electronic detectors at all wavelengths, medical diagnostic image processing and wireless communication, astronomical research has contributed to societal good and long term national goals. I personally remember talking to a group of very interested MDs about x-ray CCDs and their ability to significantly improve patient care by lowering the radiation doses required for medical x-rays for applications such as breast cancer screening. Astronomy is also a "gateway" subject. For a large number of people, astronomy is the first and only science course they will take in college. For many others, the interest in astronomy or an introductory astronomy course is the driver that lead them to careers in science and technology.

I strongly support the increases to NASA Earth Science and Heliospheric Physics—climate change is indeed one of the most important problems the world, not just the nation, now faces, and I would continue to urge increased support for those areas. But there are many great reasons why astronomy and astrophysics should continue to be a key national activity as well. I urge you all to continue to make this case.

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Items of general interest to be considered for publication in the *AAS Newsletter* should be sent to crystal@aas.org. Appropriate pictures are welcome. For information about deadlines and submitting articles, see www.aas.org/publications/newsletter.php. Items submitted to the *AAS Newsletter* are not automatically included in the AAS Electronic Announcements or vice versa. Submit electronic announcement items to crystal@aas.org.

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From the Executive Office

Kevin B. Marvel, Executive Officer, marvel@aas.org

The AAS is much more than just a membership organization for "astronomers." Under the umbrella of the AAS we have five Divisions, representing Planetary Science, Solar Physics, High Energy Astrophysics, Dynamical Astronomy and Historical Astronomy. We also have some working groups, like the Working Group on Laboratory Astrophysics and the Working Group on Professional-Amateur Collaboration, to name just two, that work to foster these special topic areas. Our Divisions and Working Groups play a vital role, allowing the AAS to fulfill its overall goal of fostering astronomy and closely related sciences.

I have just returned from the very successful Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) meeting in Puerto Rico where nearly 800 planetary scientists from all over the world gathered to share the latest in research. You may have seen the big announcement of the extended ring around Saturn or the plans for the LCROSS impact. These and many other topics were discussed at the DPS meeting, but, just as with AAS meetings, the central purpose of gathering together in one place is to interact and collaborate with colleagues. I saw the same range of small groups gathered in the lobby of the hotel with laptops popped open, data reduction software burning up CPU cycles and wild hand gesturing that I see at the AAS meetings. Planetary Scientists are the same as (and many are!) AAS members. We are all in this together, probing the Universe near and far to seek understanding and bring these results to the public.

The AAS, because we organize and plan our own large meetings, makes meeting support services available to all of our Divisions. Some choose to use our services, others do not. Our goal is to provide the expertise we have with contracting, logistics, hotel management, exhibit management, registration, finance and oversight available to our Divisions at a low cost. We bring more than expertise though, we bring a passion for our field that is unmatched in other meeting support contractors and a deep understanding of our members and our community. We know that you want to have internet connectivity that exceed the local hotel bandwidth and you want that access at odd hours, whether to handle remote observing or to communicate effectively with your international colleagues. We know you want to deal with administrative issues as quickly and efficiently as possible, which is why we revamped our registration process and badge printing system to get you registered faster. We work hard to plan for and structure our support to match your demands. I think we do a great job and, compared to other science meetings I attend, I feel our meetings provide greater value to attendees.

We are gearing up for the big meeting in DC with just this in mind. The invited, contributed and special sessions are just overwhelming in science content. Splinter meetings of all types are being organized by different groups....we have more than 85 scheduled already. We are planning on holding the banquet at the Air and Space Museum (details to be confirmed...) and showing "BLAST! The Movie" at a local cinema at a subsidized ticket price. We will have an expanded range of professional development workshops, ranging from resume advice to negotiating skills. The Job Center will be slightly redesigned and hopefully more useful to job seekers and employers alike. Finally, we just confirmed that the NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden, will be addressing our gathered attendees, so it is setting up to be an exciting, content-filled event. Get your sleep before you come.

We are also a bit nervous about this meeting. Why, you might ask? Because we received 2075 on-time abstracts. If we receive the typical number of late abstracts and multiply by the typical scale factor to get total attendees, we should have attendance in excess of 3500 individuals. The last DC meeting was only 3130 total, so you can see why we are a bit nervous. Twelve percent growth is nothing to sneeze at and is a sign that our meetings are valuable to our members and our community.

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Speaking of sneezing...contagious diseases, especially flu, is a big issue this year. The CDC and other agencies have warned everyone to take precautions. Please be especially careful this fall to follow the personal sanitation guidelines put out by the CDC. If your department or organization does not have the recommended sanitation materials on hand, look into getting some. We want everyone who can attend the AAS meeting there in person, so take proper precautions and keep yourself healthy. We will have proper sanitation resources available at the meeting, with flu information as well, so I ask that all attendees use the materials made available and follow the health guidelines we provide. We want everyone healthy when they return home. Tired is OK. Sick is not. Cheers!

Mentoring Astronomers: Students to Faculty I & II

At the January 2010 AAS meeting in Washington DC, the CSMA and CSWA will be jointly sponsoring two special sessions on mentoring. The two 90-minute special sessions, entitled, "Mentoring Astronomers: Students to Faculty I & II," will take place during the morning and afternoon sessions on Wednesday 6 January 2010.

The morning session will be devoted to an exchange of information and best practices on mentoring by speakers selected for their current work with and knowledge of mentoring activities/programs. Invited speakers include, Dana Lehr (NSF), who will give an overview of NSF's Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan requirement for NSF proposal submissions; Kathleen Flint (National Postdoctoral Association) who will discuss tips and tools for mentors generally and special considerations for international scholars and women; and Hakeem Oluseyi (Florida Institute of Technology) who will include a discussion of advancing diversity in astronomy through mentoring. The number of invited speakers has been kept small in order to allow ample time for discussion during the session. We encourage attendees at all levels and stages of mentorship.

The afternoon session will be devoted to a participatory mini-workshop on mentoring. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have developed, field tested, and publicly released research mentor training materials for several STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines, including astronomy. Eric Hooper (Univ. of Wisconsin) will lead an interactive implementation of these mentor training materials. Participants will experience the training seminar in practice, come face-to-face with some common mentoring challenges, and have a chance to reflect upon and discuss these challenges.

Our intended audience members are astronomical researchers and faculty, as well as students, who act as mentors to more junior colleagues and who will continue to be mentors as they progress through their careers. Each session will provide unique and practical information for participants who attend only one. However, if attended as a unit, the sessions provide both useful information and the opportunity to practice and discuss the techniques presented.

If you have questions, contact csma@physics.wku.edu.

Mark your calendars! We look forward to seeing you there!

Honored Elsewhere

Virginia Trimble has been awarded an honorary degree by the University of Valencia, Spain as part of their celebrations of IYA and Darwin's 200th birthday. It is scheduled for presentation at the University in January, 2010, as close as possible to the 400th anniversary of Galileo's discovery of the moons of Jupiter.

AAS on Facebook

The AAS is on Facebook! You can become a "fan" of the AAS and receive occasional updates and news via our Facebook page. Find us by simply searching for the American Astronomical Society. Post feedback via our Wall on what sort of content and news would be useful on our Facebook page.

Candidate Statements

Vice-President (vote for one)

Nicholas Suntzeff

***Nominated Office*:** Vice-President
Affiliation: Department of Physics & Astronomy, Deputy Director Mitchell Institute for Fundamental Physics & Astronomy, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843
***Position*:** Professor of Physics & Astronomy
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): 1980, University of California at Santa Cruz, Board of Studies in Astronomy & Astrophysics
Areas of Scientific Interest: supernovae, cosmology, stellar populations and abundances, fundamental calibration, instrumentation
AAS Positions and Dates: 2007-10, AAS Councilor; CAPP (2008-2010)
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: Cerro Tololo Inter-American Obs. Users' Committee (1984-6); Gemini Science Operations Working Group (1997); CTIO TAC (1990-8); NOAO TAC (1999-2003); Chilean Astronomy TAC (2000); Chilean Gemini TAC (2004-8); NOAO Director Search Committee (2000); Dark Energy Task Force (2005-6); DOE review of LBNL Physics Division (2006,7); DOE review of Stanford KIPAC (2007); DOE review of DEC at Fermilab (2007,8); NASA Astrophysics Panel (2007+); HST panels (1994,6,7,2005) and TAC (2008); GSMT-SWG (2007+); GMT Board of Directors (2007+); Univ. Vancouver Physics Department Review (2008); Science Board for Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope (2009+); Board Member AdventGX+ Corporation.
Statement: As I sit writing this in early October, the CAPP received an email from our AAS Bahcall Policy Fellow Anita Krishnamurthi alerting us that a Senate Bill (1713) which would require open-access textbooks, mandates that all federally funded research results be made free and clear to be able to be included in these textbooks. Such a policy affects the integrity of our peer-reviewed journals. This is an example of one of many critical issues that the Council must act upon—and why you have a Council. While it is the official job of the Vice President to organize the AAS meeting programs, the job is much bigger than that—to insure that the interests of the Society and all of its members are being protected, as set out in our mission statement: http://aas.org/node/588

We are living in a Golden Age of discovery in astronomy; however, while the public budgets for STEM education are being solidly supported, the future budget profile for curiosity-driven research is not optimistic. I think that our Meetings and Journals are in generally good shape—and we need to focus on the issues in Washington DC as we prepare to find support for the projects recommended by the Decadal Survey.

Rosemary Wyse

***Nominated Office*:** Vice-President
Affiliation: John Hopkins University
***Position*:** Professor
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): Cambridge University, 1983
Areas of Scientific Interest: galaxy formation and evolution, dark matter
AAS Positions and Dates: Member and chair (2004), Dannie Heineman prize committee; member and chair (1996) AAS advisory committee to AAUW in selecting Annie Jump Cannon Award winner
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: I continue to serve on the organizing committees of many international conferences and this gives me insight into possible splinter sessions at AAS meetings; I have served on several Time Allocation Committees, most recently HST Cycle 17, in 2008 and Spitzer Cycle 6 Exploration Science also in 2008, giving me a broad understanding of exciting ongoing science.
Statement: I view the AAS meetings—and in particular the winter meeting—as the primary means to get a broad overview of the wide range of science achievements of our field, while also being without peer in terms of networking, an increasingly important aspect of our community. I strongly support the splinter meetings and the increased number of plenary invited talks and, if elected, will work ensure the quality and quantity are maintained, if not increased. I can envisage a future where the only oral talks are thesis talks, and the splinter sessions and plenary talks. I have found the poster sessions to be much superior to the '5+3' minute oral sessions in terms of both science transfer and getting to know people.

Secretary

George F. Benedict

***Nominated Office*:** Secretary
Affiliation: University of Texas/McDonald Observatory
***Position*:** Senior Research Scientist
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): Northwestern University, 1972
Areas of Scientific Interest: Astrometry, exoplanets, distance scale
AAS Positions and Dates: DDA Chair 1998-99, DDA Exec Comm 1993-95
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: AAS Shapley Lecturer 1998-2003; Member DDA, DPS; Member IAU
Statement: I am honored to be nominated for this position, and have more than an inkling of the task before me. For many years I was the deputy PI of the HST Astrometry Science Team and handled every aspect of over forty Team

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meetings, from agendas to minutes. My time as DDA Chair and on the DDA Executive Committee has familiarized me with the sorts of issues that could be raised at AAS Executive Committee meetings. While my present scientific activities focus on space astrometry with HST, my scientific interests range from galaxies, through exoplanets, to Solar System exploration. All astronomy has value, and I truly enjoy sharing that value with others. For many years I participated in the Shapley Memorial Lecture series. My present outreach efforts involve Continuing Education groups at the University of Texas for which I recently received a southeast region Teacher of the Year award. Finally, I just got an excellent hearing aid, so should not miss anything at the meetings.

Councilor (vote for three)

You-Hua Chu

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
***Position*:** Professor and Chair, Astronomy Department
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of California, Berkeley 1981
Areas of Scientific Interest: interstellar medium, multiwavelength observation, stellar energy feedback, debris disks around white dwarfs
AAS Positions & Dates: member since 1978; Warner/Pierce Award Committee (1997-1998); Tinsley Award Committee (2003-2006), chair (2005-2006)
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: IUE proposal review (1990); HST proposal review (1992, 1998, 2003), panel chair (2003); ROSAT proposal review (1993-1995); ROSAT Users Committee (1993-1998); CTIO Telescope Allocation Committee (1995-1997); Chandra Fellowship Review Committee (1998, 2000); Chandra Users Committee (2001-2004); Chandra proposal review (2002, 2006, 2009), panel chair (2006); FUSE Observers Advisory Committee (1999-2000); XMM-Newton Users Group (2006-present); NSF proposal review (2004); NSF Committee of Visitors (2002); AURA, member representative (2002-present), Observatory Council (2002-2008), Nomination Committee (2004-2007), chair (2005-2007); Spitzer proposal review (2005); ASIAA Advisory Panel (2005-present); IAU Division VI and Commission 34, Organizing Committee (2003-present), Vice President (2006-2009), President (2010-2012)
Statement: The mission of the AAS is to enhance and share humanities scientific understanding of the Universe. To achieve this goal, almost every endeavor we take has to go through various peer reviews: telescope time, research grants, refereed journal papers, outreach grants, etc. In a working peer review system, both the authors and the reviewers need to do their job well. There are workshops for writing papers and proposals, and we learn to come up new ideas and write better proposals through the years. However, we have no control over the reviewers and there are no training sessions for new reviewers. The AAS Statement of Professional Ethics has a section on peer review, which provides general guidelines but does not tell reviewers what to do when reviewing proposals totally outside their area of expertise. There are ways to make the peer reviewer work better. As an AAS councilor, I would apply my experiences from both sides of peer reviews and initiate discussions on ways to prepare new reviewers, improve peer reviews, and ease anguish of authors/proposers. If elected, I will add diversity to the AAS Council, of which all current officers and councilors are white.

Edward F. Guinan

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: Villanova University
***Position*:** Prof. Astronomy & Astrophysics
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Pennsylvania, 1970

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Member Deaths

The Society is saddened to learn of the deaths of the following members, former members and affiliate members:

Rodger Doxsey
Joern Rossa

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor on current issues of importance to astronomers are welcomed. Letters must be signed and should not exceed 250 words. Send to Jeff Linsky, Associate Editor, Letters, (jlinsky@jila.colorado.edu; 303-492-7838 phone; or 303-492-5235 fax) one week prior to the *AAS Newsletter* deadline. Letters may be edited for clarity/length (authors will be consulted) and will be published at the discretion of the Editors.

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Areas of Scientific Interest: Stellar astrophysics, solar-stellar activity variable & binary stars, astrobiology
AAS Positions and Dates: none
***Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office*:** Vice-Chair of the IAU Internat. School of Young Astronomers (1998-2007); Co-Chair of the IAU Progr.: Teaching Astronomy for Development 2006-2012; PASP Editor Board 2008 – Council AAVSO 2008
Statement: It is an honor to be nominated to serve on the AAS Council. I have been an AAS member for 35+ yrs. and served as the chair of the AAS Employment Committee during the mid-1990s. Currently, I am Vice-Chair of the AAS/US National Committee and recently represented the US/AAS at the IAU General Assembly. I have served on many NASA/NSF panels, TACs, and editorial boards. I am very active in undergraduate astronomy education—in particular, involving undergraduate students in research. I am also very active in IAU education/outreach programs, serving as Vice-chair of the International-School-of-Young-Astronomers (ISYA) and currently as the co-chair of the IAU Teaching Astronomy for Development program. I have helped organize schools and workshops in developing countries in South America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. These activities are aimed at the professional development of young students and new astronomers. As a council member, I will take a pro-active approach to promoting astronomy education and research both in North America and abroad. As the past chair of the Employment Committee, I will vigorously support AAS efforts in helping graduate students, and new PhDs find jobs and offering programs and workshops for career development and employment equity.

Patricia M. Knezek

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: NOAO/WIYN
***Position*:** Associate Scientist (NOAO)/Deputy Director (WIYN Observatory)
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Massachusetts, 1993
Areas of Scientific Interest: Evolution of galaxies, star formation in galaxies, especially in dwarf and low surface brightness galaxies
AAS Positions & Dates: CSWA 2002-2008 (chair 2003-2007) – oversaw the creation and endorsement of the "Pasadena Recommendations," and co-founded the Longitudinal Study
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office:

- Deputy Director, WIYN Observatory (2005 – present)
- WFC3 Team member (1999-2001)
- Elected "Fellow," Association for Women in Science (2007)
- Committees:
    - Chair, NOAO Telescope Allocation Committee (extragalactic; 2009)
    - Member, Demographics Working Group for Astro2010 Decadal Survey (2009)
    - Member, IYA2009: "She is an Astronomer" IAU Task Group (2008 – present)
    - Chair, CSWA-sponsored AAS Longitudinal Study Ad Hoc Committee (2006 – present)
    - Member, Washington Area Astronomers Executive Committee (1999-2001)
    - Space Telescope Science Institute Director's Leadership Forum (2000-2001)
    - Space Telescope Science Institute Key Users Committee (2000-2001)
- Professional Societies:
    - Member, IAU (2009 – present)
    - Member, Association for Women in Science (2006 – present)
    - Member, HEAD (1994 – present)
    - Member, AAS (1987 – present)
- Panels:
    - NSF astronomy proposal review (2004 & 2008 – AAPF; 2007 – PREST (chair); 2001 – CAREER; 1999 - galaxies)
    - AAS Small Research Grant review panel – 2004
    - IDEAS grants review panel 2005; 2001 (chair); 2000)
    - NASA/IGES (2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2002)
- Member of organizing committees for five international meetings, plus organized numerous AAS Special Sessions

Statement: As the advocate for our community to the nation and the world, the AAS plays a critical role in facilitating the communication between the different areas of interest within our community. This organization also actively promotes our interests to the government and public. These roles are essential as we push for larger and/or more complex (and thus costly) observatories and instrumentation. Communication is crucial as research is increasingly conducted through large collaborations and the boundaries between the various scientific fields blur. At the same time, emphasis on the importance of high quality education and public awareness continues to grow. With the release of the Astro2010 Decadal Survey, the AAS will help to ensure that our community is prepared for the challenges ahead.

My broad range of experience includes Deputy Director of a consortium that serves the entire astronomical community through NOAO, as well as a range of large and small educational institutions. My background spans research from X-rays to radio, working at universities (both as a researcher and teacher), working at both ground-based and space-based centers, living and working in both the northern and southern hemispheres, and teaching secondary school science. I have experience working with individuals in nearly

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all areas of astronomy in many different venues, and have been involved in education and public outreach for my entire career. Furthermore, I am committed to improving gender equality and diversity within our community. I look forward to using my skills and experience to work for the community as an AAS Councilor.

Robert D. Mathieu

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: Department of Astronomy, University of Wisconsin - Madison
***Position*:** Professor and Chair
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of California, Berkeley 1983
Areas of Scientific Interest: binary star populations and evolution, star formation, stellar dynamics and star clusters
AAS Positions & Dates: Astronomy Education Review Editorial Board, 2002 – present; Education Prize Committee, 2004-2006 (chair 2006), Astronomy Education Board, 2006-2009
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: Associate Director, National Institute for Science Education, 1998 – 2001; President, WIYN Board of Directors, 1999-2004; UV/OIR Panel, Decadal Survey Committee, 1999-2000; Organizing Committees, IAU Commissions 26 and 30, 1999 – present; Director, Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning 2002 - present; Chair, University Committee, University of Wisconsin-Madison 2005-2008
Statement: The American Astronomical Society has enhanced my life in astronomy, directly through meetings, journals, career services, and education and indirectly through diversity initiatives, political advocacy, and outreach. It would be a privilege to serve my colleagues and give back to the AAS as a Councilor.

I am a mid-career professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. My research comprises observational studies in stellar dynamics and stellar evolution from X-ray to radio wavelengths, with an emphasis on high-resolution optical spectroscopy. Over the last decade I have served in leadership roles for an array of organizations, including the WIYN Observatory, the UW, and the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning, an NSF Center whose mission is to prepare future faculty in all fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

This diversity of experience mirrors the diverse missions of the AAS. As Councilor I would seek to strengthen the connections between research, education, professional development, and the diversity of our community. I would also seek to increase our collaborations with other disciplinary societies; these societies—often with greater resources—are addressing many of the same challenges as the AAS. Like astronomical research, our community is rapidly growing and becoming more diverse; AAS leadership must meet the challenge of maintaining connections while fostering this growth.

Terry D. Oswalt

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: Florida Institute of Technology
***Position*:** Head, Physics & Space Sciences Department, Associate Provost for Research
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): The Ohio State University, 1981
Areas of Scientific Interest: binary stars, minor planets, exoplanets
AAS Positions & Dates: Bok Award Judge 1990-2007; Shapley Lecturer 1990-present; van Biesbroeck Award Committee 2006-2009; founding member, WGAPC 2000-2004
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: Council on Undergraduate Research Physics & Astronomy Councilor, 2000-present; Chairman, Southeastern Association for Research in Astronomy (SARA), 1990-present Director, SARA Research Experiences for Undergraduate Program, 1995-1998; NSF, Program Officer for Stellar Astronomy & Astrophysics, 1998-2000; Member AAS Division of Planetary Sciences, 1980-present; Member AAS Historical Astronomy Division, 2008-present; Member IAU, 1989-present (Comm. 26 Binary Stars; Comm. 46 Variable Stars; Comm. 52 Astr. Ed.)
Statement: As Councilor, I pledge to work hard to further the AAS mission in ways such as increasing member involvement in AAS activities and cultivating an appreciation for the science of astronomy among our political leaders, students and the general public. I have a special interest in fostering research at predominantly undergraduate institutions, and in recruiting new members with strong commitments to student research. In addition, we need to identify ways to increase the AAS' interaction with other professional organizations, national labs, university consortia, and funding agencies. During this year of the Decadal Survey, it will be particularly important for the AAS to engage its entire constituency in the process of setting our profession's priorities for the next decade, and to make the priorities achieved by consensus clear to our policy matters.

Scott M. Ransom

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: NRAO
***Position*:** Associate Astronomer
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): Harvard University, 2001
Areas of Scientific Interest: Neutron Stars, Pulsars
AAS Positions and Dates:
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: Member of the HEAD Executive Committee (2009 to present).

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Statement: While I'm an astronomer at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, one of my pet peeves is being called a "radio astronomer". Similarly, I wouldn't call myself a "high energy astronomer" either, despite the fact that I'm on the HEAD Executive Committee and that almost of the objects I regularly observe, primarily neutron stars and pulsars, are decidedly in the "high energy" regime. The best science in modern astronomy and astrophysics is had when we observe the universe in all the ways that we can, be that in optical/IR, radio, X-rays, gamma-rays, astro-particles, or soon, gravitational waves. As an AAS Council member, I would work to ensure that scientists, funding agencies, and the public all realize the importance of this multi-wavelength and multi-messenger approach to astronomy. Perhaps even more importantly, I would strive to help the AAS help all of us to do the best science and to train the next generation of scientists and engineers in the U.S.

Mark Sykes

***Nominated Office*:** Councilor
Affiliation: Planetary Science Institute
***Position*:** Director
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Arizona 1986
Areas of Scientific Interest: Planetary Science, Science Policy
AAS Positions and Dates: DPS Chair 2000-2001; Program Chair, 28th Annual DPS Meeting 1996; DPS Committee Member 1996-1999; Member, AAS Committee on Astronomy and Public Policy 2002-2006.
***Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office*:** Board of Directors, Astronomical Society of the Pacific 2006-2009; Member, NASA-NSF Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee 2003-2005; Chair, NASA Planetary Data System Working Group 2002-2006; Member and Chair, NASA astrophysics and planetary proposal review panels 1989-2009; Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science.
Statement: The AAS must play a strong role in advocating for our science and scientists. Recent decades have seen the growth of "soft-money" astronomers in response to NASA's need for the research to define and provide an interpretive context for its increasing accumulation of missions, the expansion of NSF-supported facilities and support for astronomy, and the entry of the Department of Energy into the field. As a soft-money astronomer at the University of Arizona for almost 20 years, and as the director of a soft-money non-profit research corporation with a significant fraction of scientists distributed across the country, I am sensitive to the effects of funding instabilities and the need to address the situational issues needed to preserve our intellectual capital. I am also sensitive to statements by individuals in funding agencies that suggest with remarkable ignorance that research programs are welfare for astronomers (I would say in some cases that research is underfunded to such an extent that it erodes the justification for tax-payer funding of mission programs and facilities). At the same time, the AAS has a responsibility to explain the societal benefits of what we do in astronomy and why regular tax payers should feel that money is well-spent-beyond the usual "inspirational" cant. The AAS also should provide help its members engage the public with confidence on this subject. The benefits of what we do is something I bring up in every public lecture and every visit to a congressional office. Finally, in my the course of my experience as DPS Chair and a community organizer in support of decadal surveys and to push back against detrimental actions by funding agencies, I have gained great respect for our community, its willingness to engage, and its common sense. I will work to increase and facilitate community discussion and input to AAS plans of action on those issues impacting us.

USNC/IAU (vote for one)

Humberto Campins

***Nominated Office*:** USNC-IAU
Affiliation: University Central Florida
***Position*:** Professor
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Arizona, 1982
Areas of Scientific Interest: Solar System, Circumstellar Disks
AAS Positions and Dates: DPS Nominating Committee (3 years, starting around 1990)
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: I have had international collaborations for more than 25 years. For example, in 2008-2009 I spent 14 months working in Europe, 11moths in Spain and 3 moths in France. I am one of 10 US members of the science team for the planned ESA Marco Polo mission (sample return to a Near-Earth asteroid). I also have ongoing collaborations with colleagues in Argentina and Brazil.
Statement: There are many reasons why international collaborations benefit astronomers. For example, as telescopes and other astronomical facilities become larger and more expensive, international collaborations become more important. In addition, problems such as light pollution and the protection of radio frequencies often require international coordination. I grew up in Latin America, I have lived in the US for 36 years, and I just spent 14 months working in Europe. I have had international collaborations for more than 25 years that include working with colleagues in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. Therefore, I can bring to the USNC-IAU a healthy perspective on the needs and challenges that this committee will face.

Jill Cornell Tarter

***Nominated Office*:** USNC-IAU
Affiliation: SETI Institute
***Position*:** Director, Center for SETI Research
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): UC Berkeley, 1975

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Areas of Scientific Interest: Astronomy, Astrobiology, SETI
AAS Positions and Dates: Member of CAPP 2006 - Present
***Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office*:** n/a
Brief statement to assist the AAS Council: It would be an honor to serve on the AAS USNC-IAU Committee. I have enjoyed my service as Vice-Chair and Chair of IAU Commission 51. My special interest in this committee will be to advance candidacy for membership of those scientists who are working in non-traditional research areas, and perhaps also creating bridges to other disciplines such as Biology and Geology. We have a number of mainstream grand challenges in Astronomy, but there are also many, exciting opportunities beyond these 'bandwagons'. It will be particularly interesting to consider those individuals for whom no existing IAU Commission is an exact fit, because this may indicate the need for a new Commission and a new branch and evolution of Astronomy.

Nominating Committee (vote for two)

Lori Allen

***Nominated Office*:** Nominating Committee
Affiliation: NOAO
***Position*:** Associate Scientist
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Massachusetts 1996
Areas of Scientific Interest: Star and planet formation, young stellar clusters
AAS Positions and Dates: none
***Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office*:** US Gemini Science Advisory Committee, 2000-2004; Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Council, 2006-2008; Spitzer Review Panels, 2003, 2008; Spitzer Fellowship Committee, 2007; NOAO TAC, 2002-2004
Statement: The AAS has benefited from excellent leadership, but this hasn't happened by accident. The Nominating Committee's job is to seek out individuals among us who will dedicate significant effort to shaping the society's future, and guide the AAS as it provides vital services to the astronomical community. Our leadership must be creative, forward-looking, and representative of the diversity of our community.

Susana Deutsua

***Nominated Office*:** Nominating Committee
Affiliation: Space Telescope Science institute
***Position*:** Term Scientist, Instruments Division, WFC3
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Michigan, 1992
Areas of Scientific Interest: Cosmology, Precision Calibration, Astronomy Education and Outreach
AAS Positions and Dates: Director of Education, 2002-2008, Astronomy Education Board (ex-officio) 2002-2008
***Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office*:** Co-chair US IYA 2009, IAU IYA2009 Executive Working Group, IAU Commission 46, JDEM Science Coordination Group (Nov 2008-March 2009, AAS Harlow Shapley Lecturer 2006-present, DOE, NSF-AST and NSF-DUE, NASA review panels,
Statement: A vibrant Society, that reflects our membership's varied interests—from straight up astronomical research to science administration (and everything in between), as well as its changing demographics, and that is responsive to these is essential. Equally important, we should encourage each of us to contribute to the health of the profession through meaningful participation according to our individual interests and expertise. The Nominating Committee is responsible for nominating candidates for Council, Society Officers including the Publications Board Chair, Education Officer, Press Officer and representatives to the IAU and other organization. Individuals who hold these offices play important roles in the leadership of the Society: Council members have fiduciary responsibility for the Society, the Education Officer together with the Astronomy Education Board is responsible for the Society's education goals and mission and programs, the Publication Board Chair, with the Publications Board, oversee the AAS journals and publications, while the Press Officer facilitates communication with the news media and the various other individuals represent our Society. The Society and our profession have changed significantly in the last decade in all respects. Astronomy education is an emerging area of scholarly inquiry, new technologies are enabling ever larger telescopes and instrumentation, even how we carry out research is different. My background encompasses both education and research. It will be my pleasure to give back to the Society by seeking dynamic individuals who can carry out these vital leadership roles.

Pamela L. Gay

***Nominated Office*:** Nominating Committee
Affiliation: S. Il. Univ. Edwardsville
***Position*:** Assist. Research Professor
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Texas, 2002
Areas of Scientific Interest: Variable stars, galaxy evolution, Astro. Ed. Research
AAS Positions & Dates: Member Pro-Am Collaboration WG
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: Board of Directors AAVSO, 2005 forward; Chair, IYA New Media Task Group
Statement: Over the past two years, my work with the International Year of Astronomy has given me a broad sense of how our community is succeeding (and sometimes failing) to communicate our most important discoveries and our newest aspirations to one another and the public. I have also gotten a harsh awakening to the direr funding situation our field faces, and what can be made possible through all of us pooling what

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we have to do collaborative work. Through my work with Galaxy Zoo and AAVSO, I've grown a deep appreciation for the accomplishments of amateur astronomers and citizen scientists. We need their help to handle the digital data flood. As a member of the nominating committee I will work to help the AAS find leaders who recognize that we are in a field that lives and dies according to the public's willingness to fund us and work with us. This means identifying people who are community builders and communicators, who will help foster strong relationships with these increasingly needed non-professional members of community, who see astronomy as needing governmental advocates, who also value the work of people doing astronomy education (formal and informal) and astronomy education research.

David L. Meier

***Nominated Office*:** Nominating Committee
Affiliation: Caltech/JPL
***Position*:** Supervisor, Evolution of Galaxies Group, and Senior Research Scientist
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Texas, 1977
***Areas of Scientific Interest*:** black holes, AGN, microquasars, winds, jets, MHD, accretion, relativity, galaxy formation and evolution
AAS Positions & Dates: Audit Committee, July 2007 to present
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: Since mid 2008 I have been the leader of a large astrophysics group at JPL—the "Evolution of Galaxies Group"—which actually is the size of a medium astronomy department (11 permanent Ph.D. astronomers & astrophysicists; 1 staff programmer; 10 postdocs; and 90 affiliates). (This group is part of a larger "astrophysics section", see http://science/Astrophysics/index.cfm, which includes others in laboratory astrophysics, solar/space physics, exoplanets, relativistic astrophysics, cosmology and astronomical instrumentation.) My group's research activities alone cover extensive expertise in galaxies and clusters at high redshift, strong lensing, AGN & quasars, nearby galaxies, Galactic ISM and molecular clouds, details of star formation, exoplanet detection, brown dwarfs, and solar system objects (including near-earth asteroids). Furthermore, the project scientists of the following NASA missions/instruments are members of my group (in launch date order): Kepler, WISE, NuSTAR, and MIRI (JWST) focal plane instruments. Our astrophysical expertise includes theoretical simulation and modeling and observations that span the spectrum continuously from radio through hard X-ray, with members playing key roles in Spitzer and Herschel programs. My own scientific activities involve directing a group of jet theorists, outside of JPL, on a variety of MHD jet projects. I also have chaired and/or served on numerous NASA & NSF review and advisory committees, as well as various steering and facilities allocation committees; served on and/or chaired several technical project committees; and served on several scientific organizing committees. This depth of experience and access to colleagues who work in many areas of astronomy gives me a broad perspective on most aspects of the national, and international, astronomical scene.
Statement: While the federal budgetary situation is still extraordinarily difficult, there are signs that we may be beginning to turn a corner. If the slow climb out of the current deep recession continues, we must be ready to take advantage quickly of that positive development and of the forward thinking of a new administration. One of our challenges in this regard is the dearth of new NASA missions planned for the post-2011 era. Recent developments in detector and related technology, coupled with new scientific directions and crisp recommendations from the decadal survey committee, should make it possible to re-populate the manifest with new, exciting, yet inexpensive missions. The AAS is the chief advocate for astronomers in the U.S. political arena, and as such, has the potential to inform and educate those public officials who make critical decisions that affect many of its members. The Society must continue to field candidates, and elect officers, who represent the breadth of the membership and put the interests of all astronomers above that of any one area. Keeping the community aware, active, and united is the best way to keep astronomy the healthy and exciting field that the U.S. public has come to expect.

David R. Silva

***Nominated Office*:** Nominating Committee
Affiliation: National Optical Astronomy Observatory
***Position*:** Director
Ph.D. (Institution and Year): University of Michigan, 1991
Areas of Scientific Interest: Extragalactic stellar populations, formation and evolution of early-type galaxies, stars above TRGB
AAS Positions & Dates: No previous positions
Other experiences and positions relevant to service in AAS Office: NOAO, staff scientist (1993-1996); ESO, staff astronomer, Head of User Support Group (1997-2000); ESO, staff astronomer, Head of Data Flow Operations (2001-2005); Thirty Meter Telescope, Observatory Scientist (2006-2008); NOAO, Director (2008-present)
Statement: The diversity of our Society membership continues to increase rapidly in many areas, including scientific field of interest, technical expertise, career-path, ethnicity, gender, and geography. What unites us is our passion to explore the Universe and our desire to share the excitement of that exploration with our colleagues and the greater society around us. It would be an honor to work with the Society to ensure that our election slates contain excellent scientists who can communicate our excitement and who reflect the diversity of our Society as broadly as possible.

Committee on Employment

Christine Pulliam – cpulliam@cfa.harvard.edu

Science Communication as a Press Officer

In today's world, more than ever, science communication is a crucial part of the overall scientific enterprise. This is especially true in the field of astronomy. Much astronomy research is taxpayer funded; the taxpayers deserve to know what they're getting in exchange for their hard-earned dollars.

Every astronomer can play a role in educating the public about who we are and what we do, whether through lecturing, writing articles in popular publications, or authoring books. But some of us choose to make science communication our full-time avocation.

While still in graduate school, I realized that the path of the research astronomer was not for me. I liked operating a large telescope and gathering data, but I didn't enjoy spending six months analyzing that data to eke out a speck of new knowledge. Too little fun, too much tedium. On the other hand, I enjoyed teaching, or more broadly, communicating scientific concepts and the latest discoveries.

After earning a master's degree in astronomy. I quickly landed a position at the Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island as a public information officer. My role was to share information about the lab with reporters, local residents, and the general public. I got on-the-job training in writing press releases, organizing events and meetings, guiding tours, and speaking to groups—all skills that I use to this day.

After a few years, I started looking for a job more in line with my interests. Professional networking led me to the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and an opening in their press office.

My primary duties involve writing press releases and web features to publicize discoveries and the scientists who make them. I often describe my role as "translator"—speaking to astronomers in the specialized language of Strömgren spheres and acoustic oscillations, and then reworking that information into something the layperson can understand. I also coordinate public outreach events, provide speaker training, and supervise a corps of telescope volunteers who conduct skywatching after our public lectures.

Our organization hosts about 300 Ph.D. researchers, so discoveries flow thick and fast. Yet not every journal paper will warrant a press release. Some researchers are surprised when the press office declines to issue a release on, e.g., magnetic polarization of protostar environments. They forget that while a finding may be scientifically valuable, it's not necessarily something that will "wow" the public.

The flip side of this challenge is that when a dramatic discovery does come along, I get to be one of the first people to hear about it. I've been privileged to publicize such milestones as the first "weather map" of an extrasolar planet and the "super-sizing" of our galaxy via a new mass calculation. (The latter was even featured on The Colbert Report!)

Lest you think that no research is involved, our press office pays careful attention to readership numbers for print and online media outlets. We also study audience interests and overall media trends. We have to constantly adapt our communications techniques to effectively reach our target audiences.

The media world is changing fast. Print is waning, while the web is ever growing. Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and other sites offer a new way to reach people directly. Yet the audiences are becoming more fragmented, making it tough to expand beyond the science-interested to the more nebulous "general public."

The world of science communication is changing as well. Most newspapers no longer have a journalist dedicated to science topics. Instead, they rely on generalists or even crib directly from press releases. As a result, the role of press officer is taking on greater importance.

To be a good press officer, you must understand the science, but you must also be able to convey that understanding in simple language and sound bites. When a typical TV news story is three sentences long, you don't have any time to waste.

To prepare for a career in science communication, classes or seminars on journalism certainly help. Dedicated programs in science writing also exist at a handful of universities. Many of the required skills, though, are best picked up on the job.

The National Science Writers Association is the biggest clearinghouse for science writing jobs, including both salaried positions and internships. You can also check with specific organizations that interest you, such as publications (*Sky & Telescope, Astronomy*) or NASA centers (Goddard, Spitzer, etc.).

In summary, if you enjoy telling people about amazing discoveries, consider becoming a press officer You, too, can help to bring astronomy—one of the few sciences that inspires an emotional connection with people—to the world's attention.

Washington News continued from back page

The Planetary Science Decadal Survey began in July 2009 and is scheduled for completion by March 2011. It will affect decisions made by NASA and NSF for funding planetary science in the 2013-2022 timeframe.

Stay informed about news and events that could affect astronomy policy through our various channels of communication. Urgent actions are communicated via the Action Alerts that are issued by email to the membership mailing list. There are more frequent updates on our Public Policy Blog (blog.aas.org). You can also follow us on Facebook by becoming a fan. This is a good time to take a close look at how we are doing with keeping you informed—drop me a line and let me know how we are doing at communicating Washington News to you.

Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy

Joan Schmelz (CSWA Chair, University of Memphis, jschmelz@memphis.edu)

CSWA Advice Link

Faithful readers of *AASWOMEN*, our weekly electronic newsletter will already know that CSWA has an advice link, but others may not have seen this feature. Our first topic is:

Top 10 Ways to be a Better Advisor for Graduate Students

1. Try to see each student as an individual; they will all have different backgrounds, talents, and goals. Do not expect them to be 'just like you' or like people you work with. It is crucial to realize just how important their work with you will be to their career.

2. You are responsible for guiding your students' research: helping them to select a topic, write a research proposal, perform the research, evaluate it critically, and write the dissertation. Set up a weekly meeting with your thesis advisee to give *constructive* (not personal; not necessarily positive) feedback on research work.

3. Identify student's strengths and build on them; identify weaknesses and help students overcome them.

4. Students need to know what to expect; these expectations will change as the student gets closer to graduation, but some important considerations include coursework, degree requirements, funding, comprehensive exam, thesis, etc.

5. For new students: help them set up their class schedule for each semester so they fulfill their requirements for (a) graduation and (b) the comprehensive exam in a timely fashion. Help students find the right balance between coursework and RA/TA duties.

6. Take your students to conferences and introduce them to your colleagues. Do not assume that they know how to network; they will need your help to develop this vital skill.

7. Encourage your students to present posters at a conference starting from their first year. Make them rehearse until they are comfortable with the material and the background. Ask them *why* they did this work. Ask them questions that you know they might be asked. Bring colleagues over to their poster and introduce them. Then stand back and let them do the presentation; step in only if they need you.

8. Your students rely on you for financial support: RAs and TAs, but you can also help them to find fellowships and summer positions.

9. Your job continues as graduation approaches: help them to find and apply for postdoctoral positions, faculty positions, and/or jobs in industry. They will need letters of reference. Have the student write ~three bullets with short paragraphs explaining their work and its importance. Use this information in your letter. Do *not* include personal descriptions like 'she's cute.' Do not send a generic letter that you use for all students who ask for references.

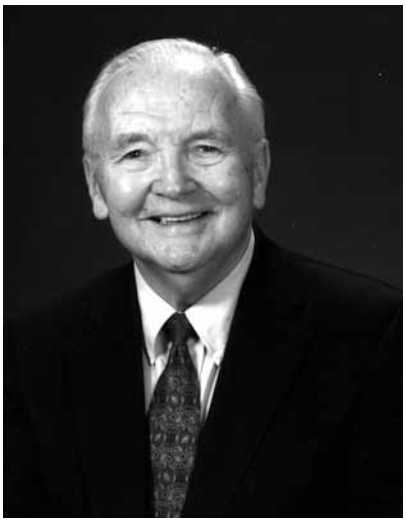
10. It is *never* appropriate to develop an intimate relationship with one of your students. If this should happen, you must not continue to advise that student (whether the relationship continues or not).

For advice on other topics, please visit the web site:
www.aas.org/cswa/advice.html

Division News

Historical Astronomy Division (HAD)

Sara J. Schechner, Chairman, Prize Committee



Michael J. Crowe to Receive LeRoy E. Doggett Prize

The Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society is pleased to announce that Michael J. Crowe will be the seventh recipient of the LeRoy E. Doggett Prize for Historical Astronomy. The Prize is awarded biennially to an individual whose long-term efforts and lifetime achievements have had significant impact on the field of the history of astronomy. The 2010 LeRoy E. Doggett Prize is presented to Professor Crowe in recognition of his research, teaching, and outreach.

Michael J. Crowe is the Reverend John J. Cavanaugh Professor Emeritus in the Humanities in the Program of Liberal Studies and Graduate Program in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Notre Dame. Professor Crowe earned a B.A. in the Program of Liberal Studies and a B.S. in Science from the University of Notre Dame in 1958. He earned a Ph.D. in the History of Science with minors in Physics and Intellectual History from the University of Wisconsin in 1965.

Professor Crowe's first book, *A History of Vector Analysis* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1967, revised Dover editions, 1985, 1994), was followed by *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, 1750-1900: The Idea of a Plurality of Worlds from Kant to Lowell* (Cambridge University Press, 1986, revised 1988, and Dover, 1999). This magisterial and ambitious work opened up a new and rich field for scholarship and made the history of beliefs in alien life a legitimate field for discussion. It is an indispensable resource that is unlikely to be surpassed for a long time to come. A companion source book, *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate: Antiquity to 1915*, was published in 2008 (University of Notre Dame Press).

Crowe's other main research interest has been the work of William and John Herschel. Here he has offered new interpretations of their careers. For example, Crowe has made a very strong case for the importance of William Herschel's belief in extraterrestrial life as a guiding principal in his construction and use of large reflecting telescopes. *The Calendar of the Correspondence of Sir John Herschel* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), edited by Crowe, is an unparalleled resource for Herschel scholarship and many topics in 19th century science.

Professor Crowe has done much to advance the discipline of the history of astronomy through his teaching. He was the founding chair of Notre Dame's Graduate Program in History and Philosophy of Science and has also served as chair of the university's Program of Liberal Studies. He has taught for close to 50 years at Notre Dame. His *Theories of the World from Antiquity to the Copernican Revolution* (Dover, 1990, revised 2001), *Modern Theories of the Universe from Herschel to Hubble* (Dover, 1994), and *Mechanics: From Aristotle to Einstein* (Green Lion, 2007) started out as course readers. As published, they have become foundational texts widely used in college courses throughout North America and independently by newcomers to the history of astronomy.

Students and colleagues describe Michael Crowe as compassionate, inspiring, and generous in sharing results. He has been called a cultivator of scholars as well as scholarship.

His welcoming nature is best exemplified by his central role in establishing in 1993 the Biennial Notre Dame Workshops for the History of Astronomy. These workshops have become the premier gathering of historians of astronomy and done much to establish a sense of community among them. Crowe created a space in which scholars of all ages and backgrounds could rub shoulders and share in convivial discussions of history-of-astronomy topics without regard to seniority or hierarchy. Indeed, many historians in the field have attributed their successful launch to the welcome, encouragement, and mutual support that they first received at one of these forums. It has been said that if Mike Crowe had done nothing else for the profession, his organization and hosting of the Notre Dame Workshops is a contribution to the field of history of astronomy that is worthy of recognition by the LeRoy E. Doggett Prize.

News from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP)

James Manning, Executive Director

Addressing the "Science" of Doomsday

Have you said your prayers? Gotten your affairs in order? Crossed everyone off your Christmas list for 2012? 'Cause Nibiru is a-comin', and all manner of other disasters, and it's the end o' the world! The Mayans predicted it, and I read it on the Internet, so it must be true.

Or not . . .

People have been predicting the end of the world since the beginning of the world. And the latest prognostication gaining steam involves New Age speculations about major transformative events occurring in conjunction with the completion of a Mayan Long Count calendar cycle on 21 December 2012. One camp says we are in for a global consciousness shift to some higher plane of understanding. Another camp says we're in for increased solar activity, a geomagnetic reversal, crustal displacements, an ominous alignment with the galactic plane, and a nasty bump by a rogue planet named Nibiru. Pick yer poison.

In recent years, an entire cottage industry has sprung up around the notion, including dozens of books, a clutch of lurid History Channel programs, and now a major feature film, complete with a viral marketing campaign that has created a fictional Institute for Human Continuity whose web site lets you register for tickets in a "survival lottery." I wager the real objective is to sell tickets at the movie box office. And as a modern-day "meme" (a term coined by scientist Richard Dawkins in 1976 to describe an idea that replicates through cultural transmission), various forms of the concept are being spread like flu viruses by the greatest cultural Typhoid Mary yet invented: the Internet.

All to the befuddlement of a chunk of the public who are less able—or less inclined—to sort science fact from fiction than we would like them to be.

But then, that is one of the things we are here for, isn't it? To offer a "voice of reasoning," so to speak, amid the clamor. This is a teachable moment. So let us teach.

Helpful voices are entering the discussion. The November issue of *Sky & Telescope Magazine*, for example, has an excellent article by Griffith Observatory director and archaeoastronomer Ed Krupp, who offers cogent explanations for why the purported Mayan predictions (and attendant cosmic threats) have no basis in fact.

And on our own ASP web site (www.astrosociety.org), you can find your way to a special article by planetary astronomer and NASA Lunar Science Institute Director David Morrison (who has been a leader in defining the threat of Earth-approaching asteroids and knows something about potential danger from space) dealing with the topic as well. The article derives from the numerous inquiries about 2012 flooding David's "Ask an Astrobiologist" web site, and offers a list of the most frequently asked questions complete with very sensible answers.

We need more such voices, and there is plenty for everyone to do, addressing falsities, separating science from pseudoscience, encouraging critical thinking in the consideration of such claims, and even in reminding the public of legitimate threats to the planet upon which we can have a remediating effect—not least of all because many of these threats derive from ourselves. (The rising global temperature comes to mind.)

We may not have the juggernaut of Hollywood in our corner on this one, but there is much we can still do to use the 2012 disaster scenarios to promote greater science literacy. At the risk of sounding Nibiruesque, I say let us give it a whack!

Announcements

Kepler Guest Observer Program – Cycle 2

Notice of Intent due: 4 December 2009
Proposals due: 15 January 2010

The Kepler Guest Observer Program solicits proposals for the acquisition and analysis of new scientific data from the Kepler mission. Cycle 2 observations will commence following the quarterly spacecraft roll on or near 18 June 2010. During its 3.5-year primary mission, Kepler will continuously monitor a ~100 square degree field-of-view in the Cygnus region, with the objective of detecting transits of Earth-size planets in the habitable zone. Proposals submitted to this program are expected to address areas of astrophysics outside of the exoplanet transit survey already underway. The instrument's high-precision photometry capability provides an opportunity for variability analyses of galactic and extragalactic sources, including, but not limited to, asteroseismology, stellar activity cycles, mass loss, rotation rates, flare stars, stellar accretion and active galactic nuclei. The Kepler instrument provides two available cadence modes of 1 minute and 30-minutes, providing uninterrupted source coverage over Guest Observer-defined windows ranging from 1 to 12 months.

The first public release of data from the Kepler mission occurred on 15 Oct 2009, containing times series photometry for eight thousand targets dropped from the exoplanet campaign after the first cycle of data inspection. All of these sources reveal either too much intrinsic variability to be useful to the transit experiment or are previously-unidentified red giants. The community is encouraged to exploit these data for scientific benefit. Cycle 2 of the Guest Observer Program provides the community its first opportunity to re-instigate dropped targets of intrinsic value to science back into the Kepler target list. These data can be accessed via the Kepler

Data Search engine of the Multimission Archive at STScI: http://archive.stsci.edu/kepler.

Programmatic information is available on the Kepler Guest Observer webpage located at http://keplergo.arc.nasa.gov. This announcement of opportunity is part of NASA's program "Research Opportunities in Space and Earth Sciences (ROSES) 2009" (NNH09ZDA001N) and can be found at http://nspires.nasaprs.com. Successful GO proposals will be funded by NASA's Science Mission Directorate. Questions about this program can be directed by email to the Kepler Guest Observer Office at keplergo@arc.nasa.gov.

Call for NRAO Observing Proposals

Astronomers are invited to submit Regular and Large proposals for observing time on the NRAO Green Bank Telescope (GBT), Expanded Very Large Array (EVLA), and Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA). A Large proposal is defined as requiring at least 200 hours of observing time on one or more of the NRAO instruments. In a new development (www.nrao.edu/news/newsletters/enews/enews_2_9/enews_2_9.shtml), both Regular and Large proposals are eligible for status as Key Science Projects.

Instrument	Deadline	Observing Period	Notes
GBT	2010 Feb 1	2010 Jun - 2010 Sep	%
	2010 Jun 1	2010 Oct - 2011 Jan	%
EVLA	2010 Feb 1	2010 Jun - 2010 Sep	*,&
	2010 Jun 1	2010 Oct - 2011 Jan	+,&
VLBA	2010 Feb 1	2010 Jun - 2010 Sep	#
	2010 Jun 1	2010 Oct - 2011 Jan	#

Notes:
(%) The availability of GBT receivers and backends typically changes with each new proposal call. Please read www.gb.nrao.edu/gbtprops/latestgbtcfp.shtml to see what is available for the latest proposal call.
(*) The C configuration with a maximum baseline of 3 km.
(+) The B configuration with a maximum baseline of 11 km.
(&) Shared-risk observing with the new EVLA correlator. Shared-risk programs are described at www.aoc.nrao.edu/evla/astro/ . "News for Proposers" is also posted on that page about two weeks before each proposal deadline.
(#) "News for Proposers" is posted at www.vlba.nrao.edu/astro/ about two weeks before each proposal deadline.

Users of NRAO instruments from most U.S. institutions may request travel support for observing and data reduction trips, as well as page charge support. In addition, a program to support research by students at U.S. universities covers student stipends, computer hardware purchases, and student travel to meetings to present observing results. Applications to this program are tied to observing proposals. Awards of up to $35,000 are possible. The NRAO and the European VLBI Network jointly handle proposals for observing time on the Global VLBI Network at centimeter wavelengths; the deadline is 2010 Feb 1 for the session in 2010 May/Jun. Also, the NRAO and a set of European observatories jointly handle proposals for VLBI observing time at a wavelength of 3mm; the deadline is 2010 Feb 1 for the session in 2010 Oct. The NRAO also handles proposals for the VLBI High Sensitivity Array at the same deadlines as for the VLBA; this Array includes the VLBA, GBT, and Arecibo in the U.S., plus Effelsberg in Germany. Although it is expected that EVLA commissioning will eventually include VLBI capabilities, no definite timescale for implementing this has yet been set.

Information on NRAO instruments, proposal submission routes, and user support is available via the NRAO website at www.nrao.edu.

NSO Observing Proposal Deadline

The current deadline for submitting observing proposals to the National Solar Observatory is 15 November 2009 for the first quarter of 2010. Information is available from the NSO Telescope Allocation Committee at P.O. Box 62, Sunspot, NM 88349 for Sacramento Peak facilities (sp@nso.edu) or P.O. Box 26732, Tucson, AZ 85726 for Kitt Peak facilities (nsokp@nso.edu). Instructions may be found at http://www.nso.edu/general/observe/. A web-based observing-request form is at http://www2.nso.edu/cgi-bin/nsoforms/obsreq/obsreq.cgi. Users' Manuals are available at http://nsosp.nso.edu/dst/ for the SP facilities and http://nsokp.nso.edu/ for the KP facilities. An observing-run evaluation form can be obtained at ftp://ftp.nso.edu/observing_templates/evaluation.form.txt.

Proposers are reminded that each quarter is typically oversubscribed, and it is to the proposer's advantage to provide all information requested to the greatest possible extent no later than the official deadline. Observing time at National Observatories is provided as support to the astronomical community by the National Science Foundation.

International Research Experience for US Graduate Students

The program is administered by the National Solar Observatory (NSO), sponsored by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE), and is open to US graduate students in any discipline of astronomy or astrophysics who are US citizens or permanent residents, age 21 years or older, and have a passport. The main goal of the program is to expose potential researchers to an international setting at an early stage in their careers. The program will take place in Bangalore, India, under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), a premier national center devoted to research in astronomy, astrophysics and related physics.

The program will support four full-time summer research positions for eight weeks starting 8 June 2010. For each participant, the program will provide round-trip air-coach travel to and from Bangalore, India, a stipend of US $500 per week, accommodation, miscellaneous travel (field trips) and incidental expenses, and medical expenses and insurance.

Additional information and application materials are available on the Web at http://eo.nso.edu/ires/. All application materials must be received by 26 January 2010.

American Astronomical Society
2000 Florida Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20009-1231

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Newsletter 149 November/December 2009

Washington News

Anita Krishnamurthi, John Bahcall Public Policy Fellow, anitak@aas.org

Fall has arrived and Congress remains consumed by the health care debate and, of course, the war in Afghanistan. So Congress may not be focusing on astronomy funding right now, but there have been many developments since our last column.

First of all, I started as the new John Bahcall Public Policy Fellow at the AAS in late September. I came here from NASA Goddard Space Flight Center where I was the Lead for Education and Public Outreach in the Astrophysics Division. It's an exciting time to take on this policy fellowship and I look forward to working on your behalf for the next two years.

Congress held several hearings in September on the report from the Augustine Commission reviewing NASA's human spaceflight program. There is basic agreement that NASA has not received the funding it needs to carry out its program. There was little debate about the merits of the manned space flight program—most of the discussion centered on how best to accomplish it.

In the words of Senator Nelson (D-FL): "The moment of truth . . . is here." President Obama will have to make some crucial decisions on the priorities for the manned space flight program and make funding decisions accordingly. We will have to wait and see how the funding for the manned space flight program at NASA will affect science funding, particularly astronomy funding within NASA.

Speaking of funding, planning is already underway for the Congressional Visits Day (CVD) in 2010. The dates are set for 28-29April 2010. The Science-Engineering-Technology Working Group, comprising professional, scientific, and engineering societies, higher education associations, institutions of higher learning, and trade associations, organizes the CVD. This two-day annual event brings scientists, engineers, researchers, educators, and technology executives to Washington to raise visibility and support for science, engineering, and technology. We are recruiting volunteers to participate in the 2010 CVD, so please contact me if you are interested.

In other news, the Decadal Surveys for Astronomy and Astrophysics and Planetary Science are both in full swing. The Science Frontiers Panels for Astro2010, the Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey, have held all their meetings and the deliberations from this point forward are confidential. The survey reports are scheduled to be published next summer.

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