



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Incorporated in the ACT

Minutes of the 30th Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday July 3 1996 at the Alexander Library, Perth.

The Meeting was opened at 11:05 am with the President in the Chair.

1. Apologies

P.L. Cottrell, M.L. Duldig, J.W.V. Storey.

2. Minutes of the 29th Annual General Meeting

Motion that the minutes of the 29th Annual General Meeting be accepted as presented.

**L.R. Allen/Webster
Carried**

3. Business arising from the Minutes

None.

4. President's Report

A written report was distributed to members before the meeting. The President, Elaine Sadler, outlined the contents of that report.

The President began by thanking the Local and Scientific organising committees who arranged the Scientific Meeting in Perth. She also thanked the committee of students who took over organisation of the Harley Wood School after the plan to hold it on the Indian-Pacific train was dropped. Three Council members were retiring at the Annual general meeting and the President thanked them for the service to the Society. The President also noted that Jenny Nicholls was retiring as Editor of PASA. Her outstanding efforts at a difficult time had produced an expanded journal of high quality. Her position will be taken by Michelle Storey.

In the Australian Government's 1995 Innovation Statement, the Australia Telescope National Facility (ATNF) was awarded \$11 million under the Major National Research Facilities (MNRF) Program. Of this, \$9.74 million was allocated for a high frequency upgrade of the AT and a further \$1.26 million for international cooperation in astronomy. The proposal for Australian Membership of the European Southern Observatory (ESO) was not funded by the MNRF program. Subsequently, the new Australian government broke off negotiations with ESO for financial reasons. The Academy of Science, the National Committee for Astronomy (NCA) and the ASA all issued press releases regretting this decision. Efforts to secure Australian access to large optical/IR telescopes continued.

The 1995 AGM approved the new categories of Fellow and Associate Member of the ASA. Fellows are members with considerable post-doctoral experience and a substantial record in astronomical research. Towards the end of 1995 members were invited to apply for admission to the grade of Fellow. This was automatically granted to Fellows of the Academy of Science and Foundation members of the ASA. Other applications were considered by a sub-committee of the Council, which also recommended guidelines to govern future applications. As a result, over 60 members became Fellows of the ASA (FASA). Associate membership was primarily aimed at those involved in astronomy education and several members had joined at that grade.

The 1996 Bok Prize (for an undergraduate project completed in 1995) was awarded to Lisa Kewley from the University of Adelaide. Lisa was presented with her prize during the Scientific Meeting and gave a talk on her work. The Berenice Page Medal for excellence in amateur astronomy in Australia was awarded to Peter Williams of the Sutherland Astronomical Society. The President presented the award at the National Australian Convention for Amateur Astronomers (NACAA) meeting in April. Other distinctions awarded by the Society were Honorary Life Membership to Doug Milne and the Harley Wood Lectureship to Russell Cannon, Director of the Anglo-Australian Observatory.

The President noted the importance of the ASA Newsletter and the Society's Web pages and email exploder as media for communication within the Society. She also noted the continuing student representation on the Council by Julia Bryant from Sydney University.

Finally the President congratulated two Fellows of the Society, Bob Frater and Ben Gascoigne, for their award the Order of Australia for their services to Astronomy. Also Mike Dopita was congratulated for his election as a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.

Motion that the President's report be accepted.

**Nicholls/Burton
Carried**

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Doug Milne, gave a summary of the written report and balance sheet which had been distributed to the meeting. Membership of the Society was listed as 357, 17 higher than at the same time in 1995. 31 members were reported as unfinancial, considerably fewer than at the corresponding time in the previous year, and most of these eventually do pay. Unfinancial members do not receive Society publications.

1995-96 resulted in a surplus listed in the audited statement as almost \$28000. This was misleading in that it did not allow for a cheque for \$18600 to CSIRO Publishing for publication costs of PASA which had not been presented at the end of our fiscal year. The budget presented to the meeting allowed for this payment and reported a surplus of around \$9000, still considerably higher than expected. This was mostly due to a profit from the 1995 Annual Scientific Meeting, higher interest income, a payment for a special issue of PASA, a sale of back issues of PASA and subscriptions to *Annual Review of Astronomy & Astrophysics*.

Estimates for the 1996-97 financial year predicted a loss of over \$5000, largely because of increased support of student travel overseas and for the 1996-only costs of student travel to the Perth Harley Wood School. Given the healthy reserves of the Society, the Treasurer recommended that fees and discounts remain unchanged - i.e.:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Annual Cost</u>
Honorary Fellows	no cost
Fellows	\$100
Full members	\$80
Student, Associate or Retired members	\$35
Corporate members	\$300

There was a brief discussion of several points in the Treasurer's report. In particular, the benefit the Society of the 10% discount to AIP members was questioned and several queries were raised about the mechanisms employed to distribute funds for student travel.

Motion that the Treasurer's Report be accepted.

**Dopita/Faulkner
Carried**

6. Election of Auditor

The Treasurer recommended that the Auditor, Mr John McCauley, be re-appointed.

Motion that Mr John McCauley being appointed as Auditor for 1996-97 at an honorarium of \$300.

**L.R. Allen/Orchiston
Carried**

7. Editor's Report

The Editor, Jenny Nicholls, began her report by describing the status of the next issues of the *Publications*. Issue 13 (1) included papers from a workshops held by JACARA and the ANU Astrophysical Theory Centre. Issue 13 (2) was closed, while 13 (3) was still lacking a full complement of papers, largely because the number of submissions from the 1995 ASM was only 11, compared to 34 for the 1994 ASM. However the number of unsolicited submissions remained steady. Volume 14 was expected to include papers from the HI Multibeam Workshop and several papers in the refereeing process.

The Editor raised the question of PASA going electronic. She noted that titles, authors and abstracts were already available on the PASA homepage and from the Astrophysics Data System (ADS). Full text of PASA articles from 1975 to 1993 were soon to be available from the ADS. Further discussion of electronic publication followed the AGM in a special session.

The agreement with ADS is one of several efforts to increase the international visibility of PASA. The Editor mentioned several others, including a flyer printed by CSIRO Publications.

Finally the Editor noted that she had completed her two year term and was passing the Editor's job to Michelle Storey.

Motion that the Editor's Report be accepted.

**Milne/Ryder
Carried**

8. ASM/AGM and Harley Wood School 1997

Prior to the ASM, the School of Physics at the University of New South Wales accepted the task of organising the 1997 Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) and would help coordinate the Harley Wood School of Astronomy.

9. Any other business

No other business was raised.

10. Election of the Council for 1996-97

As usual, the outgoing Council had made nominations for each position on the Council for 1996-97. Since there was a nomination from the membership for a position as Councillor, a postal ballot was conducted with the results counted immediately prior to the General Meeting by Roy Allen and Rachel Webster. The newly elected Council consisted of the following members:

President: Dr E M Sadler

Vice President Dr R W Clay

Treasurer	Dr D K Milne
Secretaries	Dr M L Duldig Dr J W O'Byrne
Councillors	Dr M S Bessell Dr R N Manchester Dr M M Mazzolini Dr S G Ryan Dr C H Smith

Dr Roy Allen remained as Donovan Trust Representative and Dr Michelle Storey took over as Editor. A transfer was also required in the position as the Society's Public Officer. This position had been accepted previously by Dr Michael Bessell.

The meeting was closed at 11:46 am.

Minutes of the meeting to discuss PASA
Held immediately after the 30th Annual General Meeting
on Wednesday July 3 1996
at the Alexander Library, Perth.

The meeting was opened at 11:46 am and chaired by the new Editor, Michelle Storey.

There had been many changes to PASA in the previous two years, partly in response to the member survey conducted in 1994. The Editor opened the meeting by outlining the status of PASA:

- the name had changed.
- rigorous refereeing had been emphasised - two referees, usually one from overseas.
- the journal had expanded to 3 issues per year
 - 1992 - 2 issues and 180 pages
 - 1996 - 3 issues and 305 pages.
- about 600 copies of each issue were distributed - 320 to ASA members and about 210 institutional subscriptions.
- the PASA home page (maintained by CSIRO) features instructions to authors, description of the journal, contents of recent issues, papers in press and links to the Astrophysics Data Service (ADS).
- ADS has author lists and abstracts of papers as soon as the paper edition is sent to the printer. ADS had just scanned in the full text of ASA papers from 1975 to 1993 and this was due to be available soon.
- ADS listed PASA as a refereed journal. Any ADS search will bring up PASA papers up to 1996.

PASA needs the best electronic access so that searchers can find PASA papers as readily as any other journal. This is especially important to smaller journals such as PASA.

PASA has several *advantages* for Australian astronomers:

- PASA is our journal and serves as an important record of historical papers, education papers, Ph.D. abstracts etc.
- Australian astronomers are relatively isolated from each other. PASA helps us to stay informed.
- PASA has a strong tradition of publishing papers presented at the ASA's Annual Scientific Meeting. In particular this encourages students to publish regularly.
- PASA provides a forum to publish instrumentation and computing papers.
- PASA has no page charges
- ASA members have firmly indicated that they want PASA to continue.

PASA also has several *disadvantages* for Australian astronomers:

- PASA costs the ASA money to produce, although it is cheaper than simply paying the corresponding page charges for ApJ.
- how do we justify having our own journal when not many other small countries do?
- clearly the major problem is that PASA is not readily available to overseas astronomers, so papers published in PASA are not often cited. The move to electronic access will help overcome this problem.

Options for the future of PASA:

- Maintain the status quo
 - 3 issues per year
 - submit abstracts to ADS when papers go to press and allow full text on ADS after one year (as is usual for other journals).
- Improve electronic access
 - retain 3 issues per year
 - put full text of papers on the Web as soon as they are accepted, with appropriate links.

- note that people read 30% more slowly from a computer screen and surveys by major journals indicate that readers still prefer paper copies.

Having completed this outline, Michelle Storey asked the audience for their views.

J. Dickel (Illinois) - reported that ApJ is now offering electronic subscriptions either alone or in conjunction with a paper subscription. He also noted that the 5th largest library in the US dropped PASA four years ago despite its small cost.

D. Blair (UWA) - felt that it is most important that papers are read and cited and this is best achieved by making the whole text of a paper available quickly.

M. Price (ATNF) - agreed with Blair's view.

J. Nicholls (RCfTA, former Editor) - noted that ADS has agreements with other journals for a one year delay between paper publication and providing the full paper electronically to preserve the journal subscription base.

R. Ekers (ATNF) - said that he 100% supported a move to electronic publication as a means of overcoming the current (well known) disadvantages of PASA. He recommended that CSIRO Publishing not be allowed to dictate terms to us in order to preserve *their* subscriptions.

M. Storey (RCfTA, Editor) - commented on a paper by ApJ staff in Physics Today (Jan 1996) which pointed out that going electronic was no cheaper than a paper copy of a journal.

S. Ryder (UNSW) - made the point that a paper copy is still necessary.

M. Storey - said that we shouldn't lose the paper copy since members say they want it.

J. Dickel - noted that the world doesn't know we have a paper copy!

R. Ekers - expressed the view that we should pay to get the best possible version on the Web and forget the paper copy.

J. Nicholls - noted that there are many institutional subscribers in countries where there is not easy electronic access. They need the paper copy.

S. Ryder - asked how long Web access would be provided. Will papers be accessible indefinitely and at what cost?

M. Storey - said that this depends on ADS policy. It would also be better if a large organisation with expertise and a commitment to archiving were involved in the production of an electronic PASA. We don't have the time to research archiving.

J. Mould (MSSSO) - note that he had the impression that ARC may soon change policy and allow the payment of page charges from ARC grants.

B. Koribalski (ATNF) - noted that MNRAS has no page charges, although the subscription cost for libraries was high.

J. Mould - suggested that use of Astronomy & Astrophysics may be possible with no page charges if we eventually join ESO.

M. Burton (UNSW) - raised the question of what format full electronic papers would take. PostScript files from ADS take too long to download and come one page at a time.

M. Storey - noted that ATNF has gained experience with its pre-print server. Slow access times imply the need for mirror sites of US servers and for them to mirror our servers. Enter into a reciprocal arrangement with ApJ?

A. Williams (Perth) - commented about the cost of maintaining paper copies in libraries and said that libraries are happy to go electronic with a suitable password system. He noted however that electronic archives may be ephemeral because of changing hardware and standards.

S. Ryder - asked about the turn-around time for publication since this is a major consideration to authors.

M. Storey - noted the need for refereeing and the errors that are often present in LaTeX submissions.

S. Ryan (AAO) - agreed that we want a paper to appear somewhere fast but we want both a paper and an electronic copy. He asked how fast we could get an electronic version up and running.

J. Nicholls - noted that CSIRO Publishing was trying to get the Australian Journal of Chemistry onto the Web.

D. Mar (ATNF) - noted that his experience in establishing the ATNF pre-print server was that there were many problems with different formats in submitted text. Correcting these was always very labour-intensive. A LaTeX style file would help. Provision of HTML links is another aspect of electronic availability.

M. Walker (RCfTA) - noted that there is a problem with journals expanding too fast. How can the information be condensed? Perhaps HTML links will open new options.

D. Mar - also noted the options opened by the use of links.

R. Ekers - emphasised the need to be innovative!

M. Storey - cautioned that cost and time restrictions may make it hard to be too innovative.

Finally Michelle Storey closed the discussion as the available time had expired. She noted the clear opinion that a move to electronic publication in some form was supported by the members present. She suggested that she seek further comment from people who were outspoken in the discussion.

The meeting was closed around 12:25 pm.