



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Incorporated in the ACT

ABN 37 660 297 848

Minutes of the 43th Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 8 July 2009 Elizabeth Murdoch Building University of Melbourne Parkville campus

The Meeting was opened at 2:09 pm with the President in the Chair and approximately 82 members of all grades in attendance.

1. Apologies

K.Brooks, M.Colless, J. Lattanzio, G.Lewis.

2. Minutes of the 42nd Annual General Meeting

Motion that the minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting be accepted.

**Braun/Mould
Carried**

3. Business arising from the Minutes

None.

4. President's Report

A written report (included below) was distributed to members at the meeting. The President, Warrick Couch, outlined the contents of the report.

1. Highlights

Significant achievements and recognition of ASA members

This past year has been notable for a number of Society members receiving highly prestigious awards and appointments in recognition of their research and contributions to astronomy. They were:

- Prof Penny Sackett – previously the Director of the Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics at ANU, was appointed the Chief Scientist of Australia in September 2008.
- Dr Stuart Wyithe – awarded the Australian Academy of Science's 2009 Pawsey Medal, in recognition of his outstanding research in astrophysics while under the age of 40.
- Prof Jeremy Mould – winner of the 2009 Gruber Cosmology Prize, along with Wendy Freeman and Robert Kennicutt, for their outstanding work on the extragalactic distance scale and resolving the value of the Hubble Constant. The prize ceremony is to be held at the IAU General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro on the 4th August.
- Prof Brian Schmidt – awarded an ARC Laureate Fellowship in this scheme's inaugural round.

I would like to warmly congratulate all the above members for these outstanding achievements. I would also note that I was very honoured to be elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science this year.

The Astronomy NCRIS program and the Strategic Options Committee (ANSOC) process

One of the highlights of last year's ASM in Perth was the dedication of an entire session to the "ANSOC" process, where presentations were made on the various options for spending the ~\$5M of strategic funding that was available as part of the \$45M allocated to the Optical and Radio Astronomy capability under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) program. The options up for consideration were: the acquisition of additional 8m telescope access, further investment in the Design Development Phase of the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT), and moving onto the next stage of the design of the Antarctic PILOT telescope. Another important requirement of the ANSOC process requested by DIISR was an assessment of the scientific return from the continued operation of the AAT. This special session at the Perth ASM was a key and integral part of Astronomy Australia Limited's (AAL) consultation with and receiving input from the community as part of its ANSOC process.

The ANSOC committee (comprising Garth Illingworth, Bob Williams, and Malcolm Longair, Michael Barber, and David Warren) met in September 2008 to consider the submissions for each of the options and interview the proponents in each case. They subsequently recommended to the AAL Board that the two highest priorities should be: (i) to purchase additional 8m time via a continuation of the current access arrangement for the Magellan 6.5m telescopes, and (ii) to invest in the second and third years of the GMT DDP. The committee

also gave very strong endorsement to the continued operation of the AAT. These recommendations were adopted by the AAL Board and endorsed by the AAL members in a vote held at the AAL AGM in October 2008.

Optical Roadmap and ESO

During 2008, AAL was asked by DIISR to provide an “Optical Astronomy Roadmap” document, which would contain advice on what the funding priorities are over the next 5-10 years for optical telescope facilities, and how these mesh and synergize with our radio facilities, in particular SKA and its forerunners. A particularly important part of this exercise was to put into context the continuing pivotal role the AAT would play as an optical research facility, given that a strong case needed to be made for the continued funding of the AAO in the 2009-2010 budget cycle (see next item). While this roadmap document was structured to reflect the priorities expressed in the current Astronomy Decadal Plan, the AAL Board also felt it necessary to include a risk mitigation strategy to deal with the significant risks associated with GMT and Gemini. GMT faces considerable technical and financial risks, whereas for Gemini, its future is rather uncertain beyond the end of 2012 when the current International Gemini Agreement expires. The main element of this risk mitigation strategy is to explore the possibility of Australia joining ESO. This offers an alternative option for 8m and ELT access, as well as providing access to ALMA, other optical/near-infrared facilities, and is perceived to perhaps have strategic benefits as Australia goes forward in SKA.

To initiate consideration of the ESO option, the Director General of ESO, Prof Tim de Zeeuw, was invited to Australia in November 2008 to give presentations around the country and to meet with the AAL Board, the NCA, and officials in DIISR and the ARC. Based on the positive response to his visit, the AAL Board and the NCA formed a special “ESO Working Group” (consisting of Jeremy Mould [Chair], Brian Boyle, and Brian Schmidt) to explore the option further. Their brief is to proceed via the following sequential steps, with appropriate reviews and decisions made at the conclusion of each step: (i) consult further with the community on the relative merits of joining ESO as opposed to remaining with Gemini/Magellan and GMT, (ii) if there is strong community support for the ESO option, then to enter into informal discussions with ESO to determine the details of joining in terms of cost, in-kind contributions, and access, (iii) subject to a satisfactory outcome from (ii), to establish formal discussions between ESO and the Australian government. So far, only the first of these steps has been completed, with a web-based survey being conducted to quantitatively gauge community support. The outcomes of this survey were presented by Jeremy Mould and discussed at the lunchtime session held yesterday.

The Future of the AAO

The May 2009 Federal Budget was a critical one for the future funding and hence continuation of the AAO. With the UK withdrawal becoming complete on 30 June 2010, and the Anglo-Australian Telescope Agreement Act ceasing to exist at this point, this year’s budget was the last opportunity for a new funding arrangement to be put in place to ensure a seamless transition to the new AAO of the future beyond this date. It was therefore with great relief that new funding for the AAO was announced in the Budget, securing its future for the next 10 years through until 2018/2019. Specifically, the AAO is projected to have stable recurrent funding of about \$11M per year over this period, which is an excellent outcome. This will allow the AAO to continue to provide users of the AAT with excellent instruments and high-quality service, while maintaining its renowned instrumentation program in support of Australia’s national and international optical telescope facilities. With the AAO’s funding now secured, DIISR is now moving to resolve the future governance of the AAO, where it is likely to become a ‘unit’ within DIISR (like the National Measurement Institute) and renamed the “Australian Astronomical Observatory”.

Astroinformatics Summer School

In January 2008, the ASA ran the first Theoretical Astrophysics Graduate Summer School for Australian postgraduate students. This new initiative is being funded from surplus funds that were returned to the Society from the XXVth International Astronomical Union General Assembly that was held in Sydney in 2003. The plan is to hold such schools every two years while funds permit. The next school, to be held in January 2010, will be hosted by Monash University. In alternate years, there is a plan to continue running the “AusVO” Summer Schools, but rebranded as the “Astroinformatics School” to reflect a broader remit of introducing students to a wider range of computing skills, techniques, and astronomical software than was done at the AusVO schools. Council agreed to provide financial support (from the IAU surplus funds) for the first Astroinformatics School held this year, in the hope that future schools will become self-supporting. This first school, held at the University of Sydney on 15-17 April, was a great success. The number of applications to attend well exceeded the maximum limit of 50 participants. Included in the 3-day program of lectures and tutorials were: programming, Unix scripting, database construction and use, internet technologies and data mining. The ATNF, ANU, University of WA, and the AAO also contributed generously to the funding of the school. I would like to convey the Society’s gratitude to Tara Murphy and her organising committee for their efforts in making this school such a success.

2. ASA Membership

This last year has seen another increase in Society membership. Over this period, the number of financial members has increased from 467 to 498. On behalf of the Society, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all new members, and encourage them to be active and visible participants within the Society, through attendance at its meetings schools and, if appropriate, its Chapters. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Corporate Members of the ASA: AAL, the AAO, the ATNF, the Australian Antarctic Division, the RSAA at ANU, the Swinburne Centre for Astrophysics and Supercomputing, and the University of Sydney's Science Foundation for Physics. The contributions of these Corporate Members are used each year to help fund the Harley Wood Winter School.

It is also with much pleasure to announce Council's appointment of Prof John Lattanzio as an Honorary Fellow of the Society. John has been a member and Fellow for many years, and in recent years has made an enormous contribution in his role as Chair of the PASA Editorial Advisory Committee, and the PASA Editorial Board that replaced it. John has played a vital role in developing and maintaining the excellent working relationship the ASA has with CSIRO Publications, who produce PASA. John has also been a convenor of and leading force in ANITA.

On a not so pleasant note, it is of some concern that quite a number of members each year (currently 55) become or remain unfinancial, either being very slow to pay their membership fees or not having paid them for one or more years. This creates a lot of work for our Treasurer, who has to issue reminder notices, and often has to subsequently contact people directly to determine whether they want their membership to continue. Can I encourage all members to pay their fees by the due date. Even better, pay early and benefit from a discount! I would also remind members that the Society has done all it can to provide the most convenient options for paying fees, by accepting credit card payments and direct electronic transfers into the ASA's bank account. I should also note that a new web-based system for accepting new membership applications and updating membership details is about to be implemented.

3. PASA

In my report last year, I described in some detail the uncertain and challenging landscape in which PASA operates, and the changes that were being trialled to ensure PASA's survival and emergence as a stronger and more highly respected journal into the future. The biggest continuing challenge and threat to PASA is the low number of submitted papers, particularly ones that will be well cited and hence improve its impact factor above the rather modest levels it has been at for many years (which, in the era of RQF and ERA, acts as a strong disincentive for publishing in PASA). While the majority of ASA members see it as important that the Society has its own journal and therefore want to see PASA continue, only a minority of members are willing to publish in it.

The most significant change has been to move to a new 'Editorial Board' (EB) model. Here the EB is made up of prominent Australian and international astronomers, who have the multiple roles of being paper reviewers (before they are sent out for refereeing), developing new policies and initiatives to improve the journal's standing, and playing a promotional and advocacy role for the journal. In addition, PASA is experimenting with partial 'Open Access' to align itself with the changing trends in journal access. The EB model has now been running for two years, with Bryan Gaensler taking over from John Lattanzio as EB Chair at the end of last year. In addition to Bryan and John (who continues to serve as an EB member), the other EB members are: Kate Brooks, Peter Cottrell, Simon Driver, Lister Staveley-Smith, and Stuart Wyithe. As will be reported in more detail by Bryan later in this meeting, the achievements of the EB over the last year have been significant. The most notable has been an almost factor of 2 increase in PASA's impact factor (IF) between 2007 and 2008, with it now ranking 18th out of the 46 astronomy journals whose IFs are tracked by ISI, and being CSIRO Publishing's highest impact journal. The EB have also set in motion a number of new initiatives to secure potentially high profile papers, with a particular focus on major large Australian surveys (e.g. GAMA, MWA, ASKAP) and reviews from major conferences. With these developments – for which the EB should be warmly congratulated – the difficult decisions that might have to be made at this meeting with regards to PASA's future, that I foreshadowed in my last report, would appear to be averted for now. However, while PASA's survival seems assured for the meantime, its emergence as a higher standing journal will require the trend of increasing impact factor to be continued and maintained. There is, I feel, considerable cause for optimism here given that many of the new policies and initiatives the EB have recently introduced, are yet to come to fruition.

4. Loss of prominent Society members

It is with regret that Kevin Sheridan has had to resign his membership due to ill-health. Kevin is a foundation member of the ASA and a Fellow in more recent years. He served for two years as one of the foundation Secretaries of the ASA and later for a further seven years as the Donovan Trust representative on Council. Kevin's contributions to the Society are very much appreciated.

It is with sadness that I must report the passing away, during the last year, of Ron Brown, who had been a member of the Society and was also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. Ron was a prominent theoretical chemist, and one of the pioneers of molecular-line radio astronomy. During the 1970s and 80s,

Ron's microwave spectroscopy group measured the rest frequencies of numerous potential interstellar molecules leading, for example, to the solid identification of the unknown line known as "U90.7" as hydrogen isocyanide (HNC). He and his team then made some of the first observational detections of such species in space, using telescopes that included the Parkes 64m dish.

5. Ellery Lecture for 2009

The ASA recognises outstanding contributions in astronomy or a related field by the award of the Robert Ellery Lectureship every two years. Robert Ellery was the Director of Melbourne Observatory for much of the second half of the 19th century, and one of the outstanding workers in Australian astronomy in that era. The 2009 Ellery Lecturer is Prof Jeremy Mould of the University of Melbourne. Jeremy has a long and distinguished research career working in many fields, both galactic and extragalactic. He is best known and recognised for his pioneering and world-leading work on the extragalactic distance scale, in particular his leadership of the Hubble Space Telescope Key Project which resolved the value of the Hubble Constant, via precision light curve measurements of Cepheids in nearby galaxies. As mentioned earlier in this report, this work has been recognised with the award of this year's Gruber Prize in Cosmology. The ASA Annual Scientific Meeting commenced on Monday with Jeremy's Ellery Lecture entitled "Measuring the Hubble Constant with the Hubble Space Telescope".

6. Harley Wood Lecture for 2009

The ASA sponsors the annual Harley Wood Public Lecture, which was inaugurated in honour of the first President of the ASA, who was also the Government Astronomer at the Sydney Observatory for more than 30 years. The focus of this award is to enhance the public appeal of astronomy and the aim is to select exciting speakers who will carry on the legacy established by Harley Wood. The Harley Wood Lecturer for 2009 is Prof Ray Norris from the Australian Telescope National Facility. Ray's lecture, entitled "Australian Indigenous Astronomy", was given on Monday 6 July in the Elizabeth Murdoch Theatre at the University of Melbourne. As well as being one of the normal events associated with the ASA Annual Scientific Meeting, it was this year also promoted as an IYA event. Indeed it was very pleasing to see the excellent attendance at the lecture, including many members of the public, all of whom were entertained and fascinated by Ray's account of what recent new research has uncovered about Aboriginal astronomy and its place in Australian history.

7. The new "Louise Webster" Prize

At last year's AGM, I reported Council's plans to create a new prize to recognize excellence amongst our early career researchers. This came to fruition at the end of last year, with the inaugural announcement of the prize and call for nominations being made. The prize will be awarded annually and be judged on the basis of the scientific impact of a single research paper. Along with this first call for nominations was the solicitation of suggestions as to after whom the prize should be named. After due consideration, Council decided to name the prize after the late Dr Louise Webster. Louise was a prominent member of the Australian astronomical community, who after doing her PhD at Mount Stromlo Observatory, went on to hold positions as a Commissioning Astronomer at the AAT, an inaugural staff astronomer at the AAO, and an academic staff member in the School of Physics at UNSW. She passed away in 1990 at the age of 49, after a long illness. In addition to her outstanding research contributions in the fields of planetary nebulae and X-ray binaries, Louise was also passionate about promoting astronomy to young people and the importance of mentoring her younger colleagues in the early stages of their research careers. It is with great pleasure to announce that the inaugural winner of the Louise Webster Prize is Dr Tamara Davis from the University of Queensland, for her paper "Scrutinizing exotic cosmological models using ESSENCE supernova data combined with other cosmological probes", that she published in *The Astrophysical Journal* in 2007. Tamara will be presented with her prize and give a talk on the work published in her nominated paper later today.

8. Charlene Heisler Prize for 2009

Each year, the ASA commemorates the contributions to astronomy of Dr Charlene Heisler – who during her short career became particularly well known for her encouragement and mentoring of students – by awarding a prize to the author of the best PhD thesis in astronomy or a closely related field, accepted by an Australian university in the previous calendar year. This year the prize is awarded to Dr Brendon Brewer for his thesis entitled "Applications of Bayesian Probability Theory in Astrophysics". Brendon did his PhD under the supervision of Prof Geraint Lewis at the University of Sydney, and is now a post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The assessment panel also recommended that Dr Jessie Christiansen receive a special commendation for her thesis entitled "A Tale of Two Surveys: Searching for Extrasolar Planets from Australia and Antarctica", which she did under the supervision of Prof Michael Ashley at UNSW. I would like to extend my congratulations to Brendon and Jessie, both of whom unfortunately cannot be here to accept their prize/commendation. I also wish to thank the members of the assessment panel for their efforts in reading the theses, a not insignificant task.

9. Bok Prize for 2009

The Bok Prize is awarded annually for outstanding research in astronomy by an Honours student at an Australian university. This year, the Prize is awarded to Peter Jensen from the University of Queensland for his thesis “The Colours of Galaxies in Intermediate X-ray Luminosity Galaxy Clusters”, which he did under the supervision of Dr Kevin Pimblet. Peter will receive his prize and give a talk on his later today. Congratulations to Peter!

10. David Allen Prize

The David Allen Prize is awarded by the ASA for exceptional achievement in astronomy communication in recognition of the outstanding contributions David Allen made to advancing the public understanding of astronomy before his untimely death in 1994 at the age of 47. The prize is normally awarded every three years, although unfortunately six years have lapsed since the last winner (Dr Fred Watson) received it in 2003. It is therefore very pleasing that this prize was resurrected this year, thanks largely to the efforts of the Society’s Prize and Awards Coordinator, Dr Tanya Hill. The prize was advertised widely, both in print in Cosmos Magazine, via emails distributed to the ASA, the Australian Science Communicators and the Australian Planetarium Society membership lists, and postings on various astronomy websites. A total of 13 nominations were received, demonstrating the very high level of activity around Australia in communicating astronomy to the public. The winner of the prize will be announced at tonight’s ASM dinner.

11. Science Meets Parliament 2009

Science Meets Parliament (SMP) is an annual event organised by FASTS, where members of its affiliated associations and societies gather at Federal Parliament in Canberra to primarily talk to politicians about their research and broader issues to do with science. This year SmP was held on 17-18 March, and the ASA was represented by Prof Geraint Lewis (USyd) and Dr Darren Croton (Swinburne). Topics of particular focus this year that were of considerable relevance to astronomy included: science education, the importance of ‘blue sky’ research, and spill-over technologies from SKA. They were discussed with varying effect and impact in the meetings Geraint and Darren had with Senator Gavin Marshall, the Honourable Bronwyn Bishop, Minister Barry Haase (member for Kalgoorlie, the electorate in which the Murchison Radio Observatory is located), Senator Brett Mason (Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education), and Andrew Reeves (Science Advisor to Senator Kim Carr).

12. IYA and the ASA IYA Lecture Series

The first 6 months of the International Year of Astronomy (IYA) have already passed, and an extraordinary number of local, state-wide, national and international events have already taken place, with many more planned throughout the rest of the year (see www.astronomy2009.org.au). I am sure all ASA members will be well aware of this activity, and I very much hope that many if not all of you will be involved at some level. I would also like to commend Helen Sim (Australian Single Point of Contact for IYA) and her organizing team for the promotion and coordination of IYA events within Australia.

While there are simply too many activities to provide any report on them here, I do want to highlight two items of particular relevance to the ASA. The first is funding, where as was mentioned in my last report, the ASA had contributed \$7.5K in seed funding (along with equal contributions from the AAO and the ATNF), which was used primarily to engage Niall Byrne of Science in Public to assist with the planning and promotion of IYA and to secure funding. An application to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) for funding turned out to be successful, with an amount of \$255K being awarded in November last year. This money, which is being managed by the AAO, was allocated to specific outcomes: Australian involvement in three of the IYA international cornerstone projects (100 Hours of Astronomy, She is an Astronomer, Dark Skies/Quiet Skies), a speaker program, and a publication on the achievements of Australian astronomy and high-profile Australian astronomers.

As its main contribution to IYA, the ASA is running its own “IYA Lecture Series”. The primary goal here is to present a series of lectures on mostly ‘non-standard’ topics in astronomy and astrophysics, using our best speakers within Australia, supplemented by one or two overseas speakers. Furthermore, the lectures are to be held right across Australia, targeting as broad an audience as possible. To ensure the latter, the lectures are being organized jointly with the Australian Institute of Physics (AIP), whereby the AIP state branch structure is being used to deliver the lectures across all the Australian states and territories. As well as advertise and host the lectures, the AIP branches have agreed to meet the local costs of the lecturers. The ASA will meet all the other costs, and here it has been successful in obtaining a substantial contribution from the DIISR IYA grant managed by the AAO. The planned lectures which are now underway and have, so far, been very successful are: “Black Holes and Galaxies” (Reinhard Genzel), “SKA” (Brian Boyle), “Is there more than one Universe?” (Charley Lineweaver), “A Universe made for me?” (Geraint Lewis), “The Astronomy of Aboriginal Australians” (Ray Norris), “Particle Astronomy – The Second Window” (Marc Duldig), “From Mars to Earth: A journey fostered by Science, technology and Fascination” (Paulo De Souza).

Another significant ASA contribution has been the funding of seed grants for IYA activities, proposed by EPOC. Here the goal is to encourage and promote activities that sought to engage new audiences, not usually

reached by the traditional astronomical outreach activities planned for IYA. To do so, grants of up to a maximum of \$1500 are being made available to 'seed' events of this nature. The response to this initiative has been overwhelming, with 58 applications received. From these, seven have been funded, supporting a broad and diverse range of activities including: street theatre, a high school astronomy 'day camp', "Stellar Scholarships" for girls, and the showing of Swinburne's "Bigger than Big" 3D movie at the Nati Frini Festival in Victoria.

13. Education and Public Outreach Committee (EPOC)

EPOC has had two meetings over the last year, the first being at the ASM in Perth (where ~20 people were in attendance) and second being on Friday 12 December at the AAO in Epping. These have led to three main initiatives being undertaken by EPOC: (i)The production of a fact sheet on the responsible use of laser pointers in astronomy. This is in response to new federal and state legislation controlling the use of laser pointers. (ii)The submission of a feedback on the National Curriculum Board's "National Science Curriculum Framing Paper". Input from the ASA via EPOC was seen to be critical, given that astronomy and space science featured so prominently in the draft national science curriculum, and the known value of astronomy education in encouraging school students into science careers. (iii)The funding of seed grants for IYA activities, as described above. I would like to thank and congratulate EPOC and its Chair, Stephen Hughes, for their proactivity and achievements over the last year.

14. ASA Council for 2009-2010

The current Council has had a full and very active year, both in dealing with normal business, but also in getting a number of new initiatives off the ground. I can also report that Council has concluded its quite valuable discussions on the Society's primary mission and goals, with the outcomes being captured in a new and clear Statement of Purpose that is now available on the ASA's website. Furthermore, Council has resolved that the initiatives it plans to undertake each year will also be listed on the website. I would like to thank all members of Council for their efforts and contributions, and to acknowledge in particular Simon Ellingsen, Stuart Ryder, and Max Spolaor (ASA student representative), whose terms come to an end at this AGM.

At the end of this meeting, my term as ASA President will end. I will finish feeling very positive about the ASA's future and what has been achieved over the last two years:

- the Society's membership continues to grow (much to the envy of other societies such as the AIP);
- both of its Chapters are very active;
- PASA is now in much better shape with a much improved impact factor and a very proactive editorial board;
- we have a broad and well-managed prizes and awards program which has now been expanded further to recognise early career researchers;
- the ASA has made a significant contribution to IYA at the national level through its Lecture Series and Seed Grant initiatives;
- the stronger links that have been forged with the AIP, as evidenced by our cooperative arrangement in running the IYA Lecture Series.

I also know the Society will be in very good hands with Lister Staveley-Smith replacing me as President, and Kate Brooks becoming Vice-President. Once again I must express my great debt and gratitude to my executive team for all their assistance, knowledge and advice over the past year: Gary Da Costa (Immediate Past President), Lister Staveley-Smith (Vice-President), Marc Duldig (Secretary), John O'Byrne (Secretary), and Diana Londish (Treasurer). Here Gary and Marc deserve special mention: Gary for his 6 years of distinguished service to the Society as Vice-President, President and Immediate Past President, and Marc, who as AIP Vice-President, has been instrumental in developing the stronger links with the AIP. I am also very grateful to Bryan Gaensler who has done a superb job in taking over the Chair of the PASA Editorial Board, and to Tanya Hill who has likewise done an outstanding job as Prizes and Awards Coordinator.

Following the procedures laid out in our Constitution, the current Council nominated new members for the incoming Council and then solicited the membership for further nominations. Since no additional nominations were received, the Council's nominees have been duly elected unopposed; as such, the Council for the following 12 months will be:

Lister Staveley-Smith	President
Kate Brooks	Vice-President
Warrick Couch	Immediate Past President
John O'Byrne	Secretary
Marc Duldig	Secretary
Diana Londish	Treasurer
Stephen Hughes	Councillor
Helmut Jerjen	Councillor
John Lattanzio	Councillor
Geraint Lewis	Councillor

Kevin Pimblet
Brad Tucker
Bryan Gaensler
Tanya Hill

Councillor
Student Representative
Chair, PASA Editorial Board
Prizes and Awards Coordinator

15. ASA ASM/AGM 2010

At its meeting in February 2009, Council decided to accept the offer from the University of Tasmania to host the Harley Wood Winter School, Annual Scientific Meeting, and Annual General Meeting in 2010.

My final duty is to thank the LOC and the SOC for their excellent organisation of this Meeting. In particular, LOC members: Stuart Wyithe (Chair), Catherine Buchanan, Herminde Lande, Chris Fluke, Bart Pindor, Rachel Webster. SOC members: Stuart Wyithe (Chair), Chris Blake, Alina Donea, Andrew Hopkins, Andrew Melatos, Gavin Rowell, Lister Staveley-Smith, Steven Tingay, Chris Tinney, Rachel Webster. The Harley Wood Winter School, which had the theme "Adventures in Survey Science" and was held at the Geelong Conference Centre, was by all accounts a great success, and I would like to thank all the people involved in its organisation (LOC: Lila Warszawski, Loren Bruns, Stuart Wyithe; SOC: Nick Bate, Tui Britton, Rajan Chhetri, Madhura Killedar, Max Spolaor, Brad Tucker) and those who gave freely of their time to present lectures at the school.

Discussion

The President listed the initiatives proposed for the coming year and asked for further suggestions:

- Initiate a project to document the history of the ASA
- Define a 'Code of Ethics' for ASA members
- Provide information and advice to students to help them enhance their career prospects
- Consider launching an electronic newsletter, perhaps in conjunction with the AIP
- Improve the archiving of ASA records.

Cally raised the issue of a mid-term review of the Decadal Plan. The ASA expected to facilitate the plan wherever possible, especially at the next Scientific Meeting.

Motion that the President's report be accepted.

Wyithe/Cally
Carried

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Diana Londish, presented a summary of her printed report for the Society's financial year ending 31 March 2009.

Despite the dramatic fall in interest rates caused by the global financial crisis, interest income remained healthy for the 2008-9 financial year with over \$10,000 received for each of the ASA and FAA. This was expected to be considerably lower in 2009-10.

The ASA accounts showed a significant surplus of over \$17,500 for the financial year, in part because generous sponsorship received for the 2008 Perth Scientific Meeting resulted in a surplus of \$7000. In addition, fewer than usual requests for student travel support resulted in \$6000 of unspent travel funds. Increased spending on meetings was expected in the coming year, in addition to ASA support for International Year of Astronomy (IYA) activities.

Late receipt of membership fees remained a problem. The Treasurer noted that, in adherence with the Society's rules, members would be removed from the membership ('deemed') if two years' membership dues were unpaid at the time of the AGM.

Account balances at 31/3/09 were:

<u>Regular operating accounts</u>		<u>Regular operating accounts</u>	
ASA chq	8,184.98	FAA Chq	1,662.76
ASA online business	85,379.50	FAA online	54,602.79
<u>Surplus from Gen. Assembly</u>		<u>Longer term accounts</u>	
IAU term deposit	65,986.02	FAA term deposit	<u>95,698.19</u>
<u>Conference accounts</u>		TOTAL:	<u>151,963.74</u>
HWWS	1,655.40		
ASA ASM	<u>686.83</u>		
TOTAL:	<u>161,892.73</u>		

The Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy (FAA) received donations of \$1172, less than half that in the previous year. Interest received was \$10,858.

The allocation of FAA funds among the various nominal funds at 31/3/09 were:

	David Allen Prize	Charlene Heisler Prize	No Pref	Gascoigne Fund*	Harley Wood Fund**
Total	32,095.50	28,107.50	29,582.50	26,516.50	35,635.47

* the Gascoigne Fund is used to support the Ellery lectureship.

** funds have previously held by the Macquarie Foundation and used to support student travel to the HWWS.

In summary, ASA finances remained sound. The Treasurer offered a projection for the following financial year with an income of \$54,200 and expenditure of \$59,000. The \$4,800 deficit partly balanced the surplus of the previous year and depended, in part, on exactly when payments were required.

The Treasurer once again proposed no increase to the basic fee structure. As a result, the proposed annual fees were

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Aust. (incl.GST)</u>	<u>Overseas</u>
Honorary Fellows	no cost	no cost
Fellows	\$135	\$120
Full members	\$110	\$100
Student	\$50	\$45
Retired Fellow	\$50	\$45
Retired Member	\$50	\$45
Associate Member	\$50	\$45
Associate Member with PASA	\$90	\$85
Associate Societies	\$100	\$90
Corporate members	\$370	\$335

- Discounts
- \$11 if paid by 28/2.
 - ~10% discount off the GST-inclusive fee if also a member of the AIP and paid by 28/2.
 - No discount for Corporate members.

Discussion

Wyithe noted that the current ASM was expected to operate very close to budget.

Gaensler noted that PASA costs should be explained. The annual fee paid to CSIRO Publishing was \$23,000 while they return a \$8,000 royalty to the ASA, plus a proportion of net profit if that exceeds a certain level.

Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report and audit, with Fees and discounts unchanged.

**Ryder/Da Costa
Carried**

6. Election of Auditor

The Treasurer recommended the continued appointment of Wong and Mayes as Auditor for 2009-2010.

Motion that Wong and Mayes be appointed as Auditor for 2009-2010.

**Londish/Staveley-Smith
Carried**

7. Editorial Board Report

The Chair of the Editorial Board, Bryan Gaensler, presented a report from Richard Heckler, Journal Manager for CSIRO Publishing. He opened with a case for ASA members to support PASA by publishing in the journal, highlighting its electronic-only nature with 12 open access papers per year, with a single referee as standard, an experienced Editorial Board and a diverse mission including publication of paper types that might not fit in other journals' profiles.

The latest impact factor had reached 2.6, putting PASA 18th in the list of 48 standard astronomy journals. Both were a dramatic rise over earlier years. PASA was the top ranking CSIRO journal and the top non-medical journal in Australia, ranking 4th out of 73. The impact factor was expected to rise further in the coming year but is critically influenced by a few prominent papers.

The paper report also described numbers of papers and trends over 7 years. ‘Spontaneous’ submissions in 2008-9 were low but recovering, while invited submissions were strong. The number of published papers had been below expectations but prospects were strong. Web usage was growing, with 2008 numbers double those of 2007.

Gaensler noted that there were plans for several papers from workshops, but these would only be accepted if they were unique or good reviews. He also highlighted the need to fill two vacancies in the Editorial board by the end of 2009 and plans to investigate the formation of a scientific Advisory Board for PASA.

Discussion

Discussion centred around the ability of members to publish in PASA in the era of ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) ranking of journals. It would be much easier if PASA were ranked as an A journal, rather than B, by the ERA process. It remained unclear just how much pressure there would be to publish only in A or A* journals. Gaensler suggested that leaders in the community “needed to lead” on this issue. Prolific authors in particular should consider some of their papers for PASA since all papers were available in html and pdf formats and referenced by ADS.

Motion to accept the PASA Report.

**Braun/Croom
Carried**

8. ASM, AGM and Harley Wood School for 2010

As noted in the President’s report, the Annual Science Meeting and Annual General Meeting of the ASA for 2010 were to be hosted in Hobart by the University of Tasmania.

9. Any other business

None

10. Election of the Council for 2009-2010

As required under the Constitution, the outgoing Council had made nominations for each position on the Council for 2008-2009. Since no further nominations were received, no ballot of the voting members was necessary.

The Council for 2009-2010 consisted of the following members:

President	Prof. Lister Staveley-Smith
Immediate Past President	Prof. Warrick Couch
Vice President	Dr Kate Brooks
Secretaries	Dr Marc Duldig Dr John O’Byrne
Treasurer	Dr Diana Londish
Councillors	Dr Stephen Hughes Dr Helmut Jerjen Prof. John Lattanzio Prof. Geraint Lewis Dr Kevin Pimblet

Additional co-opted Councillors were:

PASA Editorial Board Chair (ex-officio)	Prof. Bryan Gaensler
Prizes and Awards Coordinator	Dr Tanya Hill

In addition, Mr Brad Tucker took up the position as the student representative on the Council. Mr Robert Hollow continued as Donovan Trust representative, although this is not a Council position

The new President took over the meeting and offered thanks to the outgoing President for his work during his time in office.

The meeting was closed at 3.20 pm by the new President.