

AAS Newsletter

A Publication for the members of the American Astronomical Society

President's Column

John Huchra, president@aas.org

This is the first letter I am writing to you as your new President and I would like to start by thanking you for your trust and your votes. My predecessors have set very high standards and I will try very hard to live up to them and to serve the Society and all its members to the best of my ability.

We have an exciting and special time ahead of us. Next year is the 400th anniversary of the first astronomical use of the telescope. To celebrate, the United Nations and UNESCO, at the urging of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), the AAS and the astronomical societies and organizations of many, many countries have declared 2009 to be the International Year of Astronomy. The game is afoot; the AAS along with our close partners the Astronomical Society of the Pacific and the IAU, as well as organizations and individuals in 140 nations, is in the midst of both planning and fundraising (please click the box on the US IYA website - www.astronomy2009.us). A number of events have been planned already, including opening ceremonies in January, a world-wide "100 hours of Astronomy" at the end of April, and the IAU General Assembly itself in Rio de Janeiro in August.

Next year will also see the start of the next Astronomy & Astrophysics Decadal Survey. The National Research Council (NRC) expects to have a chair identified and in place by the end of this summer, and to have the main committee and panels in place and operating by the end of 2008. There will be differences between this survey and the last. The agencies, as well as Congress, have mandated that costing, including operations, be an integral part of the survey. The NRC manages such surveys on behalf of the agencies involved (for astronomy, NASA, NSF and DOE) and the NRC is committed to broad community participation. I personally hope the AAS and its Divisions can provide this by providing venues for community interactions, both with the committee and its panels and between members. At our upcoming Long Beach meeting the Tuesday sessions will be heavily focused on Decadal Survey activities including the kickoff session moderated by NRC staff. The AAS Council will also assemble demographic information on US astronomers to aid policy discussions in the survey. We intend to assemble such information as where and in what fields and disciplines astronomers work and how our research is funded. I urge everyone to help if asked, if only because informed decisions on broad programs and priorities will be much better than those based on anecdotal data. I also urge everyone to participate whenever they can in Decadal Survey events and meetings. The success of this exercise depends very much on building community consensus and following through with that consensus at the agencies and with Congress.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the staff and officers of the AAS who recently ran an extremely successful summer meeting in St. Louis, and the AAS and ASP members who helped to organize it. This meeting, held jointly with the ASP, was centered around "sub" symposia, the International Year of Astronomy, the Milky Way and Laboratory Astrophysics. I am also especially grateful to Craig Wheeler for teaching me the ropes this past year.

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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.

Judith M. Johnson, Editor
Crystal M. Tinch, Associate Editor
Jeff Linsky, U. Colorado, Associate Editor, Letters

Manuscript Submissions Using AASTeX

The *AJ* and *ApJ* accept manuscripts electronically that are prepared using the AASTeX manuscript package. Following are some important addresses for obtaining information about AASTeX and electronic submission.

AASTeX Homepage: aastex.aas.org
User Support: aastex-help@aas.org
Journal Homepages/Manuscript Submission: journals.aas.org

AAS Email Policy

To unsubscribe from AAS emails, contact address@aas.org

For address changes, email address@aas.org

Letters to the Editor

A Better "Wikipedia" for Astronomy

When we presented a poster at the AAS in Seattle on an Encyclopedia of the Cosmos project, most visitors expressed the view that we need a more reliable online source of information than the Wikipedia, especially for students. A nascent Encyclopedia of the Cosmos is now available for free at eofcosmos.org and you are invited to participate in making this the definitive free online educational resource for astronomy and space science.

Like the Wikipedia, authors can create new articles or add to existing ones. The key differences are that you have to be an expert with credentials to obtain authoring privileges (AAS membership will suffice in most cases), you have to use your real name to contribute or edit, and a topic editor reviews articles before they are moved from a draft working area to the public view.

This project is sponsored by the non-profit Digital Universe Foundation whose goal is to bring expert-vetted information online for, eventually, all subjects. The first sponsored project was the Earth Portal (earthportal.org) including an Encyclopedia of Earth. The second project is the Cosmos Portal (cosmosportal.org) including the Encyclopedia of the Cosmos.

To participate, even if only to write a paragraph or two on your favorite topic, just send an email to astro@calphysics.org and you will be supplied with a username, password and simple instructions. We hope to hear from you.

Bernard Haisch
astro@calphysics.org

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International Year of Astronomy 2009 US Node

The 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations has designated 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy. Working with the IAU, ASP, AAVSO, Astronomical League, IDA and other astronomy partners, the AAS will help organize and carry out a dynamic program of activities for the International Year of Astronomy.

Show your support for IYA, and purchase one of the many items, from stamps to shirts to mugs, available at www.astronomy2009.us, click on the "Store" link.



From the Executive Office

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

The AAS staff constantly amazes me. Each one is dedicated, hard working and focused on member service. The culmination to our St. Louis meeting confirmed my feelings. The staff managed last-minute additions of a preview screening of a documentary on the 400 years of the telescope and beer tasting, the hanging of a large piece of artwork and an immense portrait of our galaxy from Spitzer, innumerable last minute requests from presenters and registrants as well as special session organizers all while coming in slightly under budget. We will continue to try to bring the astronomy community the best possible meetings at the lowest possible price. I know I can count on you all to let us know in areas that we can improve to continue to raising the bar with our meetings. Only through constructive criticism can we continue to serve you better. Please thank the meetings director, Kelli Gilmore and the dedicated meeting team for a job well done.

As the Executive Officer, I wear a number of hats. One of the most time consuming and valuable is as the primary interaction point with the American Institute of Physics (www.aip.org). As many people are confused about just what AIP is, I wanted to tell you a bit about it, why it is of benefit to AAS members and how I work with AIP to make sure they are serving the needs of our members. I spend about three to four weeks a year on AIP-related activities, time I feel is well spent and of benefit to us all.

The American Institute of Physics was formed in 1931 by a group of American physical science societies with the goal of sharing resources to accomplish a greater good. The AIP is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, just like the AAS. It currently has ten member societies, including the American Physical Society, American Geophysical Union, Optical Society of America and the AAS as well as six other organizations. Many people are confused about APS and AIP. AIP is an umbrella organization of which APS is a member.

Because of the size of the AAS, we have three voting members on the governing board and right now, one representative (me) on the executive committee of the governing board. The executive committee meets roughly three times a year and the governing board twice per year. Larger societies (APS, AGU) have many more votes on the governing board.

The AIP provides a wide range of services of direct benefit to AAS members. I will list a few of the most important here. More can be found on the AIP website. First and foremost is the publication and distribution of *Physics Today*, paid for through a small portion of AAS member dues. This magazine serves to provide a shared publication that helps bring the various societies together. The articles, news

features and other content regularly score high in reader surveys even though not every issue will be of 100% interest to everyone.

The Government Relations group at AIP provides the regularly distributed FYI email alert service, which helps keep subscribers informed of policy developments. You can subscribe (if you haven't already) at aip.org/fyi. The History Center and Niels Bohr Library, based at the AIP headquarters in College Park, MD, archives important documents related to the history of physics and astronomy as well as photographs and makes these materials available to researchers and in limited form online. The Statistical Research Center performs regular surveys to assess the state of the fields of physics and astronomy and makes these reports available online. These include demographic and salary information.

The AIP also provides a full range of publishing services to more than 25 scientific and scholarly societies and also publishes its own journals and conference proceedings. Among the more well-known AIP journals are *Applied Physics Letters*, *Chaos* and the *Journal of Applied Physics*. Many member societies (including the AAS' BAAS) and non-member societies use AIP's publishing services to publish their own journals. The AAS also uses the AIP to provide health insurance and other Human Resources services to our own Executive Office at low cost.

Although all member societies pay a fee to AIP based on the number of members in the member society, the AIP uses additional proceeds from its publishing activities and investments to support its outreach activities that I described above as direct benefit to AAS members. Overall, the organization adds significantly to all fields of physics, including astronomy through the wide range of services it provides.

I also sit on the board of the American Physical Society Insurance Trust (APSIT), which was formed by the APS and some other AIP member societies to provide low-cost insurance products (mainly life insurance). APSIT provides affordable and reliable insurance through New York Life. AAS members can get more details by logging into the members' only area, selecting the member benefits tab and clicking through to the APSIT web page. Additionally, each year the AAS will send out a detailed letter with current plan details for member consideration. The products offered may not meet all members needs, but they do provide an affordable solution from a reliable company.

Secretary's Corner

John Graham, aassec@aas.org

AAS Bylaw Change to Define New Membership Class

The AAS Council has approved the definition of a new class of affiliate member, the Educational Affiliate. The goal of the new membership class is to provide an affordable way for those working as educators with focus on or interest in astronomy to establish closer ties with the AAS and its professional members, which should enhance the Educational Affiliate member's ability to provide current astronomical information to their audiences using best practices. A 2/3 majority vote by the Council, planned for early September, is required to accept the change. Members with concerns about this proposed Bylaw change are welcome to contact members of Council or the Executive Committee.

Educational Affiliate members would have more limited benefits than full AAS members, specifically:

- Listing in *AAS Membership Directory*
- Access to member's only web site, including directory information
- Receipt of all electronic communications including Job Register notification and electronic notices
- Ability to subscribe to the *Spark* education newsletter
- Ability to subscribe to electronic journals at member package rate
- Access to electronic copy of *AAS Newsletter* and receipt of an email notice when published
- Ability to present education-related papers at AAS meetings without sponsorship
- Member discounts for registration at AAS meetings
- AIP affiliation—including electronic access to *Physics Today*

The dues for Educational Affiliates will be set at the same rate as the International Affiliate membership class and 2009 is the first year Educational Affiliate membership will be available.

The proposed Bylaw change reads as follows:

To be inserted after Bylaw I.1.h

I.1.i. Any individual professionally engaged in astronomy-related education or public outreach and whose principal employment is at a community college, elementary or secondary school, science center, museum, planetarium, non-profit or educational organization or agency may become an Educational Affiliate of the Society. Individuals employed as professors at universities or four-year colleges would not be eligible for the Educational Affiliate membership class.

Educational Affiliate members may participate in the activities of the Society or Divisions, as appropriate, but may not vote, nominate individuals for membership, promote members in membership level, hold elected office, or serve on AAS Committees.

2009 AAS Elections Preliminary Slate

President	Michael A'Hearn Debra Elmegreen
Vice-President	Robert Rosner Lee Anne Willson
Education Officer	Timothy F. Slater
Councilors	Jonathan Elias Richard French James Lowenthal Thomas Statler Michelle Thornley Jennifer Wiseman
USNC-IAU	William Blair Brian Chaboyer
Nominating Committee	Thomas Bania Gina Brissenden James Klimchuk Edward Schmidt

Additional nominations for Officer or Councilor may be submitted by mail and must be accompanied by a written statement from the nominee indicating a willingness to serve and by the signatures of at least 30 voting Full Members of the Society. Additional nominations for the Nominating Committee must be proposed by at least five Full Members of the Society and must also be accompanied by the nominee's written statement indicating a willingness to serve.

All nominations and supporting materials must be received by **16 September 2008** in the Office of the Secretary. Send nominations to: John A. Graham, Dept. of Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institution of Washington, 5241 Broad Branch Rd., NW, Washington, DC 20015.

Reminder for Prize Nominations

The AAS needs your help in getting due recognition for our most outstanding colleagues.

Nominations for the AAS Prizes for 2008 must arrive in the Secretary's Office by 1 October 2008. The Prize nomination form is published in this newsletter and is also posted online in the members only area of the AAS website. This year, nominations are being received for the Annie Jump Cannon Award, the Newton Lacy Pierce Prize, the Helen B. Warner Prize, the Dannie Heineman Prize, the George Van Biesbroek Prize, the Education Prize, the Joseph Weber Award for Astronomical Instrumentation, and the Henry Norris Russell Lectureship.

Council Actions

Council Actions taken at the 212th Meeting of the Council of the American Astronomical Society at St. Louis, MO, 1 June 2008.

1. Adopted the Minutes of the AAS Council's 211th Meeting (Austin).
2. Approved Executive Committee actions taken between 24 January 2008 and 31 May 2008.
3. Accepted the AAS 2008 election results.
4. Accepted the election of Bruce W. Carney to the 2008 AAS Nominating Committee.
5. Accepted the election of John P. Huchra, J. Craig Wheeler, Robert W. O'Connell, Lee W. Hartmann, Hervey (Peter) Stockman, John A. Graham, and Kevin B. Marvel to the Executive Committee for the interval between the annual business meetings 3 June 2008 to 9 June 2009.
6. Approved the Financial Reports for 2007.
7. Accepted the Audit Report for 2007.
8. Adopted an amended budget for 2008 and the 2009 budget.
9. Approved revised guidelines for the long-term confidentiality of AAS journal referees.
10. Discussed a Bylaw change to introduce an Educational Affiliate category of membership.
11. Decided to appoint a group to oversee an assessment of the AAS education programs to report back to Council in January 2009.
12. Elected Lisa Storrie-Lombardi to a four year term on the Publications Board.
13. Elected Ann Eslin, Heidi B. Hammel, and Philip M. Sadler to three year terms on the Board of Education.
14. Appointed members of the Standing Committees following recommendations of the Committee on Appointments.
15. Expressed with applause its appreciation of the work done by President J. Craig Wheeler during his term of office.

Member Deaths

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

John Firor
Ronald Pitts
Philip Solomon
Andrew Wilson

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.

Opting Out of AAS Publications

If you would no longer like to receive paper copies of the *AAS Newsletter*, the *AAS Membership Directory*, or the *AAS Calendar*, please send an email to address@aaas.org.

To unsubscribe from AAS emails, contact address@aaas.org

2007 AAS Financial Report

The firm of Tate & Tryon audited the accounts of the Society for the year ending 31 December 2007. This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, and indicated no material problems while confirming that the AAS was in compliance with the required accounting provisions. This report was submitted to and accepted by the Council at its meeting on 1 June 2008.

The Society reports its finances in six categories (see Table 2) according to the nature of the activities and the source of the revenues:

(1) **General Programs:** This includes the Society's general operations and administration. In addition, the General Fund covers the income and expenses of all Society programs including educational and public policy activities, and meetings. Also under this heading are the general publications handled by the Executive Office, including the *AAS Newsletter*, the *AAS Job Register*, and the *AAS Membership Directory*.

(2) **Journals:** Each of the journals published by the AAS is operated as a distinct cost center. AAS bylaws, Article VIII.3, mandate that each Journal maintain a reserve fund equal or above the level of one-half of the annual operating expenses. At the end of 2007 the three AAS journals had reserve funds totaling \$6,762,524, or 100% of the overall operating costs of the journals.

At the close of 2007 the reserve fund for long-term maintenance of the journal electronic archives had reached a balance of \$500,874. To date, nothing has been withdrawn from this fund.

(3) **Divisions:** These comprise the finances of the five AAS Divisions and their related prizes. The Divisions legally fall under the oversight and fiscal responsibility of the AAS Council, but each Divisional Committee makes the financial decisions of its Division and the fiscal details are reported directly to the members of the Division. The figures in Table 2 include all Division funds whether held by the Division Treasurers or in the Society's general accounts.

(4) **Bequests and Memorials:** These include the AAS prizes and other funds established by gifts and bequests to the Society. The timing of the actual awarding of the various prizes causes the fluctuations in expenses between successive fiscal years. The balances of the principle funds on 31 December 2007 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Bequests and Memorial Fund Balances

Fund	Balance as of 31 December 2007
Gaposchkin	36,309
Russell	202,230
Warner	52,901
Pierce	128,690
Chretien	242,795
Tinsley	61,841
Brown	113,616
Van Biesbroeck	62,008
Kovalenko/Roberts	35,197
Education Prize	58,592
Chambliss	52,267
Weber Award	112,400

(5) **Grants and Contracts:** The bulk of this category is in Federal Grants: NASA supported AAS Small Research Grants, NSF International Travel Grants, NSF funding for the Bok and Lines Awards

(6) **Other:** This includes the General Operating Reserve and accounts for the Shapley Visiting Lecturer Program, and a variety of other special purpose funds. The General Operating Reserve stood at \$830,767. The fund balance for the Shapley Lecture Program was \$631,390 as of 31 December 2007.

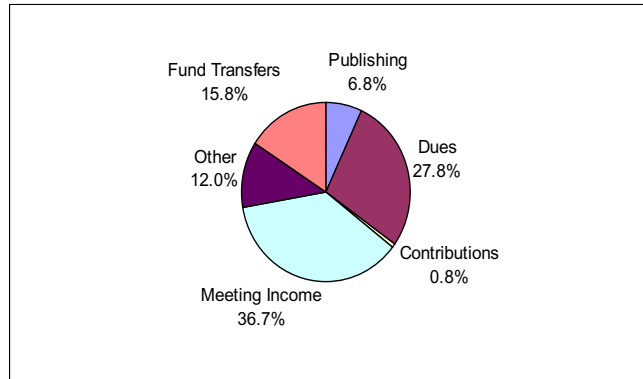
Summary

The overall financial picture for the Society remains stable. In 2007, there was an overall increase in net assets in the amount of \$170,218; resulting in a total net assets of \$11,033,900 as of 31 December 2007. The largest change from 2006 was an increase in interest and market value of our investments. While the net assets increased in 2007, the General Fund experienced a slight deficit of \$74,553. This deficit is mainly attributable increased meeting costs. It is important to note that over the past 10-year period, the General Fund produced deficits in all years except 2000 and 2001. Overall, the average annual deficit was \$190,630 throughout the 10-year review period. In years where there were operational deficits, transfers were made from the Operating Reserve Fund to offset the loss. Due to the deficits over the years, the Operating Reserve Fund Balance has decreased by approximately \$700,000 over the 10-year review period; representing 26.3 percent of the annual General Fund expenses. Council have adopted a plan to bring the Operating Reserve Fund Balance to \$3,100,000 or 86 percent of the annual General Fund Expenses by 31 December 2009.

Table 2. Income Statement (2007 and 2006)

	2007	2006
Unrestricted Net Assets		
Revenue		
General programs	2,262,800	1,675,048
Journals	7,375,793	7,489,990
Divisions	224,113	420,030
Bequests and Memorials	17,674	0
Grants and Contracts	287,144	323,342
Other	80,366	223,068
Released from restrictions	311,915	82,790
Total revenue (unrestricted)	10,559,805	10,214,268
Expenses		
General Programs	2,752,167	2,154,129
Journals	7,079,819	6,787,450
Divisions	102,896	409,786
Bequests and Memorials	34,595	52,659
Grants and Contracts	313,434	334,744
Other	40,843	20,965
Total expenses	10,323,754	9,759,733
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	236,051	454,535
Change in Restricted NetAssets	-65,833	364,303
Change in total net assets	170,218	818,838
Net assets		
Beginning of year	10,863,682	10,044,844
End of year	11,033,900	10,863,682

2007 Revenue



2007 Expenses

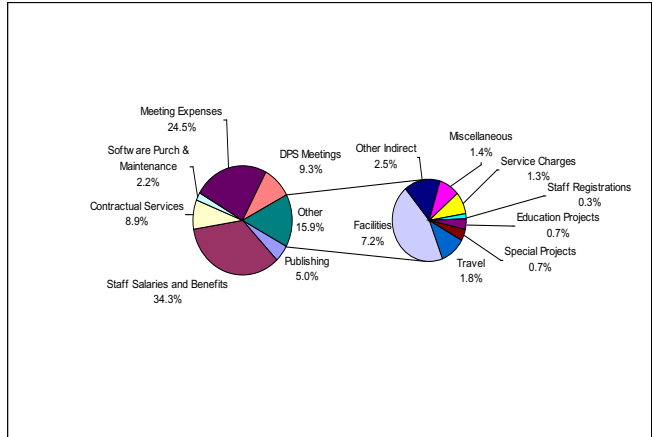


Table 3. Balance Sheet (2007 and 2006)

	2007	2006
Total Assets	14,102,834	13,663,195
Current Assets	3,125,544	2,656,469
Fixed Assets	29,562	22,321
Other Assets	10,947,728	10,984,405
Total Liabilities	13,467,208	13,663,195
Current Liabilities	946,732	697,591
Deferred Revenue	2,122,202	2,101,922
Net Assets	11,033,900	10,863,682
Unrestricted	8,678,940	8,442,889
Temporarily restricted		
Permanently restricted	2,354,960	2,420,793
Liabilities & Net Assets	14,102,834	13,663,195

Scenes of the St. Louis Meeting

Tornados and floods raged nearby, but none struck the convention center where 950 persons attended a peaceful 212th AAS meeting, in St. Louis, MO, 1-5 June 2008. The meeting, held jointly with the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, included major sessions on the structure of the Milky Way, laboratory astrophysics, and plans for the International Year of Astronomy. Unless otherwise indicated, the accompanying pictures are all AAS photographs by Richard Dreiser, © 2008 American Astronomical Society.



Left: Best-selling author Dava Sobel (*Longitude, Galileo's Daughter*) gave the public lecture and posed with Galileo, in the guise of impersonator Mark Thompson, a cantorial soloist and amateur astronomer who played the lute in his presentation at the meeting. Photo, Inge Heyer. Middle: Extragalactic investigators who briefed reporters included (L-to-R) Médéric Boquien (U. Massachusetts), Michael Brotherton (U. Wyoming), and Mark Seigar and Claud Lacey (both, U. Arkansas-Little Rock). Right: After the briefing, Seigar was interviewed on his findings which suggest that the pitch angle of spiral arms is correlated with the mass of the central black hole in spiral galaxies.



Astronomers who worked on the Galactic plane with Spitzer posed before a 180-ft mosaic of GLIMPSE and MIPS GAL data. Starting at the center, they are (left-to-right), Erin Ryan, Sachin Shenoy, Daniela Goncalves, Alberto Noriega-Crespo, Jim Jackson, Sean Carey, Thomas Bania, Robert Benjamin, Edward Churchwell, Marilyn Meade, Barbara Whitney, Mike Wolff and Matthew Povich. Photo, Larry Marschall.



Left: Observers of sub-stellar objects at the meeting included (L-to-R) Jessie Christiansen (Harvard-Smithsonian CfA), Michael A'Hearn (U. Maryland), Drake Deming (NASA Goddard), David Charbonneau (Harvard U.), David Bennett (U. Notre Dame), and Michael Liu and Trent Dupuy (both, U. Hawaii). Middle: IAU President Catherine Cesarsky gave an invited address on the International Year of Astronomy. She's accompanied here by Lars Lindberg Christensen, press officer for IAU and the Hubble European Space Agency Information Centre. Right: John Monnier (U. Michigan) discussed stellar imaging with CHARA.



Left: Katrina Exter (left) and Howard Bond (center), both of Space Telescope Science Institute, described a strange eclipsing binary in a planetary nebula that seems to lack a degenerate nucleus. Robert Stencel (right, U. Denver) predicted an eruption in the epsilon Aurigae system. Middle: Hugh Hudson (left, UC Berkeley) received the Hale Prize from Solar Physics Division Chair Todd Hoeksema and lectured on solar flares. He also gave a progress report on the search for axions in the Sun. Right: Much ado about the Milky Way (L-to-R): Sean Carey (Spitzer Science Ctr.) leads the MIPS GAL Survey; Jay Gallagher (U. Wisconsin-Madison) identified barred spirals that resemble the Galaxy; Mark Reid (CfA) used the VLBA to learn that stars in the disk orbit the Galactic center at lower speeds and in more eccentric orbits than previously believed; Edward Churchwell (UW-Madison) directs the GLIMPSE survey; Robert Benjamin (UW-Whitewater) stands between his “first star” at a new model of the stellar spiral arms in the Galaxy and space artist Robert Hurt (SSC) who helped visualize it; Barbara Whitney (Space Science Inst.) announced GLIMPSE results; Thomas Dame (CfA) discovered a far-side counterpart to the 3-kiloparsec expanding arm.



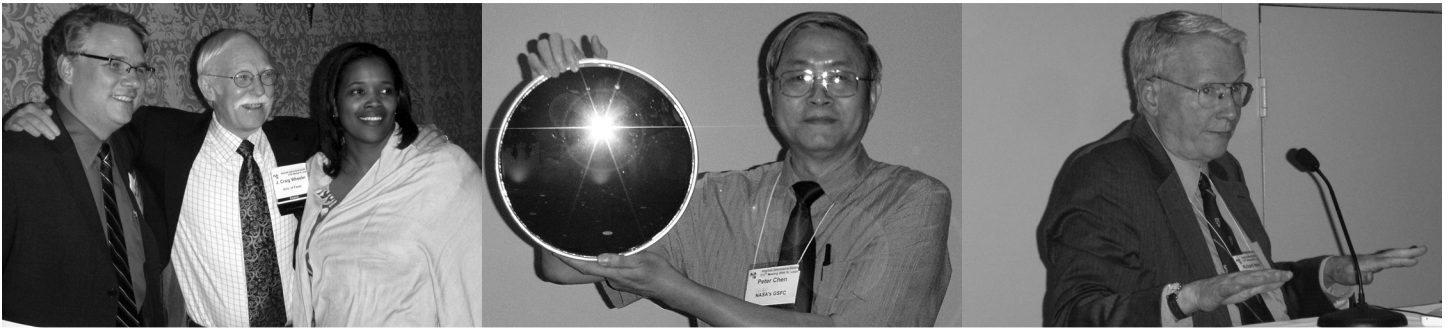
Left: Lucy Ziurys (U. Arizona) spoke on high resolution laboratory spectroscopy on molecules relevant to interstellar chemistry. Middle: Balakrishnan Naduvalath (U. Nevada-Las Vegas) described quantum dynamics calculations for interstellar molecular collisions. Right: Mayra Lebron Santos (left) and Carmen Pantoja (center), both from the University of Puerto Rico, described IYA activities in Puerto Rico and posed with outreach specialist Vivian Hoette (Yerkes Obs.).



Left: Alaina Shelden (U. Central Florida) received a Chambliss Astronomy Achievement Student Award from AAS President John Huchra. Middle: President Huchra congratulated James Kaler (U. Illinois), winner of the 2008 AAS Education Prize. Right: Peter Stetson (Herzberg Inst. of Astrophysics) is the George Van Biesbroeck Prize winner for 2008.



Far left: Anna Frebel (U. Texas-Austin) gave an invited talk on chemical evolution. Left: Julia Kregenow is testing the “SCALE-UP” approach to introductory astronomy at (Ithaca College; she’s also affiliated with Cornell U.)



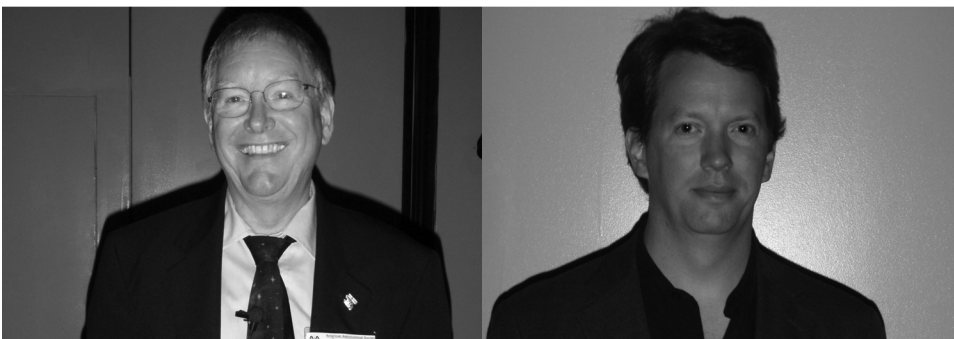
Left: Outgoing AAS President Craig Wheeler (center) celebrated the end of his presidency with Executive Officer Kevin Marvel and Kelli Gilmore, Director of Meeting Services. Middle: Peter Chen (Catholic U. of America & NASA Goddard) makes telescope mirrors from simulated moon dust to show how optics for large reflectors could be built on the Moon. Right: Richard Henry (Johns Hopkins U.) proposed a search for radio signals from extraterrestrial civilizations in a narrow zone centered on the ecliptic.



Left: Jacqueline Hewitt (MIT), here with AAS Secretary John Graham, gave an invited talk on 21-cm experiments to investigate reionization and the dark ages. Middle: Claire Max (UC Santa Cruz) told of current AGN research with laser guide star adaptive optics at Keck, and plans for the future. Right: Gina Brissenden (U. Arizona) and Jacob Noel-Storr (Rochester Inst. of Tech.) organized a brown bag lunch for educators. Photo, Inge Heyer.



Left: Ronald Samec and Crista M. Labadorf (both, Bob Jones U.) analyzed an extreme mass ratio eclipsing binary with data from the National Undergraduate Research Observatory. Middle: Participants in a workshop on “building a telescope from the ground up” made small refractors. Magdalen Normandeau (U. New Brunswick) is in left foreground and Judi James (Brazosport Planetarium) is at the right. Right: Science writer Robert Zimmerman celebrated publication of his book, *The Universe in a Mirror: The Saga of the Hubble Space Telescope and the Visionaries Who Built It*. Michelle Thaler (Spitzer Science Ctr.) is in the background.



Far left: Fritz Benedict (U. Texas-Austin) spoke on astrometry with the Hubble Space Telescope. Left: Sean Carroll (Caltech) talked about “the search for a natural explanation for the observed breakdown of time-reversal symmetry in cosmology.”

What's up with the Astronomy Education Review?

Tim Slater, Richard Green, Kevin Marvel

Sidney Wolff and Andrew Fraknoi founded the *Astronomy Education Review (AER)*, an online journal presenting peer-reviewed astronomy education research and associated information, in 2001. The journal has functioned well since its founding, especially after obtaining a grant from NASA and with significant support from the National Optical Astronomy Observatories.

In 2007, with the NASA grant having run its course and not wanting a vital journal to be cast adrift without institutional support, the founding editors approached the AAS to undertake the continuing publication of the journal, with a goal to make it self-sustaining within five years. The AAS Astronomy Education Board strongly supported this proposal and the matter passed to the AAS Publications Board for consideration.

The AAS Publications Board discussed the matter seriously and a special ad hoc committee was formed at the AAS Council level to consider possible business models for the journal. Partnership with the Astronomical Society of the Pacific was sought and received, with the two societies pledging to share the expense of supporting an editor at about the level of a Scientific Editor for the *Astrophysical Journal*.

In early spring 2008, a job description was formalized and a job announcement released. Although the formal deadline for

applications is 15 June, applications after this deadline will be considered.

The future of the *AER* is certain for the next five years. The AAS has committed to support the journal over this time, with a goal of finding new revenue sources to support its publication, which will dictate its future. The new editor will be able to shape the journal as it moves into the future, working with the AAS Publications Board and the Astronomy Education Board to build upon an excellent editorial history to craft a journal of which all AAS members can be proud.

Without the strong support of the founding editors and the significant financial support of NOAO, the AAS would not be able to accept the *AER*. Thanks to both NOAO and Sidney and Andy, the Society is sure the *AER* will be a significant addition to its journal portfolio and will continue to provide a venue for the dissemination of astronomy education research and related educational information.

If any member has questions about the journal or how the AAS is proceeding with accepting the responsibility of publishing the *AER*, please contact one of us for additional information. Currently, we hope to have an editor named and approved by the Publications Board no later than 1 October 2008.

Lynn Cominsky Moves Onward and Upward

Lynn Cominsky of Sonoma State University has stepped down as Deputy AAS Press Officer after ten years of service. For a time, she managed to juggle the demands of her AAS position with those of her work as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at SSU (and also for a time, Acting Chairman of Chemistry), Visiting Scientist at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Laboratory, and Director of NASA Education and Public Outreach at the University. But with the launch of the Gamma Ray Large Area Space Telescope on 11 June, she is even busier as a scientific Co-Investigator and Press Officer on both GLAST and the already orbiting Swift gamma-ray burst mission and something had to give.

Cominsky excelled as the AAS Press Room media coach, teaching astronomers preparing for press conferences at our meetings how to “keep it simple” yet get the science across. She also took turns with Press Officer Steve Maran, running our press release service which now distributes as many as a dozen press releases per day from US and foreign institutions to about 1700 accredited journalists worldwide. Along with Maran and our other Deputy Press Officer, Laurence Marschall of Gettysburg College, Cominsky screened thousands of AAS meeting abstracts for potential news value, chaired briefings, and answered countless questions from reporters.

“There’s a saying that when you want something done right, give it to a busy person,” says Maran. “No one I know is busier than Lynn, and no one does it better.”



Three press officers, friends and colleagues: Lynn Cominsky posed with Steve Maran (center) and Laurence Marschall at the 210th AAS meeting, in Honolulu. Photo, Larry Marschall.

Committee on Employment

Andy Howell, howell@astro.utoronto.ca

Succeeding in a Large Research Collaboration

Large collaborations are now common in astronomy, and have produced some of the most transformative recent discoveries. Yet, when I finished grad school and was given the opportunity to work for a big team, few of my elders had any useful advice for how to succeed in such an environment. If they said anything, it was often a variation on, “Don’t join one.” Fear of large collaborations is pervasive in astronomy, partly because it goes against our romantic notion of the lone astronomer on the mountaintop, but also because we rightly worry about being rendered anonymous in a sea of authors. But the benefits of large collaborations cannot be overlooked—access to enormous data sets, learning from a wide array of people, and the possibility of making truly monumental discoveries. The trick is avoiding the traps. I had to learn the hard way—by repeated failure! But after several collaborations, and much trial and error, I have identified a few strategies that worked.

Write papers: In any large collaboration there are always fires to be put out. There are proposals and software to write, and a never-ending flow of data to reduce. There will be pressure to get the problem *du jour* solved, and it is the nature of peer pressure that the group wants you to put top priority on what is in the collective interest. But the only one who can act in your own interest is you. At the end of the day the most important metric for career success is your first-author papers, so you must be aggressive about writing them. I knew half a dozen selfless people, who always put the interests of the collaboration first, and fell under the illusion that success for the team equated to personal success for them. Now they are out of astronomy, because when their postdoctoral terms were finished, they had no first-author papers to show for it.

Have your collaboration duties match your scientific interests: There is no getting around having to do the basic work required to keep the collaboration going. But this is much more enjoyable when your duties are necessary for your own paper, and everyone else gets to benefit as a side product. For example, in the Supernova Legacy Survey (SNLS), one person who discovers the supernovae is working on SN rates, one person responsible for spectroscopy uses it to produce papers on SN physics, and another member doing photometric calibration is writing one of the cosmology papers. Each person’s work is dependent on everyone else’s, but we are motivated by self-interest to do the best possible job in our area.

Encourage competition: It may seem counterintuitive that a key to success is encouraging others to try to beat you to publication, but the only collaboration I have been in that encourages ruthless competition has had a 3-5 times higher publication rate than other similar collaborations. Five times! In the SNLS, no science is reserved—it is all fair game for anyone to do at any time. Sure, this means that sometimes people’s toes get stepped on. There have been several cases where two individuals were working on the same subject. Sometimes, if one person wasn’t very far along they just dropped the research. Other times, either the analyses had to be merged, or two separate papers were written using different techniques, focusing on different parts of the problem. This is somewhat inefficient, though far outweighed by the overall efficiency gain. There were often heated discussions, and sometimes hurt feelings, but in every case the resulting science was stronger, and was produced at a much faster pace than in collaborations where science is pre-allocated. Besides, in my experience, personal disagreements happen at about the same rate no matter the organizational structure—they seem to be more a function of individual personalities.

Think creatively: I am amazed at the number of people in any collaboration who don’t care to come up with original ideas for papers—most simply want to repeat older work with better data. But large collaborations allow new kinds of studies that have never been done before, and these new, creative uses for the data often become the most-cited papers. The added benefit is that while everyone in the collaboration is fighting over the old ideas, you have exclusive access to your own fresh ones.

But creative ideas don’t come easily. It is essential to be well read both inside and outside of your field. From the inside, there are new theoretical ideas to be tested, and papers from outside your field can suggest innovative techniques and new uses for your data. Going to talks and conferences, reading astro-ph, and having random conversations with colleagues over coffee, especially in areas outside of your specialty, are every bit as essential as hammering away on data.

Just do it: The organization and politics of large collaborations can be complex, so sometimes asking permission to do something can take months to get a resolution. And it is often not in the interest of others to close off their options by giving you permission to do a certain study. Even if they are over-committed now, they may want to focus on that topic in the future. The largest time waster in any collaboration is

Committee on Employment continued

arguing over hypothetical future outcomes, the majority of which never come to pass. Instead, if you just do the science (assuming it isn't too much of a transgression of collaboration rules), few will argue when there is a finished paper. Everyone benefits from a new publication, and it is hard for others to argue that you shouldn't have written a paper because they fantasized about writing a similar one. Instead the discussion shifts to the interesting new results.

In summary, collaborations can present unique barriers to paper writing—group obligations, pre-allocated science, and

the politics of the hypothetical. But if you can remove the obstacles, the papers will flow, and everyone stands to gain.

The AAS Committee on Employment is pleased to highlight useful resources for astronomers, and welcomes your comments and responses to this and previous columns. Please check out our website (www.aas.org/career/) for additional resources and contact information for the committee members.

Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy

Geoffrey Clayton (CSWA Chair, Louisiana State University, gclayton@fenway.phys.lsu.edu)

Endorsing the Pasadena Recommendations

I am happy to say that institutions have begun to endorse the Pasadena Recommendations but, unfortunately, we did not make it very clear how to do it. We would like institutions to endorse the principles of the Pasadena Recommendations (aas.org/cswa/pasadenarecs.html) by contacting the chair

of the CSWA at the email address listed above. We will then place your institution on the list at the CSWA website at:

aas.org/cswa/pasadena_endorse.html

U.S. National Committee for the IAU

Roger Chevalier, Chair

The International Astronomical Union (IAU), with 86 national members and nearly 10,000 individual members, is concerned with all aspects of international cooperation in astronomy. In addition to tasks related to astronomical nomenclature and constants, the IAU is active in the organization of scientific meetings, and is increasingly active in astronomical outreach and astronomy in developing countries. The IAU is playing a key role in promoting 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy, which has the aim of bringing the sense of wonder of astronomy to all citizens of the world. Detailed information on the IAU can be found at iau.org/about/.

A crucial activity of the IAU is the General Assembly (GA), which occurs every three years. The next GA will be 3-14 August 2009 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and will offer six Symposia and 25 Joint Discussions and Special Sessions. The

topics of these events will be finalized in July 2008. The U.S. National Committee (USNC) for the IAU will be sponsoring a women's luncheon and a program for young astronomers.

In preparation for the upcoming GA, the USNC will be soliciting applications for membership in the IAU from U.S. astronomers. The basic qualifications for membership are a PhD or equivalent advanced degree, a strong record of several years' productive, original work in astronomy, and a willingness to be an active participant in IAU affairs. Applications for individual membership in the IAU, due by 1 February 2009, will be available in an upcoming *AAS Newsletter*.

News from NSF Division of Astronomical Sciences

Eileen D. Friel, Executive Officer, Division of Astronomical Sciences, efriel@nsf.gov

Upcoming Deadlines for FY2009 Funding

8 October 2008: NSF Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowships (AAPF) (NSF 07-575) A new program solicitation, which increases award sizes, has been released. All other aspects of the program remain unchanged from previous years. Please see the AST web site nsf.gov/mps/ast/deadlines.jsp for the new announcement.

1 November 2008: Advanced Technologies and Instrumentation (ATI)

15 November 2008: Astronomy & Astrophysics Research Grants (AAG) (NSF 05-608) provides individual investigator and collaborative research grants for observational, theoretical, laboratory and archival data studies in all areas of astronomy and astrophysics. See program announcement NSF 05-608 (nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf05608). The 15 November deadline also applies for proposals that qualify under the Research at Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) program. See program announcement NSF 00-144 at (www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf00144).

22 January 2009: Major Research Instrumentation Program (MRI) (NSF 08-503)

Stricter Enforcement of Proposal Submission Rules

Due to the increasing number of proposals we receive, and after issuing warning emails in recent years, AST will this year be returning without review proposals that violate the rules in the applicable release of the Grant Proposal Guide (nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg - NSF 08-1).

Please pay special attention to:

- *Addressing broader impact in the one-page project summary*
- *Including results of prior support – any NSF award for the PI or any CoPI in the last five years*
- *Formatting – character size and spacing; margins (including figures)*
- *Providing complete biographical sketches, especially lists of collaborators*
- *Omitting extraneous items in the budget justification, especially material that should be in the project description*
- *Inappropriate use of supplements, especially material that should be in the project description*
- *Inappropriate letters of endorsement.*

Further details appeared in AAS newsletters 136 and especially 134 (see also 131 for questions about possible support). Missing or incorrect collaborator lists cause the single biggest delay in moving forward to review. If you find that providing full collaborator lists causes you to exceed the allowable

two-page limit, please contact a program officer in AST for guidance.

We also recommend you consider getting a download of your entire proposal in pdf format to make sure it's what you think you submitted. As always, you are encouraged to contact any of the listed program officers for clarification and advice *before the deadline*.

Contacts: overall or planetary questions: Nigel Sharp, nsharp@nsf.gov, 703-292-4905; primarily Galactic, Brian Patten, bpatten@nsf.gov, 703-292-4910; generally extragalactic, Linda Sparke, lsparke@nsf.gov, 703-292-4899.

AST Seeking Reviewers

The best way to learn about the review process at NSF and to gain insights into what it takes to write a successful proposal is to participate in the proposal review process. Each year the Division calls on over 150 people to provide expert reviews and advice on the merit of the proposals submitted to the grants programs. Reviewers perform an essential service for NSF and the community. They also see a wide range of proposals, both successful and unsuccessful, read about current science, exchange ideas with colleagues on the panel and at NSF, and learn about the process of panel review. The experience is one of the best ways to prepare for writing your own proposal.

If you would be interested in serving on a review panel at NSF, please let us know, by contacting a program officer: Nigel Sharp (nsharp@nsf.gov), Linda Sparke (lsparke@nsf.gov), Brian Patten (bpatten@nsf.gov), or Eileen Friel (efriel@nsf.gov).

Member Spotlight

In each issue, we will feature one member, their research or other work, a bit of their history and their picture. We will accept suggestions for this feature, but no self-nominations. If you know of a fellow member who does interesting research, came to our field through interesting circumstances or is just a fantastic person, consider submitting their story to us for possible publication (500 word limit). We will only publish stories approved by members willing to be featured. Email your suggestion to Crystal Tinch, crystal@aaas.org.

News from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP)

James Manning, Executive Director

Communicating Astronomical Research through the *PASP*

“The cordial co-operation of many amateur and professional astronomers in the very successful observations of the Solar Eclipse of January 1, 1889, has again brought forward the desirability of organizing an ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF THE PACIFIC, in order that this pleasant and close association may not be lost, either as a scientific or as a social force. You are respectfully invited to become a member of this organization, and do your part towards making it useful in our community.”

Dated February 7, 1889, these are the first words in the first issue of the first volume of *Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (PASP)*, an enterprise that has continued unabated through nearly 120 years of astronomical discovery.

Originally, the *PASP* was the primary vehicle for Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP) notes and minutes, observing accounts, and news of amateur associations, as well as a repository of articles by many of the leading lights of professional astronomy. With the advance of astronomical instrumentation and discovery through the 20th century, the *PASP* began to transform into a publication increasingly filled with professional papers. By the early 1970's, with the advent of ASP's popular-level Mercury magazine, the *PASP* completed its evolution to the journal of peer-reviewed astronomy research papers that it is today.

The *PASP* continues to help communicate the results of astronomical research around the world, expanding its publication of instrumentation, data analysis and software-related papers even as it continues to publish observation-

oriented research in all areas of astronomy. Information about the *PASP*—including how to submit articles and how to subscribe to the publication, either through an individual technical ASP membership or through institutional subscription, can be found at www.astrosociety.org/pubs.html and www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/pasp/current.

PASP editor Paula Szkody of the University of Washington is also encouraging submittals of review articles on specific areas of astronomy, as well as short articles (two printed pages) summarizing the current status and future prospects for a given field or mission as an International Year of Astronomy (IYA) feature (with reduced page charges). Please contact her via the web sites above if you are interested in doing either a long or a short review.

Paula and her associate editors, Daniel Fabricant of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Harland Epps of the UCO/Lick Observatory, University of California, Santa Cruz, and Toby Smith of the University of Washington, welcome the opportunity to help you communicate the results of your research to the wider community. And with the approach of IYA, there's no better time to submit reviews of the myriad fields and endeavors in which astronomy research manifests itself today.

The universe is bigger, more interesting, and more mysterious than it was back in 1889 when the *PASP* began its chronicle of our ongoing steps toward cosmic enlightenment. And the *PASP* is still there, waiting to announce your contributions to the effort. Take advantage by contacting Paula and her crew, and by subscribing to this “starry messenger” of astronomical research.

Education News

The Priscilla and Bart Bok awards are given to two high school students competing in the Intel Science and Engineering Fair. This year's fair was held in Atlanta, Georgia and local AAS member, Chris De Pree and Emory University physics research associate Horace Dale handled the judging. The main criterion for selecting the two Bok Awards is scientific merit. Observational, instrumental or theoretical projects are all eligible, as are interdisciplinary projects involving Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering, etc. \$1000 will be awarded to their high school science departments for use in enhancing their science education program.

Priscilla and Bart Bok First Award of a \$5,000 scholarship winner: David Alex Rosengarten

Priscilla and Bart Bok Second Award of a \$3,000 scholarship winner: Matthew James Walentosky

The awarded funds are intended to be used by the recipients to further their education and research efforts; and are funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation and are subject to their approval.

Chambliss Astronomy Achievement Student Awards

Through the generosity of Carlson Chambliss, the AAS established the Astronomy Achievement Student Awards to recognize exemplary research by undergraduate and graduate students who present posters at the semi-annual AAS meetings. Awardees are honored with an engraved bronze Chambliss medal and a certificate. Graduate and undergraduate posters are considered separately. Students with Honorable Mentions receive a certificate.

The AAS thanks all the students who participated in the 212th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society Chambliss Student Achievement Awards and who made the judges' job difficult indeed due to the high quality of the presentations. We also thank all the judges who volunteered their time and energy.

Graduate Student Chambliss Medal Awardees

Francesca D'Arcangelo, Boston University
Correlated Multiwavelength Polarization Variability in OJ287 and Other Blazars

Aaron Price, AAVSO/Tufts University
Polarimetry and the Long Awaited Superoutburst of BZ UMa

Seamus Riley, Johns Hopkins University
A Study of Dwarf Galaxies in Five Rich Clusters II: A2218, CL0024+16, and MS1358+62

Alaina Shelden, University of Central Florida
Better Results Through Better Fibers: Improved Sensitivity on EXPERT

Honorable Mention: Graduate Students

Lanika Ruzhitskaya, University of Missouri
Project CLAE - The Moons of Jupiter: Understanding Kepler's Laws in Astronomy 101

Josh Tartar, University of Missouri
Circumstellar Crystalline Silicates: Evolved Stars

Undergraduate Student Chambliss Medal Awardees

Jessica Kellar, Wesleyan University
HI \pm Dots: Finding Isolated Extragalactic Emission-Line Objects in Narrow-Band Images

Curtis McCully, Southern Nazarene University
Unifying Narrow-line Seyfert 1 Galaxies: X-ray Spectral Analysis

Honorable Mention: Undergraduate Student

Charles Taylor, College of Charleston
Phase-Dependent Velocity Shift of the O VI Broad Wing Emission from AB Dor

Honored Elsewhere

Kaiser Elected to British Royal Society

Nicholas Kaiser, an astronomer at the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy, was elected a fellow of the British Royal Society on 16 May 2008. He was one of 44 new fellows selected this year for their contributions to science, engineering, and technology.

The national scientific academy of the United Kingdom and British Commonwealth, the Royal Society is dedicated to promoting excellence in science. A fellowship of the Royal Society is one of the most prestigious honors a British scientist can achieve.

Raised in Sheffield, England, Kaiser earned a B.Sc. in physics at Leeds University in 1978 and a Ph.D. in astronomy at Cambridge University in 1982. He won the Helen Warner Prize of the AAS in 1989, the Herzberg Medal of the Canadian Association of Physicists in 1993 and the Rutherford Medal of the Royal Society of Canada in 1997. He joined the faculty of the University of Hawaii in 1997.

Schmidt and Lynden-Bell Receive Kavli Prize

Maarten Schmidt and Donald Lynden-Bell are two of seven inaugural recipients of the new Kavli prizes, a partnership between the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, The Kavli Foundation, and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

The astrophysics prize was awarded jointly to Schmidt, of the California Institute of Technology, US, and Lynden-Bell, of Cambridge University.

The prizes will be presented to the Kavli Laureates by HRH Crown Prince Haakon at an award ceremony in Oslo Concert Hall in September 2008.

Genzel Awarded Shaw Laureate

The 2008 Shaw Prize has been awarded to Reinhard Genzel (MPI Für Extraterr. Physics). The Shaw Prize consists of three annual prizes: Astronomy, Life Science and Medicine, and Mathematical Sciences, each prize bearing a monetary award of one million US dollars.

Genzel is currently the Managing Director at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, a Professor in the Physics Department of the University of California, Berkeley, and an Honorary Professor at the Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Bonn (FRG) in 1978 and is a Scientific Member of the Max Planck Society.

The Shaw Prize is an international award managed and administered by The Shaw Prize Foundation based in Hong Kong.

is inaugurated in 2009. Given the shortcomings of the science budgets passed in the FY 2008 Omnibus bill, this will likely mean difficulties at NASA, NSF, and DOE.

Supplemental

With the budget process for FY 2009 barely moving forward, Congress continues to consider adding money to last year's budget, for FY 2008. This is a topic I was covering extensively on the blog during May. A supplemental funding bill is needed, even after the FY 2008 budget, to pay for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As you might imagine, the debate about such a bill is consumed in long-standing political disagreements about the war in Iraq. However, since they are "must pass" bills, there has been an effort by members of both parties to add domestic spending, including science spending, to the war supplemental bill.

The House passed a supplemental funding bill without any science spending. The major sticking points in the House were funding for the Iraq war, new veteran's benefits, and if those new veteran's benefits would be offset with new taxes. The Senate bill included domestic spending as well, but also include money for science—to the tune of \$1.2 billion. Included in that amount is \$200 million for NASA, \$200 million for NSF, \$100 million for DOE.

The Senate version, with all this domestic spending included, passed with a veto-proof margin of 75-22. However, as I write this, the bill must again be considered in the House. There, a coalition of conservative Republicans who oppose any domestic spending in the bill, "Blue Dog" Democrats who want any domestic spending offset with tax increases, and anti-war Democrats who will vote against any bill without a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq may prevent any supplemental from reaching a veto-proof margin in the House. A two-thirds margin is important because the White House has threatened to veto any supplemental bill that includes domestic spending.

NASA Reauthorization

In other news, the House Science Committee has passed HR 6063, the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2008, and will have been considered and likely passed the House by the time you read this column. Authorization bills authorize, but do not appropriate, money to be spent for federal agencies. The bill is more a policy document that define the purposes and goals of NASA, rather than a document about NASA's budget.

That said, the bill does authorize 12.8% more money than the President's FY 2009 budget—though this is not likely to materialize in appropriations. Other positive aspects of the bill include language on suborbital programs and technology development, requests for reform of ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) which inhibit international scientific collaboration, and the importance of Decadal

surveys and community-based decisions regarding spending and mission priorities.

The Senate has yet to introduce NASA reauthorization as of this writing. Any differences in the Senate and House versions will have to be ironed out in conference committee, and passed again by both chambers.

Local Congressional Visits Day

Something I mentioned in my last column is a desire to coordinate a local Congressional Visits Day during the summer recess. In reality, this will not likely be a single day. With the "district work period" almost a month in length from August 11 to September 5, there will be opportunities to visit local offices and perhaps meet your local member of Congress—either in the district where you work or where you live.

While local district offices will not likely have any staff with scientific expertise, you are more likely to be able to establish rapport and relationships with district offices than with those here in Washington. Also, since we are scheduling this during the recess, you may have a chance to meet with the actual member. And since district offices are likely nearby, it will be easy for students to either attend, or accompany faculty members on such a visit.

The primary purpose of a local visit will be to tell your story of yourself and your institution. You can let the office know you are a resource if they have questions, inform them about the scientific and outreach events your department or institution sponsors, and how these enhance the community and state. The AAS will provide some downloadable documents for you to leave behind, information on contacting the local office and scheduling a visit, and depending on the number of interested AAS members, coordinate a conference call to discuss the basics of congressional visits.

If you would like to participate in making a local visit, please contact me at huerta@as.org. We will also have a web site for the visits day up soon at www.as.org/policy/localvisits, as well as posts about it on the blog in the coming months.

Announcements

AAS Membership Calendar

As a membership benefit, the AAS Membership Calendar includes important dates, such as proposal and grant deadlines and AAS sponsored meetings. Sponsors receive selection of a photo layout page and 250 words of text. For only \$2000, your institution or department can show support for the whole astronomical community and be featured prominently in astronomers' offices across the country and around the world. Sponsors are reminded that space is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Groups interested in sponsoring a month may contact Crystal Tinch (crystal@aaas.org) for more information and pricing details for the 2009 calendar. Deadline for sponsorship is 1 September 2008.

Call for NRAO Observing Proposals

Astronomers are invited to submit Regular and Large proposals for observing time on the NRAO Green Bank Telescope (GBT), Very Large Array (VLA), 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.

Instrument	Deadline	Observing Period	Note
GBT	2008 Oct 1	2009 Feb-2009 May	
	2009 Feb 2	2009 Jun-2009 Sep	
VLA	2008 Oct 1	2009 Feb-2009 May	*
	2009 Feb 2	2009 Jun-2009 Sep	+
VLBA	2008 Oct 1	2009 Feb-2009 May	
	2009 Feb 2	2009 Jun-2009 Sep	

Notes: (*) The B configuration with a maximum baseline of 11 km.
(+) The C configuration with a maximum baseline of 3 km.

The NRAO is currently considering a plan to reverse the order of the configuration cycles of the VLA/EVLA from the long-used D-> A-> B-> C-> D to D-> C-> B-> A-> D, beginning with the D configuration at the end of 2009, to facilitate correlator commissioning and early science with the EVLA. No decision has been taken. We will keep the community informed.

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. For details, see wiki.gb.nrao.edu/bin/view/Observing/NRAOStudentSupportProgram

The NRAO and the European VLBI Network jointly handle proposals for observing time on the Global VLBI Network at centimeter wavelengths; the deadline is 1 October 2008 for the session in February/March 2009. Also, the NRAO and a set of European observatories jointly handle proposals for

VLBI observing time at a wavelength of 3mm; the deadline is 1 October 2008 for the session in May 2009. The NRAO also handles proposals for the VLBI High Sensitivity Array at the same deadlines as for the VLBA; this Array includes the VLBA, VLA, GBT, and Arecibo in the U.S., plus Effelsberg in Germany.

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

NSO Observing Proposal Deadline

The current deadline for submitting observing proposals to the National Solar Observatory is 15 August 2008 for the fourth quarter of 2008. 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 www.nso.edu/general/observe/. A web-based observing-request form is at www2.nso.edu/cgi-bin/nsiforms/obsreq/obsreq.cgi. Users' Manuals are available at nsosp.nso.edu/dst/ for the SP facilities and 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.

Mount Cuba Astronomical Foundation

The Mount Cuba Astronomical Foundation (MCAF) invites proposals for the acquisition of astronomical equipment, computer hardware or software, shipping equipment to observatories, or travel to observatories. Proposals may be submitted by anyone or any organization, but we expect that most proposals will come from colleges, universities, observatories, and other institutions that are exempt from Federal Income Tax under U.S. Code 501(c)(3). We will not award grants for equipment for teaching, publication costs, travel to meetings, salaries, administrative costs, or overhead.

In our first year of operations, MCAF fully funded project proposals ranging from \$4,000 to \$100,000 from institutions across the U.S. Proposals are accepted at any time, and considered as soon as practicable, generally within eight to ten weeks.

For more information, including guidelines and grant conditions, please contact James Garvin, MCAF Administrator, at Mt. Cuba Astronomical Foundation, PO Box 4556, Greenville, DE 19807, or by email jamesgarvin7@comcast.net.

Calendar

AAS & AAS Division Meetings

DPS 40th Annual Meeting

10-15 October 2008, Ithaca, NY
<http://dps08.astro.cornell.edu>

213th AAS Meeting

4-8 January 2009, Long Beach
aas.org/meetings/

HAD Meeting

6-7 January 2009, Long Beach, CA
aas.org/had/meetings/

Other Events

*Viewing the Universe via the World Wide Web

3-5 Sept 2008, Chicago, IL
Contact: Randall Landsberg
(randy@kicp.uchicago.edu)
kicp-workshops.uchicago.edu/universe2008/

*2008 NVO Summer School

3-11 Sept 2008, Pasadena, CA
Contact: Sarah Emery Bunn
(summer-school@us-vo.org)
us-vo.org/summer-school/2008

Challenges to Consensus Cosmology and the Quest for a New Picture of the Universe

7-11 Sept 2008, Port Angeles, WA
cosmology.info/2008conference/

Star Formation from Spitzer (Lyman) to Spitzer (Telescope) and Beyond

10-12 Sept 2008, Vienna, Austria
Contacts, J. Alves & V. Trimble
(chairs@spitzer2spitzer.org)
spitzer2spitzer.org

*Workshop on Early Solar System Impact Bombardment

15-17 Sept 2008, Houston, TX
lpi.usra.edu/meetings/bombardment2008/

Transformational Science with ALMA: The Birth and Feedback of Massive Stars, Within and Beyond the Galaxy

25-27 Sept 2008, Charlottesville, VA
Contact: Rémy Indebetouw
(alma08@nrao.edu)

Back to the Galaxy II

29 Sept-3 Oct 2008, UC Santa Barbara
ctcp.caltech.edu/BTMW/

Second Hinode Science Meeting

29 Sept-3 Oct 2008, Boulder, CO
Contact: Bruce Lites (lites@ucar.edu)
hao.ucar.edu/partnerships/hinode/conference-2008/index.html

Hot Massive Stars: A Lifetime of Influence

12-15 October 2008, Flagstaff, AZ
Contact: Phil Massey
(phil.massey@lowell.edu)
lowell.edu/workshops/Contifest/

The Ages of Stars

13-17 October 2008, Baltimore, MD
Contact: David Soderblom (drs@stsci.edu)
stsci.edu/institute/conference/iau258

*6th Chandra/CIAO Workshop

20-22 Oct 2008, Cambridge, MA
Contact: Antonella Fruscione
(afruscione@cfa.harvard.edu)
cxc.harvard.edu/ciao/workshop/

*The Sixth Huntsville Gamma-Ray Burst Symposium 2008

20-23 Oct 2008, Huntsville, AL
Contact: grbhuntsville2008@gmail.com
grbhuntsville2008.cspar.uah.edu

2008 Huntsville Workshop: The Physical Processes for Energy and Plasma Transport across Magnetic Boundaries

26-31 October 2008, Huntsville, AL
Contact: Ken-Ichi Nishikawa
(ken-ichi.nishikawa-1@nasa.gov)
hsvworkshop.msfc.nasa.gov

New Light on Young Stars: Spitzer's View of Circumstellar Disks

26-30 October 2008, Pasadena, CA
Contact: Deborah Padgett
(spitzer08@ipac.caltech.edu)
ipac.caltech.edu/spitzer2008/

Astronomical Data Analysis Software and Systems XVIII (ADASS XVIII)

2-5 Nov 2008, Quebec City, Canada
Contact: Daniel Durand
(daniel.durand@nrc.-cnrc.gc.ca)

*Hot and Cool: Bridging Gaps in Massive Star Evolution

10-12 November 2008, Pasadena, CA
Contact: Claus Leitherer
(leitherer@stsci.edu)
ipac.caltech.edu/hotandcool/CoolAndHot.html

Galaxy Evolution: Emerging Insights and Future Challenges

11-14 November 2008, Austin, TX
Contact: Shardha Jogee
(sj@astro.as.utexas.edu)

*Solar Activity During the Onset of Solar Cycle 24

7-12 December 2008, Napa, CA
Contact: Hugh Hudson
(solar24@ssl.berkeley.edu)
sprg.ssl.berkeley.edu/RHESSI/napa2008

24th Texas Symposium on Relativistic Astrophysics

7-14 December 2008, Vancouver
Contact: Ludovic van Waerbeke
(texas2008@phas.ubc.ca)
texasinvancouver.org

Formation and Evolution of Globular Clusters

12-16 Jan 2009, UC Santa Barbara
Contact: Fred Rasio
(rasio@northwestern.edu)
kitp.ucsb.edu/activities/auto/?id=953

*New or revised listings

Note: Listed are meetings or other events that have come to our attention. Due to space limitations, we publish notice of meetings 1) occurring in North, South and Central America; 2) meetings of the IAU; and 3) meetings as requested by AAS Members. Meeting publication may only be assured by emailing crystal@aas.org. Meetings that fall within 30 days of publication are not listed.

A comprehensive list of world-wide astronomy meetings is maintained by Liz Bryson, Librarian C-F-H Telescope in collaboration with the Canadian Astronomy Data Centre, Victoria, BC. The list may be accessed and meeting information entered at cadwww.hia.nrc.ca/meetings.



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Washington News

Marcos Huerta, John Bahcall Public Policy Fellow
huerta@aas.org



The arrival of summer in D.C. has brought no shortage of heat and humidity. While I am used to such summer weather, having lived in Texas and then for a year in Florida, the difference now is that I have to wear a wool suit almost every day to work. The summer also means a bit of a slow season on Capitol Hill. Numerous recesses are sprinkled throughout the summer—

Memorial Day, July 4, and then a long summer recess that begins August 11 and lasts through September 5.

New Public Policy Blog

The newest addition to the AAS's public policy arsenal is our new public policy blog—blog.aas.org. I post links to traditional news stories concerning issues that matter to the AAS, from the Washington Post and other sources, as well as links to the legislation text, roll call votes, and other news from Washington.

I also occasionally post stories in the context of policy positions the AAS Council has passed, such as recent state legislative actions for so called “academic freedom” bills that endanger science education public schools. More recently, I posted a link to a report from NASA's Inspector General

finding that NASA's public affairs office misrepresented scientific evidence on climate change. The AAS issued a statement in 2004 in support of the American Geophysical Union's statement, *Human Impacts on Climate*, which stresses the importance of peer-reviewed science to inform government policy on climate change.

The main purpose of the blog is to allow interested society members to follow issues in Washington that do not meet the threshold required for sending out an Informational Email or an Action Alert to all 7000 AAS members. So, I encourage you to navigate to blog.aas.org, check the site out, and, perhaps, be the first person to comment on a post.

Appropriations

Normally this time of year, the Congress is working to pass the multiple appropriations bills that will fund the entire federal government. This year, being an election year and the last year of the current administration, it is widely believed that there will be no budget. Rather, the Congress will wait out the current administration and pass what is called a continuing resolution that will fund government agencies and departments at their current levels until a new president

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