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COMMISSION 51

BIOASTRONOMY

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William Irvine
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Anny-Chantal Levasseur-Regourd
David Morrison
Stephane Udry

PROCEEDINGS BUSINESS SESSION, 12 August 2009

1. Introduction

Commission 51 met on August 12, 2009. Outgoing President Alan Boss chaired the meeting, and there were several dozen members present, including incoming President William Irvine, incoming Vice President Pascale Ehrenfreund, and outgoing Past President Karen Meech. Commission 51 (C51) was re-authorized for a term of six more years at the 2006 Prague General Assembly of the IAU, and hence comes up for renewal at the 2012 IAU General Assembly in Beijing, China.

2. Organizing Committee

The 2006-2009 C51 Organizing Committee (OC) had eight members, five from the USA, and three from Europe. Given that IAU rules state that the OC should not have more than eight members, we needed to allow several current members of the OC to rotate off in order to improve the geographical balance. Past President Karen Meech and OC member David Latham agreed to do so, allowing us to add two new OC members, Sun Kwok of Hong Kong and Anny-Chantal Levasseur-Regourd of France. Clearly C51 should also attempt to add OC members from other regions that are not currently represented on the OC, such as from Africa and South America, in time for the 2012 General Assembly.

3. Bioastronomy Meetings

The primary activity of C51 since its inception has been the approximately triennial meetings on bioastronomy which it holds. Past President Karen Meech presented a summary of the most recent bioastronomy meeting, held in San Juan, Puerto Rico on 16-20 July, 2007. The meeting was a complete success, with about 250 bioastronomers in attendance. A field trip was held to visit the Arecibo Observatory and the Camuy Caves. At the San Juan meeting, plans were made to hold a joint meeting with the International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life (ISSOL), which also holds triennial meetings on similar topics. It has been recognized for some time that in order to avoid conflicts between these two meetings, it would be desirable to try to hold joint meetings, for the

ultimate benefit of both groups. This plan was put into action at the ISSOL meeting held in Florence, Italy in August, 2008, where the C51 OC met with ISSOL President Janet Siefert and her OC and jointly approved plans to hold the first combined meeting in Montpellier, France, on 3-8 July 2011. As incoming Vice President, Pascale Ehrenfreund agreed to co-chair the Scientific Organizing Committee for the 2011 meeting, representing C51, working with Muriel Gargaud and Robert Pascal of ISSOL and their colleagues from Montpellier on the Local Organizing Committee. Pascale Ehrenfreund presented a summary of the plans for the 2011 meeting at the Rio de Janeiro C51 business meeting, and it was clear that the plans for the joint meeting are moving along well and we can expect that the meeting will be a resounding success.

4. Symposium and Special Session Sponsorship

C51 has been asked to support various proposals to hold IAU Special Sessions and Symposia, either at the 2009 IAU GA, or on their own. Several of these proposals were judged to be appropriate for C51 support and were successful, such as the Special Session on "Planetary Systems as Potential Sites for Life" at the Rio de Janeiro General Assembly.

5. New Members

The following requests for membership in C51 were approved at the meeting:

DESPOIS, Didier (France)	GARGAUD, Muriel (France)
HAGHIGHIPOUR Nader (United States)	KUAN Yi-Jehng (Taiwan)
KWOK Sun (Hong Kong)	LAMONTAGNE Robert (Canada)
LAZIO Joseph (United States)	MELOTT Adrian (United States)
OHISHI Masatoshi (Japan)	VON HIPPEL Ted (United States)

The following requests for consultant status were also approved:

BRUCATO John R (Italy)	DENNING Kathryn (Canada)
LAREO Leonardo (Columbia)	MACCONE Claudio (Italy)

Consultants are bioastronomers who are not members of the IAU and so are not eligible for membership. Consultants are no longer recognized by the IAU, but C51 continues to recognize their interests in the field of bioastronomy and keeps them aware of C51 activities by virtue of their place on the e-mail distribution list.

C51 continues to seek astronomers who wish to be recognized as members. We encourage interested IAU members to ask to join C51, which can be accomplished simply by sending an e-mail to the incoming C51 President, William Irvine (irvine@fcrao1.astro.umass.edu).

6. Closing remarks

We expect that the experiment of holding Bioastronomy meetings in concert with our colleagues in ISSOL will be a success, and we hope that all C51 members will be able to participate in the Montpellier, France joint meeting. Bioastronomy is a relatively new field that continues to grow and expand, as we make continue to make progress toward understanding the prevalence of life in the universe, how it originates, and how it evolves.

Alan P. Boss
President of the Commission