

Swiss Commission for Astronomy
(SCFA)

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday Sept. 8, 2008
at the University of Bern

1) Call to Order

The chair, G. Meylan, calls the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Attendance at the meeting :

Present : G. Beutler, G. Burki, M. Güdel, P. Jetzer, W. Schmutz, F.-K. Thielemann, and G. Meylan (chair).

Excused : W. Benz, M. Carollo, G. Lake, D. Pfenniger, M. Steinacher (guest from SER), S. Udry.

2) SCFA membership and welcome of new members

The two members at large, G. Lake (UniZH) and W. Schmutz (PMOD/WRC), will soon become full members, thanks to the election process recently initiated by Sc|Nat - MAP. All other current members will be re-elected.

3) SCFA annual report 2007

The annual report 2007, recently published by MAP in its general annual report, is also available on the following web page of Sc|Nat at :

<http://www.scnat.ch/f/Netzwerk/Strukturen/Kommissionen/index.php>

4) SCFA budget

The SCFA budget 2009 has been submitted in early August to Sc|Nat – MAP, with a content nearly identical to the SCFA budget 2008. The decrease in the budget 2008 of the allocation for travel expenses, from CHF 10'000 to CHF 5'000, has the direct consequence that all requests amounting to about CHF 1000 will be cut down by a factor of two. An email will be sent to all members of the SCFA in order to advertise in all Swiss institutes the SCFA program for travel support.

Action : G. Meylan to send an email to all members of the SCFA.

5) Swiss Contribution to the IAU and members of the IAU in Switzerland

G. Meylan summarizes the actions taken in relation to the SCFA census of the IAU members living in Switzerland : about 25 members are no longer active or have volunteered for dropping out of the IAU. The number of IAU members for Switzerland goes down from 98 to about 75 members. This has the consequence that Switzerland will remain in Category III with an annual fee of CHF 15,200, instead of the CHF 22,800, had Switzerland been updated

to Category IV, following the previous request from Prof. K. van der Hucht, General Secretary of the IAU.

M. Güdel brings some important information about the final five IAU members who have not replied yet to any of the letter and the various email reminders from the SCFA. W. Benz, G. Burki, and G. Beutler will contact these people directly, in a gentle way, in order to get a positive or negative sign from each of them. M. Güdel presents a new version of the Swiss rules to be applied by the SCFA for allowing an astronomer to become an IAU member. The final version of these rules is adopted after a few corrections. These new rules are of course following the own rules and regulations of the IAU.

M. Güdel will contact all Swiss astronomical institutes so that all potential new IAU members will be identified in time for the IAU General Assembly of August 2009 in Rio de Janeiro. The director of each institute will be responsible for proposing the candidates, following the rules which will be posted on the web page of the SCFA.

This closes all the actions triggered in October 2007 by the letter from Prof. van der Hucht, which led to a general census of the IAU members in Switzerland and an update of the IAU membership rules.

Action : W. Benz contacts F. Pont.

G. Burki contacts A. Blecha, L. Martinet et D. Segransan

G. Beutler contacts J. Geiss.

6) One action item from the roadmap : Summer school 2009

It is becoming urgent to see some action happening if we want to have a Summer school in 2009. George Lake, the coordinator in charge of the organization summer school, excused for this meeting, has not sent any information about the efforts which should have been obtained from the chairs of the four Swiss Research networks as defined in the CHAP Roadmap (Planets : Willy Benz ; Stellar Evolution : Georges Meynet ; Galaxy Formation and Cosmology : Uros Seljak ; Solar Science : Svetlana Berdyugina). Since the 2009 Saas Fee Course is entitled “Magnetic Fields : from Solar types stars to compact objects”, it is suggested that the subject of the summer school should be related to either the “Planets” or the “Galaxy formation and cosmology” network, in order to prevent useless overlap. This organizational work should progress during the coming weeks, in order to have another meeting of the SCFA before the end of this year.

Action : G. Lake to get some information, within 4 weeks, from the network chairs and report to the chair of the SCFA.

7) Miscellaneous

Fines and Prodex : F.-K. Thielemann warns the SCFA of potential problems in 3-4 years if the amount of money allocated to Fines program is not increased. It is decided to contact M. Steinacher (Fines) and Oliver Botta (Prodex) in order to identify the best way to lobby SER in favor of astrophysics.

8) The meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.