

Minutes

IAA SETI Permanent Committee
11:30 to 14:30 hours Tuesday, September 30, 2003
Bremen Congress Center
Franzius Room
Bremen, Germany

Attendance list was circulated. Those present were Seth Shostak, Tom Pierson, Carol Oliver, Ivan Almar, Alex Ollongren, John Elliott, Paulo Musso, Stelio Montebugnoli, Claudio Maccone, Bruce Dorminey, Roger Malina, Mark Lupisella, Dick Carrigan, Ernst Fasan, Andrew Howard, Jason Gallicchio, and Paul Shuch.

Chair: Seth Shostak

1. Review of Minutes of Houston meeting - Moved approval - Ernst Fasan, 2nd - Roger Malina. Passed unanimously.

2. a. Note of thanks was expressed to outgoing Co-Chair Tom Pierson.

2. b. Discussion of nominations for new Co-Chair. Shostak presented the nomination of Carol Oliver, as had been circulated earlier in email. Moved by Ernst Fasan, 2nd by Doug Vakoch. Passed unanimously.

2. c. Shostak asked that the minutes note everyone's appreciation to Jill Tarter for her years of stellar leadership.

ACTION: Chair must inform Academy of new slate of officers, and also an updated list of Study Group members.

3. Review of four SETI sessions (3 speaker sessions and one poster session) here at Bremen. Shostak mentioned that SETI I session had 5 dropouts, due to costs of attending and current state of the economy. Shostak also mentioned that he noted the attendance at the SETI sessions this year is down a bit. Ian Almar pointed out that this year is the first year that many Commission meetings were occurring at the same time as the SETI sessions. Almar suggested that in the future, SETI try to have its sessions on later days to avoid the heavy committee conflict on the first two days of the Congress. Malina pointed out that Commission meetings may be on Sunday next year, and then we could keep the SETI sessions on Monday and Tuesday.

ACTION - Our representatives who attend the March meeting in Paris should address this and make sure that the conflict is avoided.

4. The 2004 Vancouver program is ready for our sessions. However, the plenary sessions for Vancouver are not set, and this is an opportunity for SETI. The two SETI sessions of somewhat broadened themes consistent with the new academy structure have been approved. Bruce Dorminey suggested holding a "workshop" session bringing in more viewpoints, perhaps with an edge, that would permit a more open, roundtable type of discussion. This interaction would bring about a different way of getting to know each other, and would facilitate exchanging ideas and producing new results. Malina said this could be set up as a 3 year study group and fit very well with new academy activity. Almar said this is easy to do if

it does not go into the official program. If it needs to be in the program, then we need to go through the formal process to have it established. ACTION: Dorminey and any others who have roundtable discussion topics should write them up and submit to Chairman Shostak and he will attempt to organize them in an informal mode.

Maccone presented to the IAA in March the Lunar Far Side Study. It was accepted, and is currently under peer review. Maccone asked whether we should have anything in Vancouver about the Lunar Far Side. He also pointed out that Jill Tarter has discovered a comparable paper in a cosmic study by Wes Huntress. The Huntress group contemplates NASA setting up a large space station there as a departure base for future interplanetary exploration missions. Maccone has discussed with experts that the conflict can be avoided by putting up a shield. However, Huntress now says there is no conflict because their study now is contemplating using the Sun-Earth, rather than the Moon-Earth L2 Lagrange point. Shostak asked if this is worthy of a plenary session in Vancouver? Dorminey suggested that this could be pursued with people who want to go the Moon for commercial purposes, for sample return purposes, etc. In other words, involve others who want to go there for other reasons, and get all to participate in sessions. ACTION: Claudio will write up something to propose for Vancouver and get it to Shostak who will try to get consideration for Vancouver.

Almar points out that both of the above ideas need to be discussed with the Chairman of Commission 1 (Wenzel), who is critical to any such things happening. Especially for a plenary. We need to keep in mind that IAA offers only one, or at the most two plenaries, so it is difficult to get. Ollongren knows Wenzel well, and can speak to him about this.

4A. Malina pointed out that proposals for IAC Japan 2005 need to be in to the Academy by January, and thus need to be discussed today. Roger would like to resign as coordinator of the symposiums and this presents an opportunity for someone else to get involved and work with Vakoch as co-chair. It is critical that these people chase down the sessions in the March meeting. Almar predicts that there will not be a problem in March because there is a desire to have more science participation, and SETI stands well there. We need someone to fill this role. Paul Shuch volunteered. Malina pointed out this is possibly a modest problem because both coordinators would be American.

There are only two Study Groups in Commission 1. Malina pointed out that it is best to have the overall proposal come from Commission 1 and be supported by Commission 6. Dick Carrigan asked about why we do not have a SETI-specific session. Malina indicated that the Academy will endorse separate meetings of a discipline if there is a need and you have 50 or 60 participants. Carrigan pointed out it would be ideal to have these hosted by institutions that are doing the work, just as occurs in particle physics where meetings occur at locales that have accelerators.

10. Almar pointed out that SETI as a whole belongs to Commission 1. It is also an open question from the Chairman of Commission 1 as to why we are a permanent study group. Malina pointed out that the three year terms of reference for a study group is not a problem for SETI because we have rotating three year goals. We can easily meet the standards. Almar provided historic background where he and Jill Tarter were concerned about the change because SETI is interdisciplinary. The academy accepted the fact that SETI is different because it spans multiple disciplines. Now SETI is represented in Commission 6 at the highest level because Almar is Chair and Malina is vice-chair.

Final decision is a strong vote of support to continue active participation in the Academy.

5. Review of Terms of Reference of SETI Permanent Study Group. Agreed that we need to address these to correct inaccuracies.

9. Lunar SETI study group - Maccone made an argument to continue this effort because several countries are planning Moon missions, and there are also commercial companies planning lunar activities. It was agreed that this task group will need to develop new three year goals, which can easily be done. Maccone described what has already taken place, and will develop these written goals.

The Media and Education task group has been abolished, and Oliver has the lead in activities that used to be in their purview.

Regarding the post detection science and technology task group - Ray Norris has agreed to continue as Chair of this group. One of the functions of this group is to have an established stable of experts available to evaluate any SETI detections. This also includes developing Academy process or role in the implementation of the RIO scale. Media relations can also be included here.

Regarding the task group charged with making policy concerning transmissions from Earth, Fasan reported on Jill's presentation to the U.N. Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Patty Stearn has done some valuable work on amending the protocol. There is continuing work to be done under the chairmanship of Michael Michaud with Vakoch and Fasan assisting. There is a clear and very well defined task for this group and it will continue.

15. Ivan Almar commented on the Rio Scale. This numerical estimate of the credibility and importance of any claimed detection was first presented in Rio by Almar and Tarter. The follow-up occurred in 2001 at the Toulouse conference. In 2002, at Houston, a paper with version 1.1 was presented and some difficulties were pointed out. Almar now has an amended version 1.2. Almar suggested the following actions: (1) That the SETI Permanent Committee supports the use of the present version of the Rio Scale (as accepted by the authors in a draft paper, and sometimes referred to as version 1.2) in all relevant cases. (2) The new version should be published in a refereed journal and made available on the Web.

A move to endorse the current version of the Rio Scale was made by Shuch, 2nd Fasan: Vote in affirmative, one opposed.

ACTION: Shostak to convey this committee decision to the Academy and encourage them to use the Rio Scale if they are called upon to deal with a purported SETI signal. This should lead to the Academy causing it to be peer reviewed.

12. There is a very long delay in papers presented here making their way to publication. Shostak will be in contact with the correct persons to push on this issue. Howard suggested a SETI preprint server. This may raise issues with Academy policy.

13. Membership: Because there was a re-set of appointments when the permanent study group was formed, no existing members will be rotating off this year. Nominations for new members were: Don Tarter, Jader Monari, Andrew Howard and Jason Gallicchio. Moved Vakoch, 2nd Fasan. Passed unanimously.

16. Shuch proposed a joint meeting with SETI League and the Academy next year. He will write this up and Shostak will circulate to members for consideration.

17. Motion to adjourn was passed unanimously.

Submitted by Tom Pierson.