

Minutes

IAA SETI Permanent Committee
09:00 to 11:00 hours Wednesday, October 6, 2004
Gazebo 1, Pan-Pacific Hotel
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Attendees:

- Seth Shostak - Chair
- Claudio Maccone - Co-Chair
- Michael Michaud
- Robert DeBiase
- Allen Tough
- Paul Shuch
- Steven Dick
- Paulo Musso
- Alexander Olongren

Guests:

- Cathy Rand
- Lori Walton
- Yvan Dutil
- Richard Carrigan

In the absence of Secretary, Guillermo Lemarchand, Ms Lori Walton was asked to take minutes of the meeting.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from Bremen meeting

Moved, seconded and approved.

2.a. Resignation of Carol Oliver

S. Shostak reiterated the recent resignation of Ms Carol Oliver as Co-Chair to this Group, and expressed appreciation for the hard work and many hours she spent furthering the business of the SETI PSG.

2.b. Nominations for New Co-Chair

A. Tough moved that P. Shuch be nominated Co-Chair, seconded by A. Ollongren.
Passed unanimously

3. Review of the two SETI sessions at that took place Oct. 5.

Reinstatement of Penske Lecture issue

Subcommittee meetings review.

S. Shostak reported that, as of early March, there were twice as many papers submitted for consideration at the Vancouver technical sessions as were slots available. In consideration of this fact, there was no Penske lecture scheduled. Later events proved that many of those originally intending to come to the IAC could not do so, with cost being the overwhelming reason for this decision.

The Chair also suggested reinstating the Penske lecture, as a "big picture" review of events in

SETI, limiting it to about 30 minutes in length

There was general agreement in the group to include the Pesek Lecture as prelude to the technical SETI session (SETI I).

There followed discussion on the "social science" SETI sessions and whether to introduce a special lecture, similar to the Pesek lecture, in conjunction with those sessions and what the title of that lecture should be.

ACTION: Chair will poll committee members as to the name for a SETI lecture focused on the social sciences to be presented in conjunction with the social science SETI session (SETI II).

Report of Post-Detection Subcommittee

P. Shuch provided a review of committee's activities. Informed group about the wiki website developed to serve as an effective communications tool for the Subcommittee. The address of the wiki website is available from Ray Norris, the Chair of the Subcommittee (not attending).

Report of Lunar Far-Side Subcommittee

C. Maccone is the Chair of the Subcommittee and reported that a new Cosmic Study is being proposed that would have a broader scope than the first study. The second study would include the entire moon, as opposed to the just completed study (to be published in Acta Astronautica) that deals with the lunar far-side.

Discussion followed on how to bring this topic forward to the United Nations. M. Michaud cautioned against using the moon treaty as a vehicle to do this. He also noted that there are precedents for the U.N. accepting presentations based on unpublished studies.

Transmissions from Earth Subcommittee

M. Michand reported that the original declaration has been simplified and broadened. The announcement section has been modified to state that, while researchers are free to respond to queries by the media, the researchers themselves should not prematurely initiate an announcement. He mentioned he had few responses back from people on the changes made.

It was asked whether the Rio Scale document should be attached to the declaration document - this was then discussed by the group. S. Shostak commented that he is working on getting the Rio Scale published (the paper was rejected by Science, but has since been submitted to Icarus), which would provide a credible reference for the Rio Scale. P. Shuch demonstrated the Rio Scale calculator on the www.iaaseti.org page on the SETI League website. M. Michaud suggested that the scale be put on more websites - there was general agreement among the group that the scale should be promoted.

R. Carrigan asked which venue would be appropriate to further discuss the consequences of receiving information in the form of transmissions. S. Shostak suggested that the Post Detection Subcommittee should be the appropriate venue and P. Shuch suggested the wiki page as a suitable forum in which to discuss this issue. P. Shuch also suggested that R. Carrigan petition Ray Norris to join the Post-Detection Subcommittee.

A. Tough stated his concern that the declaration is too controlling and excludes the general public and other interested parties from making their own transmission attempts. M. Michaud responded that the declaration is a guideline stating intent only and has no basis in law. S. Shostak suggested that people should be given a last chance to respond to the draft declaration.

ACTION: M. Michaud will send the declaration to the Chair and the Chair will distribute to everyone for further discussion and comment.

4. Website

P. Shuch reported on the web site for the SETI Permanent Committee (iaaseti.org). The SETI League's three-year term as web site host is complete. He outlined the duties of the webmaster and emphasized the difficulty of getting material. S. Shostak stated that P. Shuch has done an excellent job of maintaining the site.

DECISION: P. Shuch will continue to act as web master for the site for another year, subject to his time availability. The issue will be revisited in a year.

5. Publication of Papers from past IAC's

S. Shostak explained that the delay in publishing SETI papers was turning into a serious problem and that he has had difficulty engaging the Acta Astronautica contact person, Pierre Marec.

There was general discussion by the group re: various venues available for SETI publishing. It was agreed that and reiterated by S. Shostak that people should arrange for publishing their papers anywhere they can.

6. Continuation of SETI activities within the IAC

- Registration and Travel Fees
- Special Cases: students, members of the press
- appropriate venue for SETI

S. Shostak enumerated the large increase in registration fees over the past half-dozen years, and everyone in the group agreed that the registration fee was a significant factor when deciding whether to participate in the conference. The fee is too onerous for the few days of SETI-related meetings and activities. Of those attending this meeting, all but two had paid the costs of coming out of their own pockets.

Various ideas for ameliorating the high costs of attending IAC's were discussed. Consensus was that there should be a two-tier fee schedule dependent on the number of days at the conference.

The intense effort and history behind the SETI group's inclusion in the IAC's conference was acknowledged, and although there was no call to withdraw from participation in the IAC, a number of troublesome issues were identified:

- delay in publication of SETI papers
- unreasonable registration fee

- SETI was not included in IAA's Cosmic Study

discussion on other venues for SETI meetings. P. Shuch mentioned the SETI Con and EuroSETI meetings which he organized.

7. Inclusion of SETI in the IAA's Cosmic Study

S. Shostak explained that the IAA Cosmic Study includes the search for life in the solar system and beyond, but totally excludes any mention of SETI.

The group agreed that this was inexplicable.

The Chair will petition Wes Huntress again, to see if this can be remedied.

7.5 Additional Agenda Item - SETI League conference in Europe

P. Shuch stated that the SETI League had wanted to sponsor a conference in Europe and sought IAA's agreement for the conference to be included in their calendar and for the use of the IAA logo on the conference program. With no response from the IAA, the SETI League went ahead with EuroSETI anyway. Shuch thought this was a missed opportunity for the IAA to have participated in a worthwhile technical conference.

S. Shostak explained that this request was not endorsed by the Chair as he felt that it was not something that the Permanent Study Group as a body had decided upon.

8. New Business

None

9. Membership Changes

ACTION: Chair will e-mail those members who have not attended meetings for three years, or contributed through other means and ask if they want to stay active. If not, then the members will be removed.

Motion by S. Shostak to accept Yvan Dutil as a member. This was seconded by A. Ollongren. Unanimously passed.

Motion by P. Shuch to nominate R. Carrigan as a member. Seconded by A. Tough. Unanimously passed

Motion by A. Tough to nominate L. Walton as a member. Seconded by P. Shuch. Unanimously passed.

Question on nomination of Greg Matloff - S. Shostak said that Greg Matlone would have to email him stating his desire to be nominated to the committee.

At this point in the meeting, a special guest, Jean-Michael Contant, the Secretary General of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) was brought in by C. Maccone. Several of the more important issues for the SETI PSG were then raised with him.

Registration Fees

S. Shostak brought up issues of unreasonable registration fees and publication delays

J.-M. Contant replied that the IAA has no control over the fees and in fact sympathizes with our views. The registration fee income is divided between the local organizing committee and the IAF. He suggested that we meet before the sessions; however S. Shostak stated that at this time the SETI group prefers to remain as part of the main conference, and that there would be little incentive to pay the expenses of travel, lodging and meals to go to the venue of the IAC, but not be part of it.

J.-M. Contant suggested that the SETI group write to him on the issue of the registration fees and he will relay the letter to the IAF. He said to encourage other groups to write. He also suggested speaking out during the General Assembly of the IAF and voting "no" to increased registration fees. C. Maccone, who will be available for this Friday meeting, offered to do this.

Publishing

J.-M. Contant explained that the "impact factor" of Acta Astronautica is increasing; the journal is larger than before, the paper circulation is steady and the number of downloaded papers is increasing. Current content is about 2000 pages/year.

Peer review and preparation for publishing is taking a very long time, 14 months on average. They are trying to shorten their publishing time to one year.

He suggested that the SETI group take a pro-active approach: we need to obtain the editing guidelines/publishing instructions from Pierre Marec.

Then we need to request a SETI Special Issue and assign a team of guest editors to gather material for special issues of 10-12 papers each.

The guest editors will ensure that the papers meet the standards of of the Manager of Special Issues, Pierre Marec.

Do not tie the papers to a particular conference, but work on submitting papers for a new special issue every 8-10 months.

In addition, J.-M. Contant suggested that we need to submit information on the membership of the Study Group and the various subcommittees (or task groups?) directly to the IAA in order to get formal approval of the membership.

We also need to ensure we have proper minutes and a formal record of discussions.

P. Shuch asked if the information on the existing iaaseti.org web site was adequate, and whether the IAA's web site could not simply link to it, and J.-M. Contant said no - the membership information and names of subcommittees has to be submitted separately.

J.-M. Contant also stated he is aware that SETI was not included in the Cosmic Study and suggested a formal request from the Chair be made to rectify this.

ACTION: The Chair is to draft a formal request to be sent to J. Contant that SETI be included within the Cosmic Study. The request must be sent by October 13.

J.-M. Contant offered to help organize and administer an independent SETI conference in France.

S. Shostak thanked study group members for their attendance, and J.-M. Contant's helpful suggestions, and then made a motion to adjourn, which was passed unanimously.