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Society Business

The 74th Meeting of the Council of the ASA

The 74th Meeting of the Council was held in the Science Foundation Council Room of the School of Physics at the University of Sydney on 8 December 1997. The meeting opened by discussing the on-going question of income tax deductibility for the Society. Discussions with the Macquarie University Foundation for Astronomy revealed some difficulties in placing donations made to the ASA with the Foundation. The issue remained unresolved.

The Council approved a list of six new members, including three Associate members. The Astronomical Society of Western Australia had approached the ASA to join as an Associate member, however it was suggested that a new category of Associate Society membership would be more appropriate and Marc Duldig agreed to draft the necessary constitutional changes.

Two applications of $400 each were approved for student travel to overseas conferences. Polling of the student membership on the progress of this program indicated support for increasing the value of the travel awards. After some discussion of the merits of much higher value awards for fewer students, it was decided to continue the current program but raise the value to $500 with an upper limit per year of $3500.

Treasurer, Doug Milne, reported that the Society's reserves remained healthy. Automatic credit card payments of fees had been made available for 1998.

The Editor reported on the state of submissions for Volume 15 of the *Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia* (PASA) and commented again on the low level of submissions from the last scientific meeting, most notably from invited speakers. Nearly all recent papers were available on the electronic PASA (el-PASA) web site. The Council approved further limited funding for part-time help for the Editor in producing el-PASA. The Editor reported that Professor Jun Nishimura, Dr Miller Goss and Dr Don Morton had all accepted invitations to join the PASA Editorial Board as overseas members.

1994 citation data indicated that PASA had a very low impact ranking amongst astronomical journals. In 1996 its ranking had improved to 24th out of 36. It was hoped that this would continue to improve as the initiatives taken in recent years under the current and previous Editors continued to strengthen the profile of PASA.

A new contract was still being negotiated with CSIRO Publishing for the production of the printed version of PASA. However Council was very unhappy that CSIRO had once again increased the subscription price to institutional subscribers without first seeking Council approval. The Editor and President were to continue contract negotiations subject to a revised budget from CSIRO which contained no budgeted surplus.

Reports were received on progress in organising the 1998 ASM/AGM and Harley Wood School. Also, the University of Western Sydney had agreed to host the 1999 ASM/AGM.

Mike Bessell noted that Interim Standard AS4282 concerned with Obtrusive Lighting had been published and an ACT inquiry into outdoor lighting had produced very good draft legislation. Several observatories had applied for 'designated observatory' status. These were provisionally approved subject to obtaining more information from some of them.

A report had earlier been circulated to Council detailing the activities of Education sub-committee. A report from Brad Carter was presented during the meeting outlining astronomical activities in Queensland. There were also reports from the ASA representatives to FASTS, the NCA, the Antarctic Science Advisory Committee, the Donovan Trust and the Macquarie Foundation. Finally the Council again discussed the Mount Stromlo Observatory (MSO) 'Adopt a Star' program and recommended improvements to the documentation to avoid any mis-interpretation by the public.

The 75th Meeting of the Council of the ASA

The 75th Meeting of the Council was held in the Science Foundation Council Room of the School of Physics at the University of Sydney on 20 February 1998. Income tax deductibility for donations to the Society remained an important unresolved issue. A new model for obtaining tax deductible status was presented, based on the experience of the Microbiological Society. Details were to be sought from the solicitors involved.

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Other continuing matters included the production of membership certificates for ASA members and the search for a new editor for the Newsletter. Several new members were approved and proposals for constitutional changes to allow Associate Society membership were discussed and approved for submission to a ballot of the membership. Honorary Life Membership was offered to Don Faulkner and subsequently accepted.

The nomination of Gordon Garradd for the Page medal was received and accepted by Council. The presentation was later made by the President at the Easter meeting of the National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers (NACAA).

The Treasurer presented a brief report outlining the Society finances. Significant fees remained outstanding, as is usual for this time of year.

The Editor reported on two very large issues in volume 15 which included papers from AAO/UKST and ANUATC workshops. Once again the lack of submissions from ASM invited speakers was raised. It was decided that, in future, the letter of invitation to invited speakers would include the requirement that a manuscript should be submitted at the meeting. Contract negotiations were continuing with CSIRO Publishing.

Detailed reports were received on the progress of the organisation of the 1998 ASM/AGM in Adelaide, with the accompanying Harley Wood School near Gawler in the few days beforehand. A reply was also tabled from the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand (RASNZ), confirming that they would take part in a joint meeting as part of the ASM/AGM in 1999.

An extensive report from the Education sub-committee was circulated to Council. Alan Wright was standing down as chair of the sub-committee and Alan Vaughan was recommended as the new chair, with Nick Lomb as deputy chair. This was accepted by Council. John O'Byrne noted the likely demise of the NSW HSC Cosmology Distinction course which several ASA members and institutions had actively supported. Council resolved to support the retention of the course with a letter from the President. Other organisations whose activities were regularly summarised for the Council reported no substantial action since the last meeting.

The 76th Meeting of the Council of the ASA

The 76th Meeting of the Council was held in the Physics Department at the University of Adelaide on 5 July 1998, the day before the beginning of the Annual Scientific Meeting in Adelaide. The Membership certificates were finally complete and they were presented to the Council. Certificates were to be distributed to Full Members, Fellows and Honorary Members at the ASM, with the remainder to be posted.

Progress in finding a means of achieving tax deductible status was reported by Mike Bessell. Advice from a solicitor experienced in this area indicated that the Society would need to establish a Foundation to handle donations. Bessell was authorised to clarify aspects of the proposal and then proceed.

Several on-going matters were discussed, including the need for a new Editor for the ASA Newsletter and a new Treasurer. John Lattanzio had previously raised the issue of success rates for astronomy proposals to the ARC. The ARC was unable to provide statistics at that stage and Council decided to undertake its own survey of the membership to complement data expected later from the ARC. The question of the MSO 'Adopt a Star' program continued to be of concern to the Council. A letter from James Biggs of the Perth Observatory describing their new fundraising program was discussed. He stressed the differences between the Perth and MSO programs. The Council did not object to the Perth program but did ask to see the advertising and promotional materials to confirm that there was no suggestion of sponsors owning or naming stars.

The Council approved 19 new members, including the Astronomical Society of Western Australia as the first Associate Society member. The constitutional amendments creating this new class of membership were approved by postal ballot, the results of which were reported to the Council and subsequently declared at the AGM.

Council approved the recommendation from the referees that the 1998 Bok Prize be awarded to Malcolm Kennett from the University of Sydney. Another item of student interest was the approval of support for five students to attend overseas conferences.

The President, Treasurer and Editor all presented their draft AGM reports to the Council for comment. The Treasurer also presented his usual report for the Council. The 1996–97 financial year showed a small profit of almost $1800, although several payments were carried over into the new financial year. The budget for the new year projected a $6500 deficit despite a recommended increase in fees—the first since 1993. Council accepted the Treasurer's recommendation for a fee increase. The deficit was due in large part to the payments carried forward and the lack of income from publication of workshop papers which was a significant feature of the previous year.

The Editor reported on changes to the Editorial Board, with Don Melrose and Peter Fenton to be replaced by Lewis Ball and Paul Cally. The improving impact of PASA as measured by the Science Citation Index was again discussed, as was the institutional representation of PASA authors. The latter showed broad support for PASA in

Australian institutions, with a strong international component as well. It was noted that all refereed papers are now available on el-PASA, with abstracts available via the Astrophysics Data Service (ADS).

Contract negotiations with CSIRO Publishing had yet to be finalised despite the fact that the contract should already have been in force. Council approved the revised budget subject to one amendment and authorised the President to sign the contract.

Roger Clay tabled a report on the plans for the ASM/AGM starting the next day. He also reported on the Harley Wood School which had just ended. There was some concern reported on the wide spread of lectures topics relative to the theme of the School. It was resolved that Council should take a stronger guiding role in future scientific programs, while recognising that student organisation of the School was successful and should continue.

There was considerable discussion of matters related to the Australian membership of the Gemini project. Proposals were presented to locate the Australian Gemini Office at either MSO or AAO. Council proposed a compromise solution, locating the office at ATNF since it was the only national astronomical facility, and planned to raise the question at the ASM and the Heads and Directors meeting. There was also comment about the proposal to use the existing AAT time allocation committee (ATAC) for Gemini proposals. While this was regarded as sensible, there were suggestions to alter the makeup of the committee and to introduce external refereeing of proposals.

The Society was asked to supply a representative for the Local Organising Committee for the IAU General Assembly in Sydney in 2003. A proposal for the Society to underwrite the costs of the meeting was deferred for later discussion.

Reports were received from the Donovan Trust and Macquarie Foundation and the meeting closed with discussions concerned with a venue for the ASM/AGM in 2000 and nominations for a new Vice-President.

The 32nd Annual General Meeting of the ASA

The 32nd Annual General Meeting of the ASA was held during the Society's Annual Scientific Meeting. The Scientific Meeting was held at the University Adelaide from 6 to 9 July 1998. A total of 139 people registered, of whom 62 were postgraduate students.

The Scientific Meeting featured 52 verbal papers and 64 poster papers. The prize for best student talk went to Christopher Fluke from the University of Melbourne, while the student poster prize went to Simon Woodings from the University of Western Australia. The 1998 Bok Prize (for an undergraduate project completed in 1997) was awarded to Malcolm Kennett from the University of Sydney, who presented a talk on his work during the meeting.

The 1998 Harley Wood lecture, entitled 'Gamma Ray Bursts, Black Holes and the Death of the Dinosaurs' was delivered one evening during the meeting by Brian Boyle, Director of the Anglo-Australian Observatory. The 1998 Harley Wood School was held from 2 to 5 July at the Roseworthy campus of the University of Adelaide near Gawler. The theme was 'Galactic Evolution and Dynamics' and it was attended by 42 students and 9 lecturers from all over Australia.

The Society's Annual General Meeting was held on July 8, during a scheduled break in the scientific sessions. Copies of the minutes of the previous General Meeting and reports from the President, Treasurer and Editor were circulated to the members. The President reported on the Society's activities during the previous year, notably the increasing profile of the *Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia* as measured by citation rates. He also raised for comment questions related to the operation of the Australian membership of the Gemini consortium. The President closed by noting with regret the deaths of one Society member, Alex Rodgers, and of visiting scientist Gene Shoemaker, who was killed in a car accident whilst in Australia.

The Treasurer gave a summary of the Society's finances and reported that the membership had risen to 371, consisting of 74 Fellows, 217 members, 67 Students, 6 Associates and 7 Corporate members. The 1997–98 financial year showed a small profit of almost $1800, although several payments were carried over into the new financial year. The budget for the new year projected a $6500 deficit, due in large part to the payments carried forward and the lack of income from publication of workshop papers which was a significant feature of the previous year. To keep the deficit to this level, the meeting accepted the Treasurer's recommendation of an increase in fees of 10%—the first since 1993.

The President commented that PASA publication costs were only slightly up in the budget and that the Council was closely reviewing CSIRO Publishing costings and planned to look at the number of institutional subscriptions. Comment was also made on the part played in containing costs by workshops which publish their papers in PASA.

The Editor's report noted that the Science Citation Index ranking of PASA had increased significantly between 1992 and 1996 and it was hoped that this would continue to improve, especially with the success of the electronic version of PASA (el-PASA) which provided the final published version of each paper in PDF form and was linked from the Astrophysics Data Service (ADS). The Editor presented a plot showing the number of authors publishing in PASA as a function of their home institution. Once again

this showed a dominant contribution from overseas authors, but with good support from all across the Australian community. Discussion of the Editor's report concentrated on the possibility of a move to solely electronic publication.

As usual, the outgoing Council had made nominations for each position on the Council for 1998–99. Since there were no further nominations from the membership, no ballot was necessary. The Council remained unchanged from the previous year and therefore consisted of the following members:

President:	Dr R W Clay
Vice President:	Dr M S Bessell
Treasurer:	Dr D K Milne
Secretaries:	Dr M L Duldig Dr J W O'Byrne
Councillors:	Dr M G Burton Dr B D Carter Dr J Chapman Dr J C Lattanzio Dr C H Smith

Dr Roy Allen remained as Donovan Trust Representative and Dr Michelle Storey continued as Editor.

Reported by John O'Byrne