

**Swiss Commission for Astronomy**  
**(SCFA)**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday April 4, 2008**  
**at the University of Bern**

**1) Call to Order**

The chair, G. Meylan, calls the meeting to order at 2:10 pm .

Attendance at the meeting :

Present : W. Benz, G. Beutler, M. Güdel, P. Jetzer, G. Lake, D. Pfenniger, M. Steinacher (guest from SER), and G. Meylan (chair).

Excused : G. Burki, M. Carollo, W. Schmutz, F.-K. Thielemann, S. Udry.

**2) SCFA membership and welcome of new members**

Four new members are welcome, namely, G. Beutler (UniBE), G. Lake (UniZH), W. Schmutz (PMOD/WRC), and S. Udry (UniGE).

**3) SCFA annual report 2007**

The annual report 2007 is available on the following web page of Sc|Nat at :  
<http://www.scnat.ch/f/Netzwerk/Strukturen/Kommissionen/index.php>

**4) SCFA budget**

Although allocated by Sc|Nat, the money corresponding to the SCFA budget 2008 has still to be made available. Then, we shall be able to pay the few already allocated travel grants.

**5) Swiss Contribution to the IAU and letter to Prof. Ott**

After the letter that Prof. K. van der Hucht sent directly to Prof. H.-R. Ott, the latter has questioned the way Switzerland pays its annual contribution, namely, directly through Sc|Nat. In order to prevent any further misunderstanding, M. Güdel and G. Meylan have written Prof. Ott in order (i) to explain how the IAU receives all the annual fees (from country members, not from individual members), and (ii) to emphasize the importance of the IAU for Swiss astronomers.

**6) IAU Swiss members and letter to Prof. van der Hucht**

Since the letter from Prof. van der Hucht suggests a significant upgrade of the Swiss contribution to the IAU (from CHF 15,200 to CHF 22,800), triggered by the increased number of individual IAU members working in Switzerland, M. Güdel and G. Meylan have decided to check the validity of the membership of all Swiss IAU members. A rather long discussion (for the first time at the SCFA) takes place about the rules for IAU membership.

A partial revision of these rules is decided, however, without any retroactive effect. The SCFA then unanimously decided to check the validity of all individual IAU memberships. This will be done by sending to all current IAU members (young, active, inactive, retired, etc...) a carefully drafted letter presenting the financial problem generated by this potential increase of the annual fee and asking each current member if they want to remain a member of the IAU. The letter will be signed by M. Güdel and G. Meylan in the name of the SCFA.

#### **7) Action items from the roadmap : Summer school and Theory institute**

**Summer school** : After discussion, it is decided that George Lake will lead and coordinate the organization of a set of block lectures. He will be helped in this effort by 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).

**Theory Institute** : George Lake explains that, given the history and culture of grant allocations in Switzerland, only a significant (private?) grant of money would give a new momentum to the project.

#### **8) Miscellaneous**

**Astronet** : Martin Steinacher emphasizes the continuing work with the organization of the “Astronet Infrastructure Roadmap Symposium” to be held in Liverpool, U.K. on the dates of 16-19 June 2008. A strong participation of Swiss astronomers would be most welcome. The Swiss Roadmap is currently on display on the Astronet webpage.

**IYA2009** : The new Swiss SPOC (Pierre Dubath, UniGE) has taken up his duties and currently establishes a calendar of events for the year 2009. Gilbert Burki, the former SPOC, will remain active at the level of the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

**Roadmap** : The Swiss Roadmap, distributed early this year, has been well received. Copies are available upon request.

**CHAPS meeting** : It is reminded that the College of Helvetic Astronomy Professors (CHAPS) is still a living entity ! The SCFA is a sub-group of CHAPS and meeting of all the members of CHAPS will be called whenever it is considered to be useful.

**Expensive activities in astrophysics** : The Swiss funding agencies would like to be able to identify the expensive projects in all research-related activities, in order to ask for coordination between all interested institutes. We, astronomers, should be prepared to such early identification, leading to efficient coordination (e.g., E-ELT).

**STC** : The 3-year term of Willy Benz at the STC will end at the end of 2008. It is the responsibility of the SCFA to find a solution. The alternative is simple : either a new term for him or the selection by the SCFA of three names of potential replacement to be proposed to the ESO DG.

#### **5) The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.**