

COMMISSION 51

BIOASTRONOMY (*BIOASTRONOMY*)

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VICE-PRESIDENT
PAST PRESIDENT
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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William Irvine
Karen Meech
Cristiano Cosmovici
Pascale Ehrenfreund
David Latham
Karen Meech
David Morrison
Stephane Udry

PROCEEDINGS BUSINESS SESSION, 18 August 2006

1. Introduction

Commission 51 met on August 18, 2006. President Karen Meech chaired the meeting and there were 16 members present, including Vice President Alan Boss, and OC member David Morrison.

2. Bioastronomy 2007

One of the premier activities of our Commission is the organization of a triennial Bioastronomy meeting. The series of international Bioastronomy meetings has been ongoing since 1984. Bioastronomy, or Astrobiology, is a rapidly growing field, and there are an increasing number of international meetings which cover this subject area. One of the major activities during the past 3 years has been to work with members of the Federation of Astrobiology Organizations to try to reduce the number of meetings by looking for opportunities to hold joint congresses.

Table 1. Previous Commission 51 Bioastronomy Meetings

Year	IAU Sponsorship	Location
1984	IAU Symposium 112	Boston, MA, USA
1987	IAU Colloquium 99	Balaton, Hungary
1990		Val Cenis, France
1993		Santa Cruz, CA, USA
1996	IAU Colloquium 151	Capri, Italy
1999		Kohala Coast, HI, USA
2002	IAU Symposium 213	Hamilton Island, Australia
2004		Reykjavik, Iceland
2007		San Juan, Puerto Rico

To this end representatives from IAU Commission 51, ISSOL (The International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life), AbSciCon (Astrobiology Science Conference), and the NAI (NASA Astrobiology Institute) met in September 2004 to formulate a plan for meeting coordination. The outcome of the 9/04 meeting was an agreement between ISSOL and IAUC51 to hold a simultaneous meetings in 2008 (one year later than the nominal C51 meeting schedule) with some joint sessions at a site to be mutually selected. At the 2005 summer business meeting

in China, ISSOL accepted an offer from hosts in Florence Italy for the 2008 meeting and they invited participation by C51. In spite of many discussions, by March 2006 it was realized that the arrangements would not work, and C51 had to search for an independent venue. Proposals to host the meeting were entertained from: Mexico, Tenerife, NRAO Virginia, Yellowstone, Flagstaff and San Juan Puerto Rico. The selection of the site in March 2006 was based on cost and the availability of the Arecibo facilities as well as a unique environment for astrobiology field excursions.

President Meech described the plans for the next Bioastronomy meeting, Bioastronomy 2007: Molecules, Microbes and Extraterrestrial Life, to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico from July 12-16, 2007. The meeting website, www.ifa.hawaii.edu/UHNAI/bioast07.htm is available for registration, hotel booking and abstract submission. The meeting site, the Condado Plaza Hotel, is conveniently located 10 minutes from the international airport within walking distance of old San Juan. The conference facilities are excellent, with 9100 square feet of space for both oral sessions and poster papers. A block of rooms at an excellent group conference rate is being held until June 2007.

Meech is the chair of the Local Organizing Committee and William Irvine is the chair of the Scientific Organizing Committee.

Table 2. Local and Scientific Organizing Committee Members

LOC Member	Institution	SOC Member	Institution
Jose Alonso	Univ. Puerto Rico	Peter Backus	SETI Institute
Daniel Altschuler	Arecibo Observatory	John Baross	Univ. Washington
Hector Ayala del-Rio	Univ. Puerto Rico	Alan Boss	Carnegie Inst.
Frank Drake	SETI Institute	Nader Haghighipour	Univ. Hawaii
Edna DeVore	SETI Institute	William Irvine	Univ. MA
Sixto Gonzales	Arecibo Observatory	Karen Meech	Univ. Hawaii
Pamela Harman	SETI Institute	Michael Mumma	NASA Goddard
Karen Meech	Univ. Hawaii	Carol Oliver	Austr. Ctr. Astrobio.
Carlos Rodriguez	Univ. Puerto Rico	John Rummel	NASA HQ
Michele Sonoda	Univ. Hawaii	Janet Siefert	Rice Univ.
Melita Thorpe	MWT Associates, Inc.	Thorsteinn Thorsteinsson	Orkustofnun
		Dan Werthimer	UC Berkeley

Irvine reported on the content of the invited speaker's program for the meeting and on the status of the acceptances to speak. The program consists of both invited and contributed talks. The session topics included: (i) Synthesis of molecules and organics, (ii) Comets and meteorites, (iii) Outer solar system, (iv) Mars, (v) Development of cells and complex life, (vi) Life in extreme environments, (vii) Extrasolar planets and habitability.

In addition to the science program the meeting will have a full Education and Public Outreach component, lead by Daniel Altschuler. This will consist of a teacher workshop on Wednesday July 18, the meeting which will offer lessons and materials related to the meeting, as well as the opportunity to interact with meeting scientists. Bioastronomy education papers will also be integrated into the main program. Tim Slater will be offering a course on "Teaching Introductory Level Astronomy and Astrobiology in the College Classroom" to meeting participants with a special workshop held July 13-15. In addition, AbGradCon will be holding a meeting for Astrobiology Graduate students on July 14-15, just prior to the meeting. The early registration deadline for the meeting is set at January 15, 2007, the abstract and travel support request deadline is February 15, 2007, and the program will be available April 1, 2007.

The meeting sponsors include: The Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii, the NASA Astrobiology Institute, NAIC/Arecibo Observatory, Puerto Rico Space Grant Consortium, and the Australian Centre for Astrobiology.

3. Bioastronomy 2011

The idea of holding a joint meeting with ISSOL in 2011 was also discussed. Venues for such a joint meeting need to be solicited soon, in order for a joint venue to be decided upon in time

for the 2008 ISSOL meeting in Florence, Italy. It was decided that the Commission should take the lead in negotiating with ISSOL regarding this possibility, rather than relying on the efforts of third parties, such as the Federation of Astrobiology Organizations, who have offered to help in the past. There was a brief discussion of possible sites for the 2011 meeting, including Lake Baikal, however, given the recent locations of the meetings, a site in the central US or Canada might be appropriate for even geographic distribution.

4. New Members of Commission 51

Twenty new members were accepted into the Commission at the business meeting.

Table 3. New Commission 51 Members

Name	Country	Research Field
Ian A. Bond	New Zealand	Astrophysics
Rolando P. Cardenas	Cuba	Cosmology
MilanM. Cirkovic	Serbia	Astrobiology, galaxy evolution
MariaR. Cunningham	Australia	Star formation
William Dent	UK	Star formation
HelenJ. Fraser	UK	Astrochemistry
Ray Jayawardhana	Canada	Star formation
Charles H. Lineweaver	Australia	Exoplanets
Ian C. Lyon	UK	Interstellar grains
Giuseppe Marzo	Italy	Astrobiology
MarlaH. Moore	USA	Ice irradiation
Dominique Naef	Chile	Extrasolar planets
Ralf Neuhaeusen	Germany	Star formation
Don Pollacco	UK	Extrasolar planets
Nuno MiguelC. Santos	Portugal	Extrasolar planets
PeterJ. Sarre	UK	ISM molecules
MarkR. Sims	UK	Space Missions
In-OkSong	Korea	Astrochemistry
Andrew J. Walsh	Australia	Star formation, Astrochemistry
Wilfred M. Walsh	Australia	Radio Astronomy

5. Election of Officers and New Organizing Committee Members

The Commission elected William Irvine to be the next Vice President and Alan Boss begins his term as Commission President at the end of the 2006 GA. Karen Meech was asked to continue to serve the Commission as Past President, given her institutional knowledge of the Commission for the last six years. One or two new Organizing Committee members will be sought, in order to widen the geographical representation. The C51 membership list will be added to the web pages. C51 needs to broaden its membership among IAU members, and a means to do this needs to be identified.

6. Closing remarks

There was consensus among the membership that our Commission is making progress in addressing the issues of consolidation of science meetings, and that we need to continue to be proactive. The members were keen to more actively participate in the Commission activities, and suggested that there be more frequent communication with the membership either via email or a newsletter. David Morrison publically thanked President Meech for all her efforts on behalf of the Commission for the past 6 years.

Karen J. Meech
President of the Commission