

COUNCIL REPORT

The Constitution imposes a number of prescriptions on Council such as the obvious composition, election procedure and functioning of Council, the last of which reads that Council shall frame an annual report on the activities of Society, which I am now submitting on behalf of Council.

I can confirm that all the Constitutional requirements applicable to Council's activities have been executed scrupulously. Whereas the Constitution calls for quarterly meetings there were actually five Council meetings conducted by Skype voice calls in September, November, February, April and June with an average attendance by 8 Council members and 3 Appointees. These meetings were conducted in a very effective manner because of both well-drafted Agendas from the Secretary and the efficient IT connection skills of Chris Stewart. It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge and thank the Council members and Appointees for the dedication and enthusiastic manner in which they participated in Council meetings and discharged their voluntary obligations. It's a pleasure working with such a bunch of knowledgeable and committed members. Thank you to each and every one.

One of the key reasons for Council's effective functioning is the updated Deadlines list which is forms part of every Agenda and serves as timely reminders of reporting or submission deadlines.

A financial sub-committee met on occasion to iron out uncertainties regarding the crucially important issue of finances. I thank them for giving me much better clarity about the best approaches and generally helped to prevent Council meetings getting bogged down in financial nitty-gritty during Skype sessions. Thank you very much for your help.

A lot of the Society's activities will be dealt with in the Section Reports, but there are a surprising number of activities *not* mentioned in these reports, which I'll briefly summarise to complete a comprehensive overview of the Society's activities.

First among these which is very much not in the "public eye" must be the thorough reviews and updates of both the Communications document, which is an extremely important and useful summary of all Council members' and appointees' responsibilities and recommended methods of execution, and the ASSA website. Monumental tasks both and well executed.

Council is in the process of updating the software required to prepare the Sky Guide Africa South for publication by Struik. Together with MNASSA these two publications give very effective execution to the Constitution's reference to the role of publications to contribute to ASSA's prime objective to "encourage and stimulate the study enjoyment of Astronomy". Both are publications to be proud of and the hours of hard work required to ensure their publication is almost unheralded but most appreciated. Congratulations and Thank You to all involved

An initial initiative to cooperate with SKA in educational outreach was independently initiated with the first of quarterly workshops for all Science teachers in the Overberg region by the Hermanus Centre. SAAO and SKA's involvement should now be easier

to enrol with a successful first round under the belt. This very rewarding activity will hopefully be copied at other Centres in future.

There was an approach for contact from an astronomy group in Namibia and this hopefully be responded to together with an initiative to try to bring all astronomical activities country-wide under the ASSA wing for at least activity reporting.

The drop of the Rand against the major currencies forced Council into revising the annual free subscription to Sky & Telescope for Honourary members to a fixed monetary contribution be applied at the recipients preference.

There were a number of noteworthy projects initiated by Council members:

- ☀ The Big 5 of the Southern Skies project was initiated by the Deep-Sky Director Auke Slotegraaf and is still ongoing. It is a project that cannot be encouraged enough in all observation and outreach activities.
- ☀ Case Rijdsdijk planned and coordinated a very worthwhile Stellar Highway to commemorate the centenary of the discovery of Proxima Centauri in South Africa, with very effective commemorative information plaques and models of the Sun and Proxima Centauri. Well done, Case.
- ☀ Claire Flanagan deserves the credit for initiating an extremely worthy ASSA project for the partial eclipse of 1st September. A sub-committee did sterling work on this project and the ASSA website has an updated and very professional web-page on this project. Thank you for your excellent work on this project Claire, Auke, Lerika, Case, Allen, James and Thank You in anticipation for all everyone who is going to promote awareness of the event and participate on the 1st September, particularly at schools.

Finally, I am ending this report in the same way as Matie Hoffman started off last year. He referred to the Secretary as the nerve centre of the Society, which is actually an uncannily accurate analogy. As the initiator, coordinator, outcomes-demanding follow-upper and, where necessary, nagger the Secretary fulfils in my view the most demanding and arguably important portfolio on Council. Thank you very much, Lerika, for your dedication to ensuring the effective functioning of Council. I frequently used her as a sounding board and always benefitted from her sound advice and experience. I really do appreciate your support over the past year, Lerika, and am selfishly but appreciatively looking forward to more of the same in the year ahead.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Pierre de Villiers

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