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## **ASSA AGM: Presidential Report**

For logistical reasons I have this year merged my Report on Council with my Presidential Address

The ASSA Council's prime objective is to make sure that the ASSA functions as laid out by its Constitution. Over the years this has been up-dated to keep in step with the maturation of the ASSA as its scope of activities has broadened. But what hasn't changed is the fact that the President has to report to ASSA members at the AGM, the Council's activities for the year.

Council meetings were held on a regular basis and usually held a week after a Financial sub-Committee, FSC, meeting, both via Skype; efficiently handled by Chris Stewart and Lerika Cross. As was mentioned last year these FSC meetings added greatly to the efficient running of Council meetings; since the Council consists of 15 members or more – as occasionally a few invited section Directors attend as well.

It is almost natural that the FSC has evolved into a sort Executive, consisting as it does, of the President, two VPs, the Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. They are able to prepare ground for the Council meetings; much work is discussed and covered beforehand by phone and e-mail, an Agenda drawn up, so that when the FSC meets issues raised have had time to be rationalized, these are then discussed

and decisions taken, that can then be taken forward to Council for further discussion and final ratification. This system has enhanced the Council's performance, and I look back on the year with great satisfaction in this regard.

Needless to say, one must never overlook the tremendous input Council gets from its Secretary, Lerika Cross. Hers is the most demanding portfolio, and the smooth running of Council is due in large part to her superb project management skills and experience. The FSC and Council Agendas and Minutes were clear, detailed and reflected accurately the issues discussed; and to be discussed. Added to this was the support I received from my VPs, Chris Stewart and Pierre de Villiers, aided by the financial wisdom of AJ Nel, certainly made my task a lot easier.

A financial issue that is still outstanding is that of the ASSET Trust. I would like to thank Peter Cramb, Tim Cooper and Ian Glass, the trustees, for doing their best to resolve this, and feel confident this will be resolved, probably this year.

A word of thanks must also go to Auke Slotegraaf for producing the SGAS which, besides being an excellent publication, it is also becoming a good source of income for the ASSA, enabling members to apply for funding for special projects.

The ASSA now produces three publications, MNASSA, SGAS and Nightfall, all being efficiently managed by the Editorial Board.

ASSA finances are in good shape and AJ will present his report later. The regular FSC meetings have certainly contributed to the smooth and efficient running of our financial affairs which are being well managed.

Claire Flanagan is looking after two Scholarships; the ASSA and the Cooke Scholarship. Thank you, Claire, for your invaluable work.

Membership Secretary, Wilmi Nel has managed this important portfolio very well. She has sustained a well-structured membership list that makes keeping track of the Country Members easier, many thanks for all your efforts. A problem that has been resolved is that MNASSA will no longer be printed and mailed to country members; it is available in printable A4 PDF and booklet format from the Website for free.

The ASSA Website is functioning very well and constantly updated by John Gill. Many people don't realize how important this is; an outdated site will inevitably contain errors that could be embarrassing

There were three highlights for me this year. The first was to see the spin-off from ASSA Symposium 2018 becoming reality, with several new projects by ASSA members;

especially Percy Jacobs and his spectroscopy, and Dave Blane for his double star observations, both contributing to the AAVSO.

This reminds me, that the next ASSA Symposium, the 12th, is due in 2020. This coincides with the 200th anniversary of the SAAO, and the Royal Astronomical Society, and a theme relating to this could well generate some funding for the Symposium and for getting both local and overseas speakers to attend.

The second was the fact that some of our members were becoming actively involved in international collaborations, for example; Tim Cooper's participation in the Cameras for All-sky Meteor Surveillance (CAMS) network in conjunction with the SETI Institute, and Clyde Foster with the NASA Juno project. Thirdly, many thanks to Chris Stewart, for his efforts in completing the Proxima Stellar highway at the Johannesburg Observatory.

On the downside, there is one problem that will need to be addressed by Council. Each Centre chair is a member of Council and these are expected to attend Council meetings, and if the chair is not available, a nominated representative is expected to attend. One or two centres have not done this for several meetings and I encourage them to do so, and that proper communication with ASSA Council is maintained; essential for the future of the ASSA, and its Centres, as I will discuss later. However I feel confident that this matter will improve this coming year.

Finally I can say that the ASSA is in a healthy state and can look forward to the future with confidence.

*Case Rijdsdijk*  
*ASSA President*

This was followed by a brief PPTX presentation on "The Future of Astronomy" – Globally, South African but with an emphasis on ASSA member's contributions.

## **ASSA AGM: Council and Appointees for 2019/20**

### **ASSA Council**

President	Chris Stewart
Vice President	Case Rijdsdijk
Treasurer	AJ Nel
Membership Secretary	Wilmi Nel
Secretary	Lerika Cross

Council Member	Dr Pieter Kotze
Council Member	Dr Ian Glass
Council Member	Clyde Foster
Bloemfontein Chair	TBA
Cape Chair	Marius Reitz
Durban Chair	Piet Strauss
Garden Route Chair	Case Rijdsdijk
Johannesburg Chair	Carmel Ives
Pretoria Chair	Bosman Olivier
Hermanus Chair	Dr Pierre de Villiers

### **ASSA Council Appointees**

Convener of Scholarships	Dr Claire Flanagan
Web Manager	John Gill
Observing Director	Kos Coronaios
Communications Director	Case Rijdsdijk
Outreach Director	Kos Coronaios
Archivist	Chris de Coning
SAAO Liason for Website	Dr Christian Hettlage

### **ASSA Sections Directors**

A - Shallow Sky: Asteroid, Meteors, Comets, Lunar, Occultations, Planetary, Satellites, Solar	Clyde Foster
B1: Deep Sky	Douglas Bullis
B2: Double and Variable Stars	Dave Blane
C: Photometry, Spectroscopy	Percy Jacobs
D: Cosmology and Astrophysics	Bruce Dickson
E: SA Astronomy History	Chris de Coning
F: Dark Sky Section	Vacant
G: Imaging Section	Martin Heigan
H: Instrumentation and ATM	Chris Stewart
I: Citizen Science	Allen Versfeld

### **Editorial Board**

MNASSA Editor	Case Rijdsdijk
MNASSA Assistant and Layout Editor	Dr Ian Glass
MNASSA Ass. Layout Editor	Willie Koorts
Sky Guide Editor	Auke Slotegraaf
Nightfall Editor	Douglas Bullis
Book Review Editor	Maciej Soltynski

Webmanager	John Gill
Professional Astronomer	Em. Prof Brian Warner
Professional Astronomer	Dr Ian Glass
Professional Astronomer	Dr Vanessa McBride OAD/UCT/SAAO

### **Scholarships Committee**

Dr Claire Flanagan	Scholarship Convenor
Dr Ian Glass	Professional Astronomer
Sivuyile Manxoyi	EUNAWE, SAAO outreach
Maciej Soltynski	Previous Scholarship Convenor
Dr Vanessa McBride	OAD,/UJCT/SAAO

## **ASSA AGM: Summary of Reports**

**Communications** – approximately one enquiry every three days on average was received, with career queries being forwarded to SAAO. Several radio and TV interviews were fielded, notably by Clyde.

**Editorial board** – MNASSA, SkyGuide, Nightfall & Website are competently handled as usual by the team, which lost Prof Feast (deceased) and gained Doug Bullis.

**Deep Sky Section** – Achievement awards for observation were issued to 10 members. 7 members were thanked for their contributions to Nightfall.

**Historical Section** – Archiving and updates to the website are ongoing. An Historical Symposium was held in conjunction with the ASSA symposium in Cape Town, for which the organising committee are thanked. Two historical articles and 3 obituaries were published in MNASSA.

**Shallow Sky Section** – 18 fireball reports were investigated and reported on in MNASSA, together with several meteor showers. Planetary Imaging and international pro-am collaboration on various lunar and planetary topics are ongoing. Martian dust storms, Lunar X & Y features, unprecedented developments of Jupiter's Great Red Spot, and Saturn's lunar occultations received much attention.

**Variable & Double-Star Section** – Eclipsing binary photometry projects were collaborated on, with papers and articles on 4 such systems being published. An exoplanet transit was observed and published on, as part of an 8-country search for habitable exoplanets. Several variable star observers submitted reports to AAVSO, VSS, etc. databases, and talks were delivered. The director continues his survey of Southern wide double stars.

**Astrophotography/Imaging Section** – 4 section members received international recognition for their contributions, both aesthetic and scientifically useful in nature. Astro images of South African origin are shared on Flickr and highlighted in Nightfall. The catchment area for the ScopeX astrophotography competition has been widened this year.

**Citizen Science Section** – This is a new section formed encourage and support ASSA members participating in citizen science projects, and to provide technical assistance to South African researchers who wish to set up their own citizen science projects. It was sparked by Dr Stella Kafka of AAVSO, is supported by Dr Pamela Gay of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific and has attracted the interest of Dr Corlia Meyer of Stellenbosch University. Plans regarding identification of projects suitable for the Section to tackle, are in progress.

**Instrumentation Section** – Activities largely revolve around communication, outreach, guidance and education, plus the important aspect of encouraging people in the pursuit of their personal instrumentation projects. The telescope making class which has been continuously active since mid-1991 still enjoys an influx of newcomers, whilst experienced members are currently tackling ambitious projects such as f/3 paraboloids and high-resolution spectroscopes. Interested parties worldwide receive advice via the FaceBook group. The 18<sup>th</sup> ScopeX event will occur in September.

**Spectroscopy Section** – The objective is to promote amateur spectroscopy and provide support to those who need to improve on their skills or get involved with pro-am activities. As a niche field, participation is low, though some beginners have been attracted and the Director is engaged in high-resolution spectroscopy with home-made equipment. Of the 181 spectra submitted to the AAVSO database from 7 active observers around the globe, 73 were submitted by the Director and they have attracted 179 downloads.

**Cosmology Section** – Whilst the July 2018-2019 has been quiet in terms of scientific discovery, group discussion has been active with about 4 new topic threads per week and interest levels remain high.

**Scholarship Committee** – Two scholarships of R20,000 each are administered. Of 15 applications received, 8 were eligible and both scholarships were awarded. Previous awardees are continuing their studies; one of the 2018 candidates is now registered for BSc(Hons) on Dark Matter.

**Observing & Outreach** – Alerts for opportunities to observe various uncommon or transient events were published, while several reports from the public on sightings (e.g. of meteor/fireballs) were received and routed as appropriate. ASSA Centres across the country have held monthly meetings and (weather permitting) observing evenings, which are open to the public. Live video cover of the recent partial eclipse was fed to Slooh for the benefit of viewers worldwide.