

## Instrumentation Section Report 2014-15

*By Chris Stewart*

Activities of the Instrumentation Section largely revolve around communication, outreach, guidance and education, plus the important aspect of encouraging people in the pursuit of their personal instrumentation projects. There is no drive to formally induct members into the Section; rather, the approach has been to address ASSA members' needs for information on a case by case basis.

In support of the Society's general communication efforts, which equally support the instrumentation Section's goals, the following have been performed and are ongoing:

- Moderate the ASSA FaceBook page.
- Moderate the Yahoo! Group mail lists.
- Moderate the Telescope Making FaceBook page.
- Contributed links and suggestions for website, posted content on FaceBook

The Section directly supports the needs of both ASSA members and the general public regarding construction, purchase, maintenance and use of instrumentation. This is mostly done via the telescope making class, the Telescope Making SA FaceBook page, e-mail correspondence, telephonic discussion, and ScopeX.

The Telescope Making SA Facebook group - whilst distinctly South African - has at the time of writing attracted about 450 members from around the world, an increase of about 160 during the year. This international involvement produces an energetic bidirectional flow of ideas, information, technical assistance and encouragement. Some of the unusual approaches to instrumentation adopted locally and highlighted in this medium, have this year have been favorably received abroad and are starting to be copied.

The telescope making class, which has been continuously active for over 20 years, attracts a steady stream of newcomers to the art, with a good success rate of people finishing their first instruments. In addition, a fair proportion of participants stays on or returns after completion of their first telescope, in order to tackle more advanced projects. Notable challenges currently underway include a 24" mirror and a Yolo telescope.

ScopeX, which grew out of the telescope making class, is currently ramping up for the 14<sup>th</sup> annual event. In addition to the primary goals of general astronomy outreach and publicizing the Society, it provides a platform for the telescope making community to exhibit their work and encourage newcomers to engage in this fascinating hobby. Having a plethora of instruments at one place (both commercial and amateur-built/modified), enables visitors and members alike to see and touch a variety of instruments. This sparks discussion of ideas, approaches and relative merits, enabling people to make informed choices.

To date, no communal projects within the section have been initiated. The Director again asks those interested collaborative development to get in touch with him to discuss.

Chris Stewart