DDA Newsletter #87 - August 2009

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Remarks from the Chair

This is a year for soul-searching among astronomers, with the 2010 Astrophysics Decadal Survey now in full swing and the 2013 Planetary Decadal Survey gearing up. As noted below by our past-Chair, Michael Efroimsky, the DDA has not been as successful as we had hoped in getting a "seat at the table" for the Decadal Survey, but in the process two White Papers were submitted dealing with DDA issues (dynamics and astrometry). I would urge all members to acquaint themselves with these documents, and to take whatever opportunities may arise to advance our cause and ensure that issues of particular interest to our Division are addressed in the final reports of these two surveys.

The change of officers for the DDA on July 1, as mandated by our recently-revised By-Laws, has brought several new faces to our organization, but also several old faces who have returned in new roles. After a twelve-year stint as Secretary, Marc Murison has stepped down to be replaced by Alice Monet. But we will continue to benefit from Marc's long experience, as he assumes a new role on the DDA Committee. Due to unexpected resignations, both the Nominating Committee and Brouwer Award Selection Committee have new chairs, in the persons of Alan Harris and Steve Unwin. Alan, Alice and Steve have all served previously in several roles, including DDA Chair, so we can be confident that these positions are in good hands. 2008/9 was an especially trying year for the past-Chair, Michael Efroimsky, the DDA Committee and for the Nominating Commitee, chaired by Lea Athanassoula, who had to deal with these extraordinary replacements in addition to the regular slate of candidates for election. We owe them all our sincere thanks for arranging such a smooth transition, which probably went unnoticed by many members until the Annual Meeting in May! Thanks also to Ken Seidelmann, who generously took on the position of Acting Vice-Chair last October when Bill van Altena stepped down.

Looking ahead, we are still searching for a replacement for our long-serving Treasurer, Peter Shelus, who has agreed to stay on for one more year as Acting Treasurer. Pete has "owned" this job since 1978, and with the Division's books now in good shape this is an excellent time for a volunteer to step forward. If you are interested, please contact Al Harris or another member of the Nominating Committee.

Lastly, I should point out that, while I also served as Chair in 2004/5, there is no truth to the rumor that in future DDA Chairs will simply be recycled every 5 years!

Phil Nicholson [1], DDA Chair

From the Retiring DDA Chair

Dear DDAers,

It has been another year of our Division's work. As ever, the key event of the DDA year was our annual meeting, which this time was held back-to-back and at the same location with a kindred conference, a Symposium of the International Astronomical Union, "Relativity in Fundamental Astronomy: Dynamics, Reference Frames, and Data Analysis."

Although both the financial crisis and the 2008 meeting took a toll on the DDA treasury, the fiscal discipline wherewith the said double conference was held has reduced the impact. The DDA Meeting shows $1,771.00 surplus, while the IAU Symposium shows $8,986.90. The surplus from the DDA Meeting will, by default, go to the DDA Treasury. At the IAU's kind permission, the surplus from the IAU Symposium, too, will be forwarded to the DDA. All in all: $10,757.90.

This gives me a pleasant opportunity to deeply thank Kevin Marvel and his AAS team, who provided excellent logistical support both to the IAU Symposium and the DDA Meeting, and who applied for it such small charges, that at the end of the day both conferences generated a surplus. Our special gratitude goes to the past Acting Vice Chair of the DDA, P. Kenneth Seidelmann, who chaired the Scientific Program Committee for the DDA Meeting, and also co-chaired (with Sergei Klioner) the Scientific Program Committee for the IAU Symposium. Last, and by no means least, I wish to thank everyone who participated in these wonderful conferences.

Another big issue of the year was the activity around the planned Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey. The DDA submitted, both to the NRC and to the Chair of the Survey, a letter endorsing several candidates who might serve on the Decadal Survey Committee. Unfortunately, none of our proposed candidates was appointed to the Committee. In his polite response to our request, a certain official wrote to me that, "The process for selecting the committee was long and involved many people and much review for balance along many dimensions and conflict of interest according to NRC procedures." To keep said balance, and to avoid whatever conflicts of interest, the Committee was shaped largely of members of the HEAD division of the AAS, with Scott Tremaine being the only DDA member included and with Jonathan Lunine being the only DPS member included. (Although the AAS President John Huchra is a member of all the divisions, I count him as a HEAD member, in accordance with his present research interests.)

If we are to change the tide, we have to become more aggressive in advertising our areas of research, and to explain to our colleagues and to grant-giving bodies and to the general public why our research is of importance to astronomy in general. This year, the DDA endorsed two white papers: "A proposal for a renewed research thrust in Dynamical Astronomy" by D. Scheeres, T. Statler et al., and "A proposal for further research efforts in ground-based Astrometry" by T. Henry et al. I wish to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to these white papers. May I hope that these white papers mark the beginning of a broader collective effort by dynamical astronomers and by astrometrists in the struggle for truly balanced policies, a fairer attitude, and more adequate funding.

On this note, may I wish to all DDAers a fruitful scientific year. If everything goes as planned, our next annual meeting should be held in Boston on 26&nbsh;29 April 2010, and I very much hope to see all of you there.

Michael Efroimsky, Past Chair of the DDA

Approving Latest Revision of Bylaws

The latest revision of the DDA By-laws requires final acceptance by the members of the DDA in order to be officially enacted. The current By-laws and the revised version are posted on the division website. There are two proposed changes, both in Section VI: Election and Tenure of Officers and Committee Members. The first, regarding the term of DDA officers, states: "The term year shall be construed as running from 1 July to 30 June." The second, regarding the appointment and terms of members of the Nominating Committee, states: "[the DDA Chair shall appoint] one new member of a Nominating Committee. This individual shall not be a member of the new Committee of the Division, or a new Officer. The term of members of the Nominating Committee shall be three years, beginning after the meeting at which they are appointed. The longest-serving member of the Nominating

Committee shall serve as its Chair." A ballot is included at the end of this newsletter. Please copy it to an email, indicate whether you approve or disapprove these changes, and send it to the secretary [2]. If you prefer, you may print the ballot, mark it, and mail it to: Dr. Alice Monet, US Naval Observatory, Astronomical Applications Dept., 3450 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20392-5420.

Requesting Nominations for Brouwer award

Nominations are invited for the 2009-10 Dirk Brouwer Award of the Division on Dynamical Astronomy. Each year since 1976 the DDA has honored the achievements of a major contributor to the field of dynamical astronomy, providing the awardee with an honorarium, a certificate, and presentation of an award lecture. The DDA's Brouwer Award Selection Committee invites you to suggest candidates for this award.

You do not have to be a member of the AAS or DDA to nominate. We seek a wide range of award candidates differing in age, gender, nationality, occupation, field of interest, and scientific and technical contributions. The main criteria, which are not necessarily weighted equally, are (a) excellence in scientific research; (b) impact and influence in the field; (c) excellence in teaching and training of students; (d) outstanding advancement and other support of the field through administration, public service or engineering achievement.

You can find more information on the Brouwer Award, the selection process, and a list of previous award winners on the award page [3]. Recent recipients include Victor Brumberg, Simon White, Jacques Laskar, and James Williams. Please send nominations, with a brief explanation of the candidate's achievements, to the Brouwer Award Selection Committee Chair, Stephen Unwin [4].

Preparing for 2010 DDA Elections

This year we want to have a slate of candidates for election prepared as early as possible to give plenty of time for petition nominations, candidates to prepare their statements, the Secretary to get the ballot out, and everyone to have plenty of time to vote. To that end, I hope to stretch the lead time a bit longer than the minimums called for in the bylaws, and have the slate of candidates from the Nominating Committee transmitted to the Secretary well before Christmas holidays, around mid-December. To achieve that, I would like for the Nominating committee to have their "hit list" and start knocking on doors in the next two or three months, by early fall. Thus, with this message I am requesting members of the DDA to either (a) volunteer to serve; or (b) suggest names of possible candidates.

To be eligible to serve on the DDA Committee, one must be a full (not Affiliate or Student) member of the DDA and AAS. An Affiliate member could qualify to run for office by upgrading to full membership.

This year, we need to elect a Vice-Chair, who will then nominally become Chair the next year and stay on the Committee as Past-Chair the year after that, for a total of 3 years' service; a Treasurer, which is a 3-year term; and three members of the Committee, who serve 2-years terms. Terms of office are now tied to the calendar, not to the meeting date, and run from July 1 to June 30.

An important goal in choosing officers is to provide broad diversity in professional specialty, institutional affiliation, gender, age, and geographic location. We are doing well in terms of gender and age among the continuing members of the Committee, but there is possibly some imbalance in the other aspects (the western-most member is in Arizona and there are no foreign members). Here I list the continuing members of the Committee, their institutions, professional specialty, and the offices they will hold in the year coming up for which we are electing new members:

- Phil Nicholson, Past-Chair, Cornell University, planetary dynamics
- Alice Quillen, Chair, University of Rochester, galactic and circumstellar disk dynamics
- Alice Monet, Secretary, USNO, solar system astrometry
- Kelly Holley-Bockelmann, Committee member, Vanderbilt, galactic dynamics

- Marc Murison, Committee member, USNO Flagstaff, coordinates and astrometry
- Monica Valluri, Committee member, University of Michigan, galactic dynamics

If you or someone you know would add breadth to this group, I particularly want to hear from you. On the other hand, diversity isn't everything, so I really want to hear from anyone who is willing to serve or has a suggestion of someone who would be good and might be willing. Please send suggestions to me or any of the other members of the Nominating Committee:

Alan W. Harris [5], Chair
Glen Stewart [6]
William I. Newman [7]

Soliciting Applications for Student Stipend Awards

Every year, the DDA recognizes the talents of outstanding graduate students and recognizes their scientific contributions to dynamical astronomy by providing two "Student Stipend Awards". Each award covers the cost of the registration fee and banquet fee, and contributes significantly to the students' travel expenses. The awards are meant to ease the financial burden of attending the DDA conference and to encourage participation by talented potential future leaders in the field. In 2009, the two winners were Julia (Julie) Comerford from UC Berkeley (advisor: Marc Davis), who presented "The Dynamics of Black Holes in Galaxy Mergers: A New Observational Technique for Identifying Mergers", and Ashley Espy from U. Florida (advisor: Stanley Dermott), who presented "A Dynamical Model of a Still-Forming Zodiacal Dust Band as Constrained by IRAS Data". The DDA encourages its membership to increase awareness about the award in the varied and extensive communities which comprise dynamical astronomy. We will solicit applications for the next awards at the beginning of 2010. Please direct any questions to Dr. Dimitri Veras [8].

Planning for 2010 DDA Meeting – Brookline, MA

The 2010 DDA meeting will take place at the Holiday Inn Boston-Brookline from 25th to 29th of April. The LOC will be co-chaired by Brian Marsden and Matija Cuk, and Alice Quillen will serve as the program chair. Despite the traditionally expensive location, we expect the meeting to be more affordable than any of the DDA meetings in recent years. The well-connected, East Coast location should also make flying comparably affordable for our Europe-based members. The conference hotel is situated in one of Boston's nicest neighborhoods, with lots of dining options and a direct streetcar connection to downtown Boston. Special events are planned for Cambridge, the home of Harvard and the MIT, with generous help from the CfA's Institute for Theory and Computation and other local institutions. The LOC is looking forward to having a big turnout and a great meeting!

Returning to Austin – 2011 DDA Meeting

You are cordially invited to attend the 2011 annual DDA meeting in Austin, TX from 10 April to 14 April 2011. Our hosts will be the Department of Astronomy and the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the University of Texas, McDonald Observatory, and the Space Sciences Institute. The meeting venue is the Sheraton Hotel, with a negotiated room rate of $129/night, single or double occupancy. Located a few blocks from both the UT campus and Austin's Sixth Street, the heart of the live music capital of the world, attendees can enrich both the mind and the soul. Come enjoy springtime in Austin and a temperature range 58F to 79F.
Fritz Benedict (McDonald Observatory)

Regarding the DDA Archives

At the suggestion of Alan Harris, the DDA Archives Committee got started after the 1999 meeting in Estes Park. Shortly after the meeting Alan Fiala and I put out a series of emails and badgered mainly the older members for information that they had collected about the DDA and its founding over the years.

We actually collected a lot of stuff during those first couple of years. We received a description of the

founding of the DDA from Ray Duncombe, which is available on the DDA web site *(* http://dda.harvard.edu/aboutdda/ddahist.html *[9])*.

We even received a picture from the first meeting. With the help of some of the older members we were able to identify most of the participants. But there are still some that are unknown. If you can identify one of them please let me know. The picture itself is embedded in Ray's history.

However, I don't actually keep the archives. Instead, my main job was to collect the the initial papers from members, do an initial sort, and find an archives with professional archivists willing to do the real work. The archives themselves, and probably a much better list of the materials in it than mine reside at the Center for History of Physics at the AIP, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740, (301) 209-3165, http://www.aip.org/history/ *[10]*.

The contact there is Joe Anderson. Fortunately, Joe will happily accept all of the files, preferably with an initial listing, and will take it from there. In fact, he would much rather accept duplicates and take care of them himself than have us do an initial sort and accidentally throw out something unique.

Nowadays, the work of the archives consists of bullying the secretary (along with anybody taking pictures) into either sending me his/her files or getting him/her to drop them off at the AIP his/herself.
James Hilton [11]

(Cut here.)

DDA Ballot: Approval of 2009 Bylaws Revision

I hereby (select one):

(__) Accept

(__) Reject

the proposed revisions to the DDA By-Laws, as indicated in the "2009 Revision" [12] posted on the division website [13].

Please copy the ballot above into an email message, mark your vote, and email it to the Secretary [2]. Alternatively, you may print the ballot, mark it, and mail it to: Dr. Alice Monet, US Naval Observatory, Astronomical Applications Dept., 3450 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20392-5420, or fax to 202-762-1612, addressed to Dr. Alice Monet.

Please return your ballot within four weeks of the date of distribution of this newsletter. Per the By-laws, "The adoption of an amendment shall require the affirmative vote of not fewer than two thirds of the members voting."

Source URL: https://dda.aas.org/reports/newsletter-87

Links
[1] mailto:nicholson@astro.cornell.edu
[2] mailto:dda.secretary@gmail.com
[3] https://dda.aas.org/awards/brouwer
[4] mailto:Stephen.C.Unwin@jpl.nasa.gov
[5] mailto:awharris@spacescience.org
[6] mailto:gstewart@lasp.colorado.edu
[7] mailto:win@ucla.edu
[8] mailto:veras@astro.ufl.edu

[9] http://dda.harvard.edu/aboutdda/ddahist.html
[10] http://www.aip.org/history/
[11] mailto:james.hilton@usno.navy.mil
[12] https://dda.aas.org/about/bylaws2009
[13] https://dda.aas.org