

Report of the CASCA Education & Outreach Committee, June 2007

Submitted by Jayanne English, Committee Chair

Committee Designation:

For clarity about outreach activities, we recommend that this committee be designated the Education and Public Outreach (EPO) committee and that the listing on <http://www.casca.ca/Links/Committees.php> be changed accordingly.

Committee Membership:

Martin Connors (2004-2007), Dennis Crabtree (2006-2009), Michael De Robertis (2005-2008), Michael De Robertis (2005-2008), Bill Harris (2005-2008), Robert Lamontagne (ex-officio), Nathalie Martimbeau (2006-2009), Peter Martin (ex-officio), Margaret Milne (2004-2007), John Percy (2005-2008, past-chair), Joanne Rosvick (2005-2008); Rene Plume is out-going Board Rep, and Mohaddesse Azimlu is the Graduate Student Committee rep.

We suggest that the Board ask for candidates who may be interested in fundraising as well as EPO. The EPO Committee will be meeting at CASCA 2007 to determine priorities. We expect that fundraising will be of primary importance. (The EPO committee members are not aware of CASCA members with fundraising skills.)

Martin Connors has agreed to serve again. Although he is willing to step down if there is someone who would like to join the committee, he has been a supportive member who we'd like to retain.

John Percy continues to act as liaison with Heather Theijsmeijer.

We recommend that the IYA SPoC, currently Jim Hesser, be designated as ex-officio EPO committee member for the period 2007-2010.

A new EPO Board liaison will need to be designated.

Education Coordinator (Heather Theijsmeijer):

At a recent telecon, the Board was presented with material outlining the Education Coordinator's position in detail; it is resubmitted to the Board. Assuming CASCA wishes to support CASCA's education website (CASCAedu) and the CASCA Westar Lectureships, it is critical that this position is retained and supported. From Theijsmeijer's

report below, it is evident that, in addition to high school teachers, CASCAedu is now relevant to the graduate student community who are tutorial assistants, who participate in the front lines of public outreach, and who are our future professors.

We recommend the renewal of this position at least until IYA activities end in 2010.

CASCAedu Website :

These 2 items are in addition to the items listed in Theijsmeijer's report below.

Douglas Scott and members of the EPO committee (particularly Harris, Percy and English) revised the careers page. This page is highly visible, since the career link appears on the home page of our membership's CASCA.ca website - <http://www.casca.ca/indexeng.html> (click on careers). The page has been implemented by Theijsmeijer.

The EPO committee has solicited Michael deRobertis to produce podcasts about the "most vexing questions" in astronomy. These will be posted on CASCAedu and can be linked to or from the IYA website as well.

International Year of Astronomy:

Jim Hesser has been acting Single Point of Contact (SPOC) person for the IYA Canada Committee (IYACC). He has provided a detailed report to the EPO Committee and the Board on the activities since the Calgary AGM; his report should be consulted regarding IYA activities.

Unfortunately a call for a SPOC volunteer via the CASCA email exploder was unsuccessful, except that it resulted in a volunteer for a working group.

Therefore our strategy changed to search for an "executive officer or assistant" to support the volunteer SPoC. English, at the request of Peter Martin, approached a freelance public outreach specialist with an offer for 1 day a week financial support, who declined the specified position but outlined the work he could do on a contract basis. The outreach specialist noted that "... the "executive officer" role for this type of national effort is not something that can be compartmentalized into a day per week. Fundraising alone is a full time effort and requires a unique skill set." English also approached a director of a charity-run cafe with fundraising experience who provided useful suggestions, but is unable to accept part-time employment.

We recommend that the Board delegate a person or team to do grant writing and submit applications to the organizations described below in order to fundraise for the IYA Executive Officer Position and for project support. The EPO committee is not knowledgeable about CASCA members with fundraising experience. Note that an alternative is to hire a professional fundraiser for about 10% of the money being raised. The outreach specialist mentioned above did not include fundraising in the work he would do. Percy and English could explore contacts for professional fundraisers.

We recommend that the Board hire a professional outreach consultant to determine cost of programming ideas which have been ranked highly by the programming committee, according to the programming goals. Budgets for activities (such as "Galileo did it" - look through a telescope - and symphony+art events with astronomical themes) would be exceedingly helpful for the fundraiser.

Additionally Percy has an intern who would be able to work on a document "Canadian Astronomy Education and Public Outreach: IYA and Beyond" to present to potential sponsors. This would be sort of like the LRP/MTR and completed by September 1. However content needs to be provided and this report would not be a substitute for writing grants to specific organizations since submissions required specific packages.

English has provided a few Board members with a list from the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy of appropriate foundations and corporations that fund science outreach projects. Hopefully these can be approached for funding IYA2009 support staff, particularly an executive officer position. Donating organizations require receipts for tax deductions. In discussion with CASCA treasurer David Hanes, it appears that CascaTrust can be used for this purpose since the guidelines support CASCA Education and Outreach committee activities.

We recommend that the Board put in place a reporting structure for its IYA SPoC and IYACC activities that enables donors to receive tax receipts from CASCA Trust while ensuring that the Board has appropriate oversight of IYA2009 activities being carried out in CASCA's name. Note the IYACC, which is a one-time, unusually large outreach activity, can be viewed as an AD HOC joint committee of CASCA, RASC and FAAQ with its CASCA component interacting via the CASCA EPO committee. However reporting to the Board through the CASCA EPO would be cumbersome.

Note that above we also request that the SPoC be ex-officio on the EPO committee.

AstronomyCanada.ca:

Budget Information Document:

In the fall, English created a draft document, for the promotion of the AstronomyCanada.ca site, for use by Coalition members. This document was delivered to the coalition and will be used in their future endeavours to raise funds associated with the LRP/MTR. See <http://www.physics.umanitoba.ca/~english/cascaweb/acca/coalitionbudget3.pdf>

Generating and acquiring content:

Since the government did not support the LRP/MTR in the current budget, AC.ca does not have funds to proceed. One aspect of the site that can possibly grow regardless of funding is a "database" of content, such as astronomy images and articles, which can be accessed when the site does become viable. In order to test whether we can acquire content English, Hesser, Percy and Crabtree are announcing at the CASCA 2007 meeting a contest: THE "STRUT YOUR (SPACE) STUFF" CONTEST. The deadline will be Oct. 10th. Material that is selected (by the end of October) will eventually appear on the website and be distributed to the media.

One of the things that will make this website unique are illustrations and diagrams that explain concepts and phenomena that are associated with the astronomy images and articles. STUDENTS FROM THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, IN AN ASTRONOMY CLASS TAUGHT BY ROBIN KINGSBURGH (OCAD, YORK U.), WILL PRODUCE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CONTEST WINNERS. Their course terminates in December 2007.

Necessities for moving forward:

Many of the website features and activities could be supported by volunteers. However AC.ca should be considered as both method and material to inform and inspire Canadians about astronomy. The "material" component is mainly a monthly package of astronomy image, associated caption and/or article, plus an illustration. This package will be not only posted on the website but announced as a press release. This package generation and dissemination means that the Website Ccoordinator position is critical and needs to be funded if this website is to be viable and alive.

AC.CA Coordinator's role includes:

- find scientists who will produce images and/or articles and facilitate partnerships between these scientists
- coordinate the production of illustrations and graphics which will be associated with the scientists' materials

- facilitate team building between the scientists, image and writing specialists, and any other contributors to the monthly package
- Ensure that all materials are vetted for clarity
- organize a "clearinghouse" of links to other Canadian outreach sites, like CSA, TMT, etc. and establish relationships with the public affairs department/officer of each of those institutes
- coordinate the french (or english) translation of the monthly package
- coordinate any other volunteer activities
- combine the monthly material into a press release
- schedule the releases and post the material monthly on the website
- work with the CASCA press officer to disseminate the monthly press release to the media; work with the scientists' institutes to ensure that each given release has the largest possible impact
- ensure the smooth operation of the the website and that email is regularly answered
- deal with issues of credit and copyright
- find image and writing specialists as needed
- prepare materials for conferences as appropriate

This person is responsible for the day-to-day work in making AC.ca happen. This would be a 1/2 time position.

We recommend that the Board designate funds for the initial coordination of the website. If the "STRUT YOUR (SPACE) STUFF" contest generates a significant amount of good material, we propose contracting a part-time coordinator for 6 months beginning mid-October who will coordinate between the student illustrators (and possibly writing interns) and the scientists. If little content is generated by the contest then this person, who would have a background in astronomy, could search (abstracts, image archives, and news releases) for appropriate contributors and contact them.

Note that the document "Canadian Astronomy Education and Public Outreach: IYA and Beyond" will consider options for funding this project if government support continues to be lacking.

Completing a template of the website structure would also help move the project forward. That is, it could be awaiting a coordinator. We currently have the design for a homepage developed for \$1000 using a team of students called "Plain Design" (see the budget document or poster at CASCA for the look and feel). However the HTML and JAVA coding have not been developed. Although the budget report estimates \$10,000 for development, this could be cheaper if we continue to develop the website in stages, possibly continuing to use students.

The EPO committee requests that the Board allocate \$2,000 dollars for the period June, 2007- 31 March 2008 to permit the Chair to employ student labour to continue to develop an AC.ca website template.

Press officer's report:

Robert Lamontagne will attend the Kingston CASCA meeting. Press releases for the various awards (Plaskett, Petrie, Hogg) were distributed before 23 May along with the announcement for the upcoming annual meeting. An email has been sent to this year's participants to encourage them about preparing a short public-oriented description of their contribution. Hopefully, this will result in a handful of releases.

Robert still manages CASCA's press release website although he doesn't receive many releases from members of our community. Most of the time he simply posts copies of releases (received from S.Maran) which involve Canadian researchers.

We ask that the Board encourage members of our society to make sure Robert receives a copy of whatever releases they have prepared either through their home institution, or in collaboration with international partners.

Report from CASCAedu Coordinator Heather Theijsmeijer:

E-Cass: (regular contributions)
Education Notes
Best teaching practice articles

Conferences:
Abstract/proposal for STAO 2007 (accepted)

CASCA Assembly:
Will give an oral presentation (accepted).
CASCAed handouts for grad and undergrad workshops
Organizing teachers' workshop

Website:
Small updates on various pages due to comments/suggestions
Maintaining cascaed email address

Coordinating the following Casca Westar Lectureships:
Selkirk BC - March
Saskatchewan Summer Star Party (SSSP) - August
Lethbridge - date still to be decided

Summer Projects (The majority of the coordination occurs in the summer.)

Website:

Thorough check for dead links, updating links
Finish Canadian content pages (research, news, facilities,
more astronomer profiles, observatory news)
Expand Canadian photo gallery
Begin Year of Astronomy promotion/awareness
Expand promotion of site: links from related sites, articles, letters, etc.
French unit plans based on new CSA French resources
More resources for grad students - teaching, outreach etc. based on
grad student needs

CWL:
Complete SSSP "transaction"
Finalize Lethbridge details
Begin plans for Sault Ste. Marie/Sudbury
Expand "getting the word out" - articles, etc.
Target regions we don't seem to have reached yet (Atlantic Canada)
and get the word out

Conferences:
Materials to prepare for STAN conference (Oct. 2007)
Materials to prepare for STAO conference (Nov. 2007)

E-Cass:
Continue above work, including reporting on Education talks at CASCA '07

Member's other activities:

Jayanne English:

Co-author on a few outreach posters for the Kingston 2007 CASCA meeting as well as the upcoming ASP conference. These posters support AC.CA and IYA.

English is heavily involved in IYA, writing significant correspondence and gathering fundraising materials.

English recently gave a very well-received talk on image-making at KeyCon, a science fiction convention in Winnipeg.

John Percy:

Served on the Organizing Committee of a two-day session on "Innovations in Teaching and Learning Astronomy" at the 2006 IAU GA; gave an invited talk on "Learning Astronomy by Doing Astronomy", which will be published in the proceedings.

Served on the Organizing Committee of a two-day session on "Astronomy

for the Developing World" at the 2006 IAU GA; gave an invited talk on "Undergraduate and Graduate Programs in Astronomy for Developing Countries", which will be published in the proceedings

Gave a talk on "Education and Outreach for Dark Skies, 2006-9" at the 2006 IAU GA, for Commission 50; it's published on-line.

Gave two 2-hour workshops on astronomy teaching for teacher-candidates at the University of Toronto Faculty of Education.

Chair of the IAU "Exchange of Astronomers" grants program.

Member of the Advisory Board of the ASP.

Member of the Editorial Board of Astronomy Education Review.

Founding chair of the Education and Outreach Committee of the AAVSO; retiring in June 2007 as chair.

Founding member of the Steering Committee of the Science and Technology Awareness Network; retired December 2006. Hosted/moderated Jodi Asbell-Clarke's session at the 2006 STAN conference.

Member of the Advisory Board for "Investigating Astronomy", an NSF-funded astronomy education project.

Primary expert reviewer for the revision of the grade six and grade nine astronomy units in the Ontario school science curriculum.

With undergraduate student Kaushala Bandara (now a grad student at UVic), organized outreach programs for in-residence Aboriginal high school students, and for at-risk inner-city high school students, as part of the University of Toronto Summer Mentorship Program.

Martin Connors:

1) organization of public outreach events, most notably a talk by Ian Shelton in Edmonton on the 20th anniversary of discovery of SN1987A (total 160 people at Telus World of Science), and also events overlapping into the space physics domain

2) development of the Canadian Skies astronomy courseware for the CSA (Heather can give details in person)

Mohadesseh Azimlu:

Submitted proposal of potential activities for IYA based on activities at the University of Waterloo.