

Report of the CASCA Education & Outreach Committee, November 2006

Submitted by Jayanne English, Committee Chair

Committee Membership:

Martin Connors (2004-2007), Michael De Robertis (2005-2008), John Percy (2005-2008), Bill Harris (2005-2008) Robert Lamontagne (ex-officio), Nathalie Martimbeau (2003-2006), 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.

Margaret Milne is no longer at the Centre of the Universe and hence may not be able to make contributions. However we are currently retaining her on the committee until we find a replacement.

No one has been found to be vice-chair of the committee; a couple of people have been asked and declined. John Percy acts as liason with Heather Theijsmeijer.

AstronomyCanada.ca:

Jayanne worked on the AstronomyCanada.ca website. A homepage has been designed by PlainDesign and needs to be implemented in HTML. As is, it is adequate for promoting the future site to both potential funders and supporters. Jayanne created a draft document for the promotion of the site for use by coalition members. However she has not received feedback on this from the CASCA board. An updated draft of the document will be sent to be included with this report.

International Year of Astronomy:

The steering group got off to a very strong start, with monthly telecons, while led by Dennis Crabtree. Currently we are attempting to find a volunteer to take over Dennis's position as International Year of Astronomy (IYA) leader for Canada. An announcement has been sent via CASCA exploder to the membership and we hope to have some responses by the end of November. Jayanne will also pro-actively

contact potential leaders. (Volunteers so far are Phil Langill and Yvan Dutil; regrets include Bill Harris and Carmelle Robert.) We also need volunteers to lead the subcommittees.

Status Report by Dennis Crabtree:

IYA Canada - Status Report

CASCA established an IYA Canada Committee (IYACC) under the EPO committee. IYACC members include representatives from amateur astronomy and other organizations involved in astronomy in Canada. The current members of IYACC are:

Dennis Crabtree (NRC-HIA)

Jayanne English (U. of Mantoba/Chair of CASCA EPO Committee)

Jim Hesser (NRC-HIA/Past President of CASCA)

Peter Jedicke (Fanshawe College/Past President of the RASC)

RŽmi Lacasse (President of the FAAQ)

Louis Michon (Canadian Space Agency)

John Percy (U. of Toronto)

Scott Young (Manitoba Museum/President of the RASC)

Andy Woodsworth (NRC retired - ex-Director General)

The committee has had three very productive telecons and the minutes for the last two are attached. The Steering Committee (above) has formed 4 working groups:

Program WorkingGroup

Resource WorkingGroup

Web WorkingGroup

Media Relations Working Group

IYACC has established a Twiki for internal communications. The group has also reserved the web domains astronomy2009.ca and astronomie2009.ca for the IYA web site.

One of the long lead time projects identified was a series of stamps related to astronomy in 2009. A proposal to Canada Post is needed 2 years in advance and John Percy is leading this effort.

ACTION ITEM FOR THE BOARD: DECIDE ON REPORTING RELATIONSHIP FOR THE IYA2009 COMMITTEE. Given the strategic importance of this activity to CASCA we suggest that the IYACC report directly to the CASCA Board, while maintaining a close relationship with the EPO committee.

Press officer's report:

Robert Lamontagne could not attend this year's annual CASCA meeting for personal reasons. Unfortunately, this resulted in a small number of press releases and poor media coverage during the Calgary meeting. Hopefully, the situation will be back to normal in 2007 since he plans to attend the next meeting.

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.

ACTION ITEM FOR BOARD: Perhaps the Board could 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 Heather Theijsmeijer on CASCAedu:

To match the mandate of the new astronomycanada.ca site, some of the focus of the education website has switched to focus on greater Canadian content, specifically Canadian space technologies and research. This is an ongoing process, with several of the site pages currently being overhauled. The end result will include links to the latest in Canadian Astronomy news, as well as modified "press releases" which can be used by teachers or the media.

On the website, I would like to initiate a contest for a new mnemonic for the order of the planets (since Pluto is no longer considered a planet!). Along with this, I will be putting together pages for teachers and students regarding the new definition of a planet since a lot of students are asking about it. I also quite like the blog on astronomycanada.ca, and would like to start a similar one on the education website.

Speaking with teachers, a popular resource is a question bank that can be used for worksheets or tests, or as review on the part of the students. I aim to put together such a list for the site and have been speaking with Travis about how to make the site more interactive for

users, and hence outstanding, without requiring too much maintenance.

I continue to write E-Cass articles with a focus on bringing best practice teaching techniques to professional astronomers and post them on the CASCAedu website.

I will be presenting at STAO on Nov. 17, and will be at CASCA 07 in Kingston for the Education Session on June 8, 2007. My talk at STAO will focus on Canadian Astronomy resources and cross-curricular links between astronomy and other subjects. I was not able to attend CASCA 06, but did prepare and send out information on astronomy outreach to both the graduate student workshop and the undergraduate student workshop.

Member's other activities:

Jayanne English:

I did a CASCA-Westar Lectureship in the Okanagan in October. The report will appear in E-Cass.

I was co-author on an EPO poster at CASCA and the ASP conference mentioned by John Percy below. At CASCA and at DRAO (in October) I gave lectures on imagemaking to astronomers in order to encourage them to produce public outreach images. (I note that I won 1st prize in NRAO 2006 image contest.)

John Percy:

Attended the ASP (Astronomical Society of the Pacific) conference on Education and Public Outreach in Astronomy, and presented a poster paper on Canadian Astronomy E/PO (co-authors Dennis Crabtree, Jayanne English, Jim Hesser, and Heather Theijsmeijer).

Attended STAN (Science and Technology Awareness Network) on behalf of CASCA; retired from the founding Steering Committee. I will write up a report for E-Cass, but you can already find a lot of the notes on the STAN website:

<http://www.scienceandtechnologynetwork.ca/main/downloads.php>

I will be attending STAO (Science Teachers Association of Ontario);

Heather Theijsmeijer is presenting these on behalf of CASCA; I will be networking. We have in hand about 200 copies of the French version of the RASC teachers' guide to astronomy. I have tried several routes to finding a good home for these, and am still trying.

I am founding chair of the Education and Outreach Committee of the AAVSO (American Association of Variable Star Observers). Among other things, we are developing some excellent activities for schools, which will be relevant to Canada.

I have reviewed the revised grade nine Astronomy unit in the Ontario school curriculum, and am in the process of reviewing the revised grade six unit.

Cascaeducation: I talked with Heather yesterday, and am working with her on priorities.

The ASP has received additional funding for their teachers' newsletter, and will be rejuvenating that publication. Since it's generally relevant to Canada as well, I have agreed to help them promote it.

CWL: There's a possibility that I will be going to Sudbury (Laurentian University, Science North, and the school board).

Let's Talk Science: I could put something together; I know the organization well. There is also Scientists in Schools.

I promise to start working on the proposal for a series of Canadian astronomy stamps for IYA. I have the necessary information, and will send out a draft document shortly.

Martin Connors:

The major development at Athabasca U. is that we have been funded by CSA to develop a distance ed course on "Canadian Skies" which will be a general introductory astronomy course with a very Canadian approach, including sky phenomena of high latitudes, Canadian achievements, broader topics such as auroras. The material will also be available publicly as learning modules.