

Report of the CASCA Education & Outreach Committee, May 2008

Submitted by John Percy, Acting Committee Chair.

This report covers the interval December 2007 to May 2008.

Committee Membership:

Martin Connors (2007-2010), Dennis Crabtree (2006-2009), Michael De Robertis (2005-2008), Bill Harris (2005-2008), Jim Hesser (ex-officio; 2007-2010), Ray Jayawardhana (2007-2010), Robert Lamontagne (ex-officio), Nathalie Martimbeau (2006-2009), Peter Martin (ex-officio), John Percy (2005-2008, past-chair), Joanne Rosvick (2005-2008); Carmelle Roberts is the Board Rep, and Mohaddesse Azimlu is the Graduate Student Committee rep.

Four CASCA members, Jan Cami, Yvan Dutil, Louise Edwards, and Gordon Sarty, have expressed an interest in joining the committee, and they have been invited to do so. Acceptances so far: Jan Cami.

John Percy continues to act as liaison with Heather Theijsmeijer. See attached letter. He is also serving as Interim Chair. His term on the committee expires in 2008, but he has agreed to stay on through IYA in order to provide continuity.

NOTIFICATION TO THE BOARD: The President and Vice-President agreed to arrange a co-chair for the EPO committee; a list of possibilities was provided. However this has not occurred. The chair resigned in early 2008, so the committee is in urgent need of both a chair and a vice-chair.

Meetings and Communication:

No meetings or telecons were held since December 2007; the work of the committee has been done by email.

CASCA 2008 Meeting in Victoria, B.C.:

The education session will focus on informing astronomers on how to do outreach during IYA 2009. Peter Calamai, an award-winning science writer at the Toronto Star, is to be a plenary speaker. Thanks to Jayanne English for arranging this. The rest of the session was organized by Joanne Rosvick.

Additionally we plan to encourage participation in the EPO session by the RASC and FAAQ amateur astronomy societies, who will be represented by Ron Jerome and Remi Lacasse, respectively.

A teachers' workshop is being organized by Eric Chisholm, and his staff at the DAO Visitors' Centre, with John Percy as the Committee liaison. About 20-30 teachers are expected.

Heather Theijsmeijer CASCA Education Coordinator:

A copy of Heather's contract and a very detailed job description has been submitted previously to the Board. At the end of this report we include a brief report from Heather; see our December 2007 for a more detailed report.

International Year of Astronomy:

Jim Hesser has continued to serve as 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 Kingston AGM; his report should be consulted regarding IYA activities. One activity under development is a national lectureship. IYA has also served as a focus for other CASCA EPO activities, such as the education and media websites, as well as lectures across the country.

Jim Hesser and John Percy wrote an article on "Communicating Canadian Astronomy on the Eve of IYA 2009" for the journal *Communicating Astronomy to the Public*, Issue 3, pages 32-33, May 2008:

http://www.capjournal.org/issues/03/03_32.php

CASCA-IYA Lectureship Report:

Plans for this initiative continue to be developed; see the December 2007 report for further details.

Jim Hesser asked former Presidents Bill and Gretchen Harris, aided by Stephane Courteau, to take this initiative to the next stage. Their report fully reflects the vision that the EPO Committee developed in August-September 2007. It has been submitted to the CASCA Board for decisions at their May 2008 meeting.

IYA Fundraising:

Please see the IYA Canada report.

Other Fundraising:

Percy, with input from Hesser and English, and an intern have created a 20-page colour document "Canadian Astronomy Education and Public Outreach: IYA and Beyond" to present to potential sponsors. This document is in support of IYA 2009, the CASCA Education website, and the proposed AstronomyCanada.ca website. This document has been completed Dec. 2007. The document can be seen (minus its beautiful cover) at:

<http://www.astro.utoronto.ca/~percy/finalastrodoc.pdf>

Additionally we would like to raise funds within the CASCA community. Percy and Rosvick have created a suitable fundraising letter, and are awaiting Board approval to send it to CASCA members.

AstronomyCanada.ca:

Please see the December 2007 report for the status of this project, which is designed to provide high-quality images, graphics, and information for the media and other astronomy communicators.

Reports:

Report from the Press Officer: Robert Lamontagne:

- Press officer's preparations for CASCA 08 have been completed.
- Press releases for the Plaskett and Beals Awards were distributed a week before CASCA 08.
- An invitation to prepare press releases for Victoria was sent (twice) to all participating CASCA members.
- A few "CASCA 2008 Science Press Releases" are ready to go out; web copies are also ready.

- I am presenting a talk during the EPO session in Victoria on the use of blogs as a means to reach large audiences.

> Report from CASCAedu Coordinator: Heather Theijsmeijer

CASCA-Westar Lectureships:

- A CWL was recently held in Lethbridge.

Presentations/publications:

- Articles for E-Cass
- Abstract accepted for the Science Teachers Association of Ontario 2008
- Creating new E/PO flyer for CASCA 08 Grad Workshop

On cascaeducation.ca:

- Updates to astronomer profiles
- New page on First-Nations astronomy
- More Canadian content everywhere
- IYA page

Responding to email to cascaeducation.ca

Upcoming:

- Test/update all links on cascaeducation.ca
- Give public talk at Manitoulin Star Party
- More work for IYA
- Promotion of cascaeducation.ca

> Committee Members' other activities:

Jayanne English:

- Wrote contracts for fundraiser.
- Initiated IYA Image Curation Team which is collecting Canadian images that can be used for IYA and elsewhere.
- Raised \$50K per year for 2 years for IYA project manager.

Ray Jayawardhana

- Keynote speaker on ``New Worlds in the Making'' at Starfest, Canada's largest star party, 2007 August 11
- Lectures on ``Unravelling Planets Around Other Stars" and "New Worlds in the Making" on a UofT alumni travel program (2008 April)
- Contributing Editor, Astronomy magazine, on-going
- Shapley Lecturer, American Astronomical Society
 - Shapley lectures in Helena, Montana (2008 April):
 - ``Diversity of Extra-Solar Planets''
 - ``New Worlds in the Making: Birth of Planets and Brown Dwarfs''
 - Live 40-minute interview on KBLL radio Coffee Break program (2008 April 15)
 - Interviewed on 6pm news on KTVH (2008 April 14)
 - Featured in articles in Helena Independent Record and Queen City News (2008 April)
- Youngest scientist profiled at science.ca
- Editorial Advisory Committee of idea&s, the Arts and Science Review at UofT
- Author of feature article on "How the Milky Way Devours its Neighbours" in Astronomy (2008 March issue)
- Quoted in CBC News online article on ``Good Hunting: Spotting Distant Planets has come a Long Way" (2008 April 10)

John Percy:

- Organizing committee for Science Rendezvous (www.sciencerendezvous.ca) which we hope will become an annual, national event.
- Gave workshop on astronomy for 60 BEd students in science.
- "Fact checker" for revised grade 9 astronomy/space units in Ontario.
- Reviewer for astronomy/space unit in a textbook for the above.

Michael De Robertis:

Michael has been working on podcasts related to elementary FAQ's about astronomy, that will be offered to the CASCA EPO website at no cost to CASCA. Scripts have been written, and are now being polished. They will then be recorded, and converted to RSS feeds. Plans are to submit a few

of them to the CASCA EPO committee for review, by early summer. These will also be suitable for use in post-secondary intro astronomy courses.