

COMMISSION 16

PHYSICAL STUDY OF PLANETS & SATELLITES (*ETUDE PHYSIQUE DES PLANETES & DES SATELLITES*)

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PROCEEDINGS BUSINESS SESSION, 13 August 2009

1. Introduction

The Business Meeting of IAU Commission 16 was held at the General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro on August 13, 2009. The meeting was called to order at 9:15am by Commission President, Régis Courtin, with 12 members present. Commission 16 now has 312 members, up from 271 at the last General Assembly. It is now the third largest Commission in Division III, after Commission 15 and Commission 51.

A moment of silence was requested to honor departed colleagues during the 2006–2009 triennium: John Derral Mulholland (1934–2008); James A. van Allen (1914–2006); George W. Wetherill (1925–2006); Arthur C. Clarke (1917–2008); Gordon A. McKay (1945–2008); Steven J. Ostro (1916–2008). A brief remembrance that included slides highlighting each departed colleague was shown, and a few moments were spent discussing the careers of these colleagues.

The new officers and members of the Commission 16 Organizing Committee were then introduced. They are identified at the top of this report.

2. Report from the President and discussion

Régis Courtin summarized the activities of Commission 16 during the last triennium, which included an informal meeting of the Organizing Committee at the 2006 Division for Planetary Sciences meeting in Pasadena, California, in October 2006 to brain storm about the organization of a session for the Rio General Assembly. The idea of a special session devoted to astrobiology and extrasolar planets, in conjunction with Commissions 51 (Bio-Astronomy) and 53 (Extrasolar Planets), was identified. This resulted in the highly successful Special Session 6 “Planetary System as Potential Sites for Life” held from August 10–11, 2009 at the General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro. The session was highlighted on the front page of the *Estrela D’Alva* (the Morning Star), the daily newspaper of the General Assembly. The session consisted primarily of invited talks (22) and oral contributions (4), so many requests for oral talks were moved to the poster session (40).

Commission 16 was also at the origin of a lunch presentation of the IAU activities, specially those of Division III, during the Division for Planetary Sciences meeting held in Ithaca, NY, in October 2008. It was noted that the high number of new Commission members is probably a result of this initiative.

It was suggested during the discussion that in the future, it would be helpful and appropriate to give the posters some devoted time, perhaps either by having one person read the posters and review them during the oral session, or allowing each poster author to present one viewgraph during the oral session. The group also discussed ideas for a Special Session, Joint Discussion, or Symposium for the next General Assembly, which will be held August 20–31, 2012 in Beijing, China. It was noted that at this General Assembly the “Ices Bodies of the Solar System” was a 5 day Symposium sponsored by Division III. Ideas suggested included a theme of “Giant Planets to Exoplanets to Brown Dwarfs”; the Moon; or Binary Systems (including binary asteroids) in conjunction with Commission 15. The group endorsed the plan to hold another informal meeting of the Organizing Committee at the Division for Planetary Sciences meeting in Pasadena in 2010 to further flesh out potential ideas for a session in Beijing.

The group considered briefly a request from Professor R-M. Bonnet, the President of COSPAR, to Professor Karel A. van der Hucht, the General Secretary of the IAU, inviting IAU sponsorship of several special events (sessions) of the COSPAR Scientific Assembly and Associated Events to be held in Bremen, Germany, 18–25 July 2010.

A request was made during the meeting to post the Commission 15 membership list on the Commission web page.

The group also discussed possible actions that the Commission could undertake during the next triennium. Suggestions included the integration of the Working Group on Natural Satellites led by Jean-Eudes Arlot. It was noted that many small satellites that are discovered are subsequently lost; it would be helpful to support increased efforts not to lose them after discovery. A Working Group on Modeling Planets and Collecting Data, with a web page and links, was also suggested.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15am.

Régis Courtin
President of the Commission