

ATNF ATUC Memorandum

To: ATUC
From: Jessica Chapman
Date: 25 November 2004
Subject: National Facility Report

1. TAC statistics and processes

As requested by ATUC, TAC statistics are provided on the ATNF website at the address

<http://www.atnf.csiro.au/observers/tacstats>.

Detailed statistics are also provided in the ATNF annual reports.

The 2004 OCTS currently underway is the first full six-month semester. For this semester, 95 proposals were received for the ATCA, 30 for Parkes, two for Mopra, five for VLBI and one for Tidbinbilla. For the ATCA the oversubscription rate of 1.8 was fairly high, but lower than the exceptionally high rate of 3.0 for the previous winter term when millimetre facilities were available (plots C1 – C3 on the above web page). The oversubscription rate for Parkes was ~ 1.1 . The average oversubscription rate for Parkes has been fairly constant over the years 2000 – 2004 (plot P2).

Typically 40% of scheduled time is allocated to proposals with overseas PIs with the other 60% allocated to proposals with PIs at the ATNF and other Australian institutions. In 2004 the allocation of time to proposals with PIs at other Australian institutions was lower than in previous years, with an allocation of 15% for the ATCA and 22% for Parkes.

The number of ATNF publications for 2004 is exceptionally high. For 2004, at least 120 papers with ATNF data have been published in refereed journals. This number is a lower limit for the calendar year, with an expected total of at least 130. This compares to 103 National Facility papers for 2003.

For the 2004 December meeting the TAC members will be Lister Staveley-Smith (acting chair), Wilfred Walsh, Anne Green, Simon Johnston and Ravi Subrahmanyam. Members are selected by the Steering Committee to cover a broad range of astronomical expertise and geographical distribution. The TAC now uses a triage system that has been found to be very effective. Following feedback from ATUC, the TAC attempted to improve the comments sent out after the previous meeting for the 2004 OCTS.

2. Australia Telescope Online Archive

We have developed a system called the ATOA (Australia Telescope Online Archive) to allow users direct access to the Compact Array archive data files. The ATOA was initially set up as a collaborative project between ATNF and the ICT Centre in Canberra with the data files installed in Canberra. To facilitate the querying of data files, metadata is extracted from the RPFITS file headers and stored in an Oracle database together with other information.

In August 2004 a decision was made by the ICT Centre to withdraw support for the ATOA. The ATNF then decided to transfer the full system, including the data files to the ATNF Marsfield.

Over the last three months, we have transferred all the data file to the ATNF in Marsfield and have installed the hardware and software that will allow users to access the files. This includes 'standard' data access for data that was taken at least 18 months ago with access and downloading of files via an easy-to-use web form. We are also providing access to 'own' data by allocating a project-based password on request to the PIs, for projects observed within the most recent 18 months. The project-based passwords will be sent by email following entry of a web request form.

At the time of writing the ATOA is being tested and is due for public release by end-November. I would like to thank Christopher Owen and Vince McIntyre especially for their successful work on this project and Peter Lamb, Rob Power & Colleagues in Canberra for setting this up initially.

RPFITS metadata

The ATOA system will later be connected to the pipeline data reduction system currently being developed by Tara Murphy (see separate report from Neil Killeen). To facilitate the retrieval of data and the pipeline data reduction, some additional information is now written to the RPFITS file headers. Other changes to the RPFITS headers have been suggested but not yet implemented. In particular it would be helpful to modify the scheduling program, *sched*, so that observers are required to enter and distinguish between the different types of calibrator observations (phase, bandpass, flux). Multiple calibration categories could be used for a single source.

3. Electronic Proposal System

The ATNF plans to replace the current antiquated proposal system with a new fully electronic proposal system from June 2005. The start date for work on this project has been delayed due to the transfer of the ATOA system from Canberra to Marsfield described above. We now plan to begin work on the specification statement in December 2004. The release date is unchanged. ATUC will be consulted on the specifications for the EPS once this is underway.

4. Outreach Report

Public outreach continues to have a high priority with many outreach activities held since the last ATUC meeting. Some recent highlights include:

Sport in Space Competition – for National Science Week – August 2004

For this competition we received nearly one hundred entries from primary and high school students from across Australia. The three winners (for different age categories) were taken on a trip to Parkes where they had an extensive tour of the telescope and a wonderful time.

Parkes Open Day 28 – 29 August 2004

The Parkes Observatory received around 1150 visitors during an open weekend in August. The weekend was a great success and it is clear that Open Days at the Observatories are a highly effective form of outreach.

Outreach website

The new ATNF Outreach and Education website (<http://outreach.atnf.csiro.au>) is having an impact on the teaching of astronomy to senior students in Australian High Schools. The site provides extensive material for high school teachers and their students and now includes all of the content needed for the Astrophysics option (9.7) in the NSW Stage 6 (HSC) Physics syllabus. Teacher feedback has been highly positive and the site, which also includes content for media and the general public, will be submitted for an international Webby Award.

The development of an outreach website and the provision of HSC content were both key objectives discussed at the ATUC November 2003 meeting. It is good to see that these have been achieved within a year.

ATNF calendar

In place of a Xmas card, we have produced an ATNF 2005 calendar which has been posted to colleagues and partners. Copies can be bought locally from Vicki Drazenovic.

Narrabri Visitors Centre Redevelopment

Plans for the redevelopment of the Visitors Centre at Narrabri are progressing well. Following a call for expressions of interest, we have now signed a contract with a company called Convergence Design. In consultation with ATNF staff, Convergence will design and build new displays and exhibits for the grounds of the visitors centre. Convergence, based in Melbourne, specialise in the development of displays for museums and visitors centres and were involved with the development of the Energy Technology exhibit for CSIRO Discovery featured in Monday Mail on the 15 November (<http://www.csiro.au/mailarchives/csiro-all/msg00342.html>).

Advice sought

- ATUC is asked whether it would support modifications to the *sched* program so that observers are required to enter and distinguish between the different types of calibration observations (phase, bandpass, flux).
- ATUC is asked to comment on whether there has been any improvement in the response from proposers to the last round of TAC comments.