

ATNF ATUC MEMORANDUM

To: ATUC
From: Jessica Chapman
Date: 6 June 2005
Subject: National Facility Report

1. TAC information

TAC statistics

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 ATNF annual report for 2004 is now available on the web. Hard copies will be distributed around mid-June.

In 2004 111 papers with ATNF data were published in refereed journals, 76 papers with ATNF data were published in conference proceedings and 79 other papers were published by ATNF staff,

TAC members

For the 2005 July meeting, John Dickey joins the TAC as the incoming Chairman and replaces Lister Staveley-Smith. The other TAC members will be Wilfred Walsh, Anne Green, Simon Johnston, Paul Francis and Ravi Subrahmanyam.

Observers web pages

A new web page at

http://www.atnf.csiro.au/observers/tools_all.html

provides a summary of links to observers archives, web-based tools and other information. This includes a link to a new page with information on the SCHED program at

<http://www.narrabri.atnf.csiro.au/observing/sched/>.

TAC deadlines

Following ATUC comments, to shorten the time interval between proposal submissions and notification of TAC outcomes, the deadlines for telescope applications have been moved by two weeks, from June 1 and Dec 1, to June 15 and Dec 15 respectively. The semester dates are unchanged.

The notification of TAC outcomes is now sent by email to the contact person on each proposal. Following the release of OPAL (see below) all TAC outcomes will be emailed to all proposers with given email addresses.

2. OPAL

OPAL (Online Proposal Applications and Links) is a new web-based application that will replace the current system for telescope proposal submissions. OPAL will provide a set of web-based tools to help astronomers prepare and submit their telescope proposals and will also provide additional facilities for administrators, TAC members and telescope schedulers. It is intended that OPAL will be fully in use in time for the application deadline on 15 December 2005.

OPAL is currently being developed and has so far met the project milestones. An initial user-specification document was released in March 2005. This was extensively reviewed and many helpful comments were provided by ATUC members and other telescope users. A revised specifications document which incorporates this input, was released in May. This is available at

<http://www.atnf.csiro.au/computing/web/opal/opal-requirements.pdf>

We plan to complete the software coding for OPAL in July and will then spend several weeks, in consultation with expert and non-expert users, testing OPAL for robustness and for user acceptance. The deadline for a public release of OPAL is 06 September.

3. ATNF outreach and education

Teachers Workshops

Two successful workshops for teachers were held recently by ATNF. *Astrophysics for Physics Teachers* was a one-day workshop for teachers of HSC Physics held at Marsfield on Saturday 5 March. Twenty-one teachers participated and heard talks on cosmology and stellar evolution from ATNF and AAO staff. The annual *Astronomy from the Ground Up!* workshop was held at Parkes over 13 -15 May in glorious sunny weather and was attended by 24 teachers. Two staff members from the Visitors Centre also attended.

ATNF in conjunction with the Western Australian Office of Science and Innovation, Scitech in Perth (an organisation that promotes science education in WA) and the Science Teachers' Association of WA offered a scholarship to fund a WA teacher to the Parkes workshop. The quality of the applicants was very high and two teachers were given scholarships. Both gave interesting talks to the other teachers about ways to teach astronomy in the classroom.

We are pursuing plans to hold a teachers workshop in Geraldton in October or November 2005. This will be held in collaboration with Scitech and local teachers. We are also exploring a grant proposal to support the teaching of astronomy in schools located in the SKA region.

Feedback on the outreach and education website continues to be very positive. New content for the year-11 syllabus, *The Cosmic Engine*, has recently been released.

Narrabri Visitors Centre Redevelopment

Plans for the redevelopment of the Visitors Centre at Narrabri are progressing well. The detailed design work for the new exterior exhibits has now been completed by *Convergence Design*, in consultation with ATNF staff. Construction work is expected to begin in June and the on-site installation to be completed by early September.