

COMMISSION 51: BIOASTRONOMY
BIOASTRONOMIE

PRESIDENT (ACTING): J. C. Tarter

Report of Meetings at The Hague: August 1994

Session I

23 August 1994

0900 - 1030

BUSINESS MEETING

Because the Commission President, Dr. Ron Brown, was unable to attend the General Assembly, both business meetings of Commission 51 were presided over by Commission Vice President, Dr. Jill Tarter, acting as President.

1. Restructuring. The EC proposal for restructuring of Commissions, by affiliating them with larger Divisions was extensively discussed. The proposal for Commission 51 to become part of Division 9: Interdisciplinary, along with Commission 14: Atomic and Molecular Data and Commission 41: History of Astronomy did not receive unanimous support. The primary objections were that it is unlikely that this association would lead to any jointly sponsored Colloquia, Symposia or Joint Discussions by the three Commissions and further that during those triennia when the President of the Division was the President or past-President of one of the other two Commissions, then Commission 51 would not have a spokesperson very familiar with its requirements in dealings with the EC. Several members urged that Commission 51 should decline to join any Division (an option being considered by Commission 41). However on the basis of what is believed to be the second phase of the restructuring, where Division Presidents will become the members of the EC, those members present agreed to the suggestion of joining Division 9. In that way, at least once every three triennia, Commission 51 will have direct representation on, and influence with, the EC. A letter to the EC was prepared that summarized the Commission position. During the second meeting of the Commission Presidents this plan was overtaken by events. At that time Commissions 14 and 41 both requested to be allowed to become Commissions of the EC and part of no Division. Commission 14's request was granted, but not that of Commission 41, which subsequently decided to refrain from joining any Division. Pending approval during the second business meeting of Commission 51, I suggested that the name of Division 3 be changed from Solar System to Solar Systems, and that Commission 51 join Commissions 15: Physical Study of Comets, Minor Planets & Meteorites, 16: Physical Study of Planets & Satellites, 20: Positions and Motions of Minor Planets, Comets & Satellites, 21: Light of the Night Sky, and 22: Meteors and Interplanetary Dust. The rationale being that Commission 51 has interests in all these topics and how they might influence the possibility for life in other planetary systems. Members present at the second business meeting subsequently approved this plan of action. Now that the dust has settled, Commission 51 is officially a member of Division 3: Planetary System Sciences. The Division President is Martha Hanner (past-President of Commission 21) and the members of the

Board of Division 3 are the current Presidents of the member Commissions:

- 15: Michael A'Hearn, USA
- 16: Mikhail Marov, Russia
- 20: Donald Yeomans, USA
- 21: Christoph Leinert, Germany
- 22: Iwan Williams, USA
- 51: Jill Tarter, USA

2. New Officers. The following list of officers and members of the Organizing Committee for Commission 51 were proposed:

- President - Jill Tarter, USA
- Vice President - Fernando Colomb, Argentina
- Organizing Committee:
 - Ron Brown, Australia
 - Frank Drake, USA
 - Sam Gulkis, USA
 - Jean Heidmann, France
 - Ivan Almar, Hungary
 - Kelvin Wellington, Australia
 - Alain Leger, France

This proposal was subsequently accepted by the members present. Jean Heidmann will continue to serve as the Secretary of the Commission.

3. 5th Bioastronomy Symposium, 1996. Possible locations for the next Bioastronomy Symposium were discussed. A very professional proposal from Dr. James Biggs, Director Perth Observatory, Western Australia was favored by the Acting President over a last minute, incomplete proposal from Prof. Cristiano Comovici, Consilio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Frascati, Italy. However concerns over travel costs to the proposed sites in Western Australia were raised by the members present. For this reason, it was impossible to reach a decision on the location. It was decided that the President would have to canvas the members of the Commission 51, providing them with a description of location, local organizing committees, dates, and typical air travel costs from the US, Europe, Asia and Australia and asking for a vote on proposed locations. A mailing has been sent out, but the results will not be known until December 1. It was decided that whatever the location, co-sponsorship should be sought from other Commissions in Division 3 and an application for support as an IAU Symposium should be made. As in the past, if this application is unsuccessful, the Symposium will be held anyway, using whatever local funding sources are available, but inevitably the meeting fees and travel supported would both be impacted.

4. New members. After consideration of their interests and credentials, the following new members were selected:

- C.S.L. Keay, Australia
- Ray Norris, Australia
- Alain Leger, France
- B.A. Dubinsky, Russia

5. Other business. Colin Keay, Chairman IAU Working Group on the Prevention of Interplanetary Pollution invited participation by Commission 51 in his Working Group. The Working Group was formed at the Baltimore General Assembly, 1988 and has now broadened its original scope of trying to find ways to prevent the proliferation of orbital debris into interplanetary space. It was agreed that Commission 51 had interests in preventing light and radio pollution from lunar and interplanetary activities as well as issues of planetary quarantine, so membership in this Working Group was appropriate. Jill Tarter and David Morrison, are the Commission 51 representatives.

Session 2

August 23

1100 - 1230

BUSINESS MEETING

1. Officers. Names of new Commission officers and organizing committee members were announced.

2. 1996 Symposium. For the benefit of members not present at the first meeting, the discussion on possible locations for the 5th Bioastronomy Symposium in 1996 and the further action required to reach a decision were summarized.

3. President's Report. The activities of the Commission during the past three years were summarized by the Acting President. These included co-sponsoring the 4th Bioastronomy Symposium, August 16-20, 1993, at University of California, Santa Cruz along with NASA, UC Santa Cruz, JPL, ISSOL and the SETI Institute. There were 120 participants in 8 scientific sessions: Extra Solar Planets (their formation and detection), Origin of Life (how quickly and how often?), SETI (observational progress), Habitable Life Zones, Planetary Atmospheres and Surfaces (origin of life), Comets and Asteroids (impacts and biospheres), Interstellar Chemistry (distribution of biogenic elements), Cultural Aspects of SETI (consequences of detection and educational tools). From the President's point of view, the outstanding highlight of the meeting was the announcement of the detection of interstellar glycine (the Acting President, however, recalled the roller coaster and bumper car rides following the banquet dinner at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk!). The Triennial Report of Commission 51 was edited by the President. The report contains the following chapters by the authors listed:

Planetary Disks - Ron Brown

Habitable Zones and Habitability - Jean Heidmann

Molecular Clouds - Bill Irvine

Chemical Evolution of the Earth - Ron Brown

Developments in Chemical Evolution of Life 1990-93 - A.G.

Cairns-Smith

Intelligence, Cognition and Communication in Other Species -

Diana Reiss

SETI - Jill Tarter

Not surprisingly, the President indicated his strong preference for the Australian sites for the 1996 Bioastronomy Symposium. At the current General Assembly Commission 51 co-

sponsored the Joint Discussion on Origin and Detection of Planetary Systems (with Commissions 16 and 15).

4. New members. After consideration of their interests and credentials, the following new members were selected:

David Morrison, USA
Annie Chantal Levasseur-Regourd, France
Jan Hogbom, Netherlands
Rubens Freire Ferrero, France
Ye Shuhua, China

5. Other reports. Jill Tarter summarized the 1993 Bioastronomy Symposium. Steven Dick summarized his ongoing project on the history of SETI and provided reprints of a recent article. Laurence Doyle summarized a 1994 meeting on Habitable Zones. Jean Heidmann gave a status report on his suggestions for a SETI database of signals that reflected little enthusiasm thus far by the observing community. Jill Tarter advertised an upcoming 1995 meeting at Chamonix on the topic of The Cultural Aspects of SETI and displayed the latest issue of BIOASTRONOMY NEWS and confirmed that it would continue to be produced by The Planetary Society.