

COMMISSION 46 : TEACHING OF ASTRONOMY
(ENSEIGNEMENT DE L'ASTRONOMIE)

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Lecturers Programme

1. Introduction

The President is happy to report that a considerable increase of interest in astronomy teaching problems seems to have taken place in many countries during the period 1985-1987. Some countries organized local teachers courses and meetings, other - national conferences devoted to establishing modern school programmes and training teachers methods including astronomical notions. An international workshop for physics teachers showing possibilities of practical introducing astronomy when teaching physics / GIREP 1986 / brought into contact astronomers and physicists. And, last but not least, teaching problems have been also introduced during the IAU Colloquium No.98, "The Contribution of Amateur Astronomers to Astronomy", in 1987, while the first IAU meeting dedicated to teaching problems - the IAU Colloquium No.105 "The Teaching of Astronomy" - is planned for 1988 in Williamstown /USA/. Let us hope that in the near future all astronomers will be well aware of their own responsibility in helping astronomical education all over the world.

The Commission 46 various forms of activity have been run by the Organizing Committee members; here are some details.

2. Membership

Much attention has been devoted to the preparation of new membership rules. These rules are not the same as in other IAU Commissions since Commission 46 is a subcommittee of the IAU Executive Committee. A set of rules accepted by the Executive Committee will be presented during the Commission meetings at the IAU General Assembly in Baltimore in 1988.

3. International Schools for Young Astronomers - ISYA

The ISYA project has been continued with the financial help of IAU, UNESCO, ICSU and local authorities. The XIVth ISYA took place in August 1986 in Beijing /China/; 52 students from China, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Iran and UK attended. The XVth School has been held in Espinho /Portugal/ in September 1986; 30 participants came from Angola, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Guinea, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. The main advantages of these Schools lie in the possibility of discussing by the participants their own scientific problems

with the lecturers - eminent astronomers from their own country and from abroad, and in the high level of seminars where students get acquainted with scientific works of many abroad institutions. The 1988 ISYA will be held in Cuba.

4. Visiting Lecturers Programme - VLP

The VLP for University San Marco in Lima /Peru/ is nearly finished, the last lectures will be held in the fall of 1987. The results of the whole three-year programme may be summarized as follows: three master degrees in astronomical subjects are being prepared, astrophysics has been included into the curriculum of the Faculty of Physics, there is a possibility of creating a department of astrophysics in future. It has not been possible to arrange for a VLP in Nsukka /Nigeria/. A VLP is planned for Asuncion /Paraguay/ in 1988.

5. Newsletter

The Commission Newsletter is issued twice a year, approximately in January and June; the numbers 18 to 22, a total of 115 pages, have been published and distributed until end of 1987. Beginning with No.19, 1986, J.R.Percy of Toronto / Canada/ has acted as editor, while the printing and distributing has been arranged by L.Houziaux in Liège /Belgium/. The articles printed contained either general informations on astronomy education in a given country or details on proposed teaching aids, school programmes, meetings and conferences, the contributors have been nearly from every part of the world.

6. National Reports

As it has been customary, National Reports prepared for 1983 - 1985 by the National Representatives to Commission 46 have been printed in Newsletter No.18, p.1 and 2. They are prepared every three years and they present a worldwide overview of what the current situation is in astronomy teaching at all educational levels, from primary schools to universities and general public programmes. A report for the period 1985-1987 based on National Reports will be published in the Newsletter in 1988.

7. Astronomy Education Material

Every three years an updated list of most important teaching publications /books, lecture notes, films, etc/ is published in three language groups. The 1985 publication comprised materials in Slavic languages prepared by E.V.Kononovich, in non-English languages /with an extensive list of Chinese publications/ - by M.Gerbaldi, in English - by R.R.Robbins. Similar lists will be prepared by the same authors for the period 1985-1987.

8. Travelling Telescope Project

In 1985 two Commission 46 members, D.McNally and R.M.West, put forward the idea of a "travelling telescope". It had to be a small instrument with an auxiliary equipment, easily transportable to a given country in conjunction with other teaching projects /VLP, ISYA/, in order to give opportunities of gaining direct experience in modern observing techniques. J.R.Percy got in 1987 the necessary fund-

ing for this project from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. The purchasing of the telescope and of the additional instruments, the preparation of documents and organization of maintenance of this telescope will be the task of J.R.Percy and D.Brückner of Toronto /Canada/. It is to be hoped that through the project of Travelling Telescope developing countries can gain more observing experience and will start having their own small observatories.

References

Proceedings of the GIREP Conference 1986 "Cosmos - an Educational Challenge", Copenhagen, 18-23 August, 1986, (ESA SP-253, Nov. 1986)

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