

SETI Permanent Committee
IAA SETI PC meeting
Wednesday, October 3, 2012
14:00 to 16:00. Room MR3 (Hall 4)
Naples, Italy

Attendees:

*Members: Seth Shostak, Paul Shuch, Claudio Maccone, Alexander Ollonger, John D. Rummel, Martin Dominik, Lori Walton, Robert DeBiase, Stephane Dumas, Roger Malina.

*Guests: Monica Ebert, Carl L. Devito, Daniela de Paulis, Andrew Siemion, Valentina Marcheselli, Miriam Janssen, Mustapha Masmoudi, Michael Garrett, Gerry Harp.

The meeting began with an introduction, followed by approval of the 2011 meeting minutes, as posted to the iaaseti.org website. Following were comments about the SETI technical session that preceded the meeting. The number of papers withdrawn from the SETI sessions was very high. There was a quick discussion about possible reasons for this.

The first order of business is the election for the new chair. The chair is limited to two 5-year terms. The current chair, Seth Shostak, has completed his second term as chair. The election for the new chair had three nominated candidates. It was a very close election with a clear winner. Claudio Maccone won the election and is elected as the new chair.

Following that announcement, a new member was introduced. Twenty-three votes were made to consider the candidate, all in favor of membership.

The next meeting will be in Beijing, at the 64th International Astronautical Congress. The SETI panel needs volunteers to Chair sessions (introduce speakers). A co-chair is also needed for each of the sessions. The panel is also looking for a session rapporteur (who fills out forms to publish content). Vacancies include: Co-chair (SETI 1), rapporteur (SETI 1). Seth volunteers to be co-chair. This information will be updated on website as some other volunteer slots have already been filled.

Traditionally, each of the SETI sessions is opened with a named lecture, the presenter of which receives twice the normal speaking time. Named lectures include:

1. Pesek Lecture (SETI 1 session)
2. Billingham Cutting Edge Lecture (SETI 2)

Discussion took place about finding representatives from the host country, i.e. Chinese SETI researchers, to be designated for these lectures.

Discussion about alternative funding for BCEL:

Funds for 5 years have supported travel to meeting. Is there an additional source of funding when funds run out? The panel welcomes any funding ideas for BCEL.

Revised protocols:

1980's effort produced a document describing protocols to be followed if anyone found a signal thought to come from an extraterrestrial civilization. The document aimed to address what would happen if we found a signal we are looking for, and what you do when you find it. The board of the IAA approved it, but there are a lot of inconsistencies in the document. There are two main issues with the document the way it exists today. The first is that the signal needs to be confirmed, which limits confirmation to SETI community. The second issue is that the document reflects tensions of Cold War (neither side wanted information to be hidden). In order to update and improve the document, it has been shortened and re-written in clear language. An example procedure was outlined: find signal, verify, tell world, do not send response signal without international consultation (so that no one party monopolizes communication).

The revised document was reviewed with international community. It was presented and endorsed, but there is some controversy over using the word 'SETI' and needing a sponsor (UN member country) if the document is to be adopted by the UN. The IAA SETI permanent committee presented during commission meeting. This is what they learned: 51% in favor (IAA) have to vote again. No response is considered as a yes vote. Bottom line on protocols: something may happen in the next few months. Value is not utility --there is not much utility. The document serves to define and promote an ethical approach.

Moon Farside Protection:

How to use the Moon Farside is a hot topic that requires international agreement. It is a very unique place, and should be preserved from man-made radio noise. It is not only technical issue (IAA), but also a legal issue (IISL). One use would be to measure wavelengths using notch filters and take advantage of the quiet farside of the moon. Discussion about the plausibility of putting a satellite in orbit to measure tiny signals from dark ages of universe highlighted some of the future applications. Another possibility other than the moon farside is the Sun Earth system L2—the other L2 beyond interaction of moon. The topic of a Lunar far side radio observatory protection study was raised. There is pressure for the international community to complete a study by the 64th IAC in Beijing, China. The issue will be discussed further at IISL dinner tomorrow (Thursday, October 4th, 2012).

Question arises about terminology on website: Subcommittees vs. task groups. Webmaster states a request for consistency. Members present agree to change all mentions of 'task group' to 'subcommittee'.

SETI Media/Education/Outreach group was reactivated and a call for volunteers took place. The SETI EPO activities would include various projects to leverage

public's interest such as propose teaching SETI to high school and younger education up to middle school. Volunteers for this Subcommittee include: Carl Devito, Danila De Paulis, Monica Ebert, Bob Debiase, Seth Shostak, and Miriam Janssen.

Denise Herzing volunteered to reactivate the communication subcommittee. Action will be taken through website.

Discussion ensues about the positives and negatives of remaining a part of the IAA. Some obstacles include the cost of travel to attend the annual meeting and the time investment of travel and attendance. The IAA does have historical insight and credibility, and it was a lot of work to put SETI in IAA. Other options include possibility of attending IAA meetings virtually, or joining other meetings such as for astrobiology conference, bioastronomy or IAU. Other meetings could be beneficial by making contact with broader community outside of IAA. Annual SETI meeting could take place before or after a major conference, but scheduling issues apply. Panel encourages ideas for meetings to keep the international SETI community connected and coordinated.

Expired memberships and reasons to terminate memberships:

The membership committee is defined as the chair and two co-chairs. There is a five year term for membership. Committee decides after member's five years whether or not to renew. However, there is no institutional record of membership start date. Some members have had no activity for many years. There should be a re-appointment process. Input is appreciated on this and any of the matters discussed at the meeting.

Action item for Webmaster: post the leadership positions for Beijing IAC.

Next March at the Paris IAA meeting, Chairman must submit sessions for Toronto. If anyone would like to come, please join us.

Good and Welfare:

--Allen Tough's contributions in support of the BCEL are acknowledged for the record.

--The Committee thanks Seth Shostak for 10 years as Chair.

--Dinner at 7:30pm.

Meeting adjourned.