

Report of Commission 16

Commission 16 held its business meeting at the Sydney General Assembly on Thursday, July 17, 2003, with 19 members present. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by President Dale P. Cruikshank, with a welcome and introduction of all present. A moment of silence was observed in the memory of those Commission members deceased since the last General Assembly. They are Merton E. Davies, John A. O'Keefe, John D. Mihalov, Pierre Guerin, Theophile P. F. Weimer, and Henri Camichel.

It was noted that the current membership of Commission 16 is 240, of which 12 are Consultants. Applications for membership have been received for 17 scientists, and their applications were unanimously approved by those members present.

A wide-ranging discussion was held on the subject of the future of Commission 16 within the newly evolving structure of the IAU, and Division III in particular. It was noted that the membership of C-16 is rather small, and does not appear to attract planetary astronomers and scientists, although planetary science is very active worldwide, and continues to grow. Dr. I. P. Williams, incoming President of Division III, discussed his vision for the role of the commissions in the evolving structure of the IAU, noting that in the next three years before the Prague GA there will be opportunities for extensive discussions among the members on ways in which the commissions might be restructured. The continuing importance of the Commission Working Groups (Planetary Nomenclature, Near Earth Objects) was noted.

There was a general discussion about the next meeting in Prague, 2006, including membership of the Organizing Committee. N. Thomas and A. Davies will replace M. Belton and A. Coradini on the Organizing Committee.

Secretary G. J. Consolmagno reported on the Commission 16 website, which he designed and has maintained for three years, and requested that he be relieved of that duty. The membership expressed its thanks to him for his very successful and effective efforts.

The Commission heard, discussed, and passed a Type C Resolution, as follows:

OBSERVATIONS OF THE SATURNIAN SYSTEM. IAU Commission 16 (Physical Study of Planets and Satellites) endorses astronomical observations of the Saturnian system at the time of the NASA and ESA Cassini/Huygens mission to the Saturnian system. The attention of the world-wide astronomical community is drawn to the unique scientific opportunities presented by the presence of a long-lived orbiting spacecraft in the Saturnian system and a Titan Probe. Observations of all types, ground- and space-based, are encouraged during the course of the mission (nominally 2003-2008), including observations of Saturn, the rings, Titan, and the icy satellites.

The new officers of the Commission were introduced and handed the mantle of authority. They are: President: Guy J. Consolmagno (Vatican), Vice-President: Regis Courtin (France), and Secretary: Maarten Roos Serote (Netherlands).

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.