IAU COMMISSION C2 COMMUNICATING ASTRONOMY WITH THE PUBLIC CONFERENCES WG

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TRIENNIAL REPORT 2015-2018

1. Introduction

The main role of this working group is to organize the Communicating Astronomy with the Public (CAP) Conference, and form the conference Science Organizing Committee in which most of the WG members take part.. During this triennial, two CAP conferences were organized — CAP 2016 in Medellin, Colombia on May 2016 and CAP 2018 in Fukuoka, Japan on March 2018.

The WG should be continued for the following reasons
- CAP conference is an important event for the astronomy communicators
- clear demand from many countries to host CAP
- huge increase in participation

2. CAP2016

In the first part of 2016, the CAP Conferences Working Group focused on the organisation of the Communicating Astronomy with the Public Conference in Medellin, Colombia.

The Working Group acted as Scientific Advisory Committee of the conference, while the chairs were also involved in the overall organisation of the conference. 150 professionals from 24 countries registered for the conference. 8 bursaries were offered.

The programme included: 6 keynote talks, 26 plenary talks, 71 talks in parallel sessions, a panel discussion, an unconference slot, 26 posters and, for the first time ever, 12 workshops. Special attention was given to networking activities.

From the 47 responses (about ⅓ of the participants) in the evaluation survey we concluded:

• Workshops — a first ever programme item — were highly regarded as the most important activity (average ranking 7 out of 9), while the talks and posters had an average ranking of 5 out of 9 and 3 out of 9 respectively.

• The general impression of the statistics reflects a similar behavior (participant background, impression on the conference, views on their interests) as with the previous CAP meeting, but a slightly younger average age of the audience, and also with more first-time participants.

• We intended to decrease the "activity report" type of talks that had no lessons learnt. There were still many of these talks, but statistically less people commented on this as being a downside than in the previous CAP.

3. CAP2018

After CAP 2016 concluded, the Working Group opened a call for hosting CAP 2018. The Group defined an improved set of criteria for selecting organisations. The evaluation process was further improved by introducing a formula for evaluating factual criteria. 8 countries submitted a first proposal with 6 of them selected for the second and final evaluation stage. Japan was selected as the winner and the first announcement was made in December 2016.

Since then, the main task for our WG in 2017-2018 was to prepare the 2018 edition of the conference. Again, the WG has formed the SOC team with most of the WG members onboard.

The work included
• adopted "Communicating Astronomy in Today's World: Purpose & Methods" as the theme of the CAP 2018 and the following sub-themes
  ○ Current Challenges in Astronomy Communication
  ○ Best Practices in Public Outreach
  ○ Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Empathy in Communicating Astronomy
  ○ Astronomy Communication for a Better World
  ○ Media's Role in Astronomy Communication
  ○ Using Multimedia, Social Media, Immersive Environments, and other Technologies for Public Engagement with Astronomy
  ○ Special Topic: Public Engagement Opportunities during the IAU Centennial Celebration
• selected 5 keynote speakers together with the LOC
  ○ Norio Kaifu - Best Practices in Public Outreach
  ○ Hitoshi Murayama - Astronomy Communication for a Better World
  ○ Dominique Brossard - Using Multimedia, Social Media, Immersive Environments and other Technologies for Public Engagement with Astronomy
  ○ Jennifer Ouellette - Current Challenges in Astronomy Communication
  ○ Wanda Diaz Merced - Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Empathy in Communicating Astronomy
• promoted the conference through different channels with the help of the LOC
• provided grant support for the underprivileged participants, together with the LOC
• seeked additional fund for the travel grant
• opened the abstract submissions with an overwhelming interest of 426 submissions received

- evaluated the abstracts and decided on accepted contributions; communicated with participants about their accepted/rejected contributions
- liaised regularly with the local organizers on the conference logistics

At the time of writing, more than 400 participants have registered for CAP 2018.

4. Other actions

In parallel the chairs have started a process of increasing WG efficiency which consists of five steps:

- draft responsibilities of the SOC members and communicate these to the members
- provide better guidelines for SOC members in order to increase quality of conference
- identify ways in which we can consolidate a bit the group (better integrate new members, get to know each other better etc)
- provide better recognition for contributions
- evaluate SOC members (with the consequence of exclusion if there is a lack of activity and bringing in new people)

Step 1 has been started with the responsibilities defined.

CAP Conference SOC Responsibilities
M - mandatory
O - optional

Contribute to drafting call for hosting CAP conference (M)
Evaluate proposals for hosting CAP conference (M)
Contribute to identifying theme and subtopics for CAP Conference (M)
Promote CAP Conference (O)
Identify and suggest key speakers (O)
Evaluate and offer to support key speakers (M)
Contribute to the design of the abstract evaluation process (M)
Evaluate abstracts and assign them to subtopics (M)
Contribute to the design of the grant evaluation process (M)
Evaluate grants (M)
Contribute to the evaluation of the CAP Confernece (O)
Chair CAP Conference sessions (O)
Write reports on CAP Conference sessions (M only if you're a session chair)
Evaluate CAP Conference sessions (M only if you're a session chair)
Contribute to Conference proceedings (O so far as proceedings are still optional)
Communicate regularly with the Working Group (online meetings, emails etc.) (M)

CAP Conference SOC Chair Responsibilities
M - mandatory
O - optional

All SOC responsibilities are mandatory for Chairs
In additions Chairs are responsible also for (all M):

Liaise with LOC on a regular basis and offer support in the organisation of the conference

Evaluate SOC members, provide guidelines, training and recognition

Attract new members, integrate new members and overall ensure group cohesion

Actively contribute to the promotion of the Conference in general and editions in particular

Set up necessary infrastructure (mailling lists, forms, webpages)

Ensure the overall quality of the conference both from a scientific and logistical point of view

Ensure the proper representation of the IAU

Manage grant funds

Ensure communication with externals with regards to the scientific content of the conference

5. Future plans

Future plans for the WG include:
- Seeing CAP 2018 to its completion
- Evaluating CAP 2018 conference
- Opening a call for CAP 2020
- Further improving the WG

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Chairs of the Working Group