

COMMISSION C2

COMMUNICATING ASTRONOMY WITH THE PUBLIC (CAP)

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COMMISSION C2 WORKING GROUPS
Div. C / Commission C2 WG

CAP Conferences

TRIENNIAL REPORT 2018-2021

1. Activities of IAU Commission C2 During 2018-2021

by Richard Tresch Fienberg (President) and Oana Sandu Barbulete (Vice-President)

Commission C2 is concerned with the advancement of effective astronomy communication and outreach. While professional astronomers, including many IAU members, participate in such activity, arguably many more practitioners are science writers, amateur astronomers, museum and planetarium workers, and others who aren't usually qualified to become IAU members. C2 depends critically on the involvement of such people, so we tend to have a higher proportion of Associates than most other IAU bodies.

During the previous triennium, 2015–2018, IAU Commission C2 had five Working Groups (WGs). Two completed their work and were discontinued for the new triennium. Another, the *CAP Journal* WG, was made redundant because responsibility for the journal was moved from C2 to the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAo). Another, on science-communication research, was discontinued because its Chair elected not to propose its renewal. Thus only one WG was carried over into the new triennium after its co-chairs proposed its renewal and both the C2 OC and the Division C Steering Committee (SC) approved it: the CAP Conferences WG.

We solicited and received proposals for several new WGs for the new triennium, but none were deemed strong enough to win approval from the Division C SC. Thus we had only one WG for the 2018–2021 triennium. This WG is co-chaired by Oana Sandu, C2 Vice-President; Lina Canas, OAo International Outreach Coordinator (IOC) and C2 Associate; and Ramasamy Venugopal of the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD), also a C2 Associate.

The OAo has a network of National Outreach Coordinators (NOCs) throughout the world, many of whom are neither professional astronomers nor IAU members but many of whom have led

IAU 100 activities and/or other astronomy outreach programs in their respective countries. More than a dozen OAO NOCs expressed interest in joining the IAU as Associates. Because of C2's close relationship with the OAO, and with the endorsements of the OAO IOC and the President of Division C, we invited these active astronomy communicators to apply to become Associates of C2 and to engage with the work of the Commission, e.g., by participating in CAP Conferences and proposing new WGs and programs or activities. Nearly all of them did.

Early in 2019 C2 entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with two partner organizations: the IAU OAO and the International Planetarium Society (IPS). Through these documents the partners pledge to promote each other's activities where there are common goals and other organizational synergies. The memos also describe specific roles that one or more representatives of the partner organizations will play in each other's activities.

Among other provisions, the C2-OAO MoU specifies that the OAO IOC shall serve as an ex-officio member of the C2 OC and as a co-chair of the CAP Conference Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC); that the President of C2 shall participate in a minimum twice-yearly teleconference among the IOC, the OAO Supervising Director (SD), and the IAU Assistant General Secretary (AGS) to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information; and that the *CAP Journal's* editorial board shall include the President of C2 or another member of the C2 OC (other than the IOC, of course).

The key provisions of the C2-IPS MoU are that C2 will appoint a member to serve on the IPS Council/Board (Lucia Marchetti agreed to serve in that role), and that the IPS will appoint a member to serve on C2's OC (Kaoru Kimura agreed to serve in that role); and that each organization will have an opportunity to organize a session or provide a speaker at the other's regular conference, i.e., the CAP Conference and the biennial IPS Conference.

Consistent with the MoU, the President of C2 met by telecon roughly every six months with OAO and IAU leadership and has been reviewing articles for the *CAP Journal* as requested by the editor. In addition, the President of C2 participated in an external review of the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan's (NAOJ's) Public Relations Center, where the OAO is based, in February 2020.

Similarly, C2 OC members Lucia Marchetti and Kaoru Kimura have been coordinating the organization of complementary sessions at the CAP 2021 (see below) and IPS conferences.

The President of C2 serves as an ex-officio member of the Division C SC, and in that role he has participated in several proposal reviews, for example, for IAU Symposia and for WGs in Division C and its four Commissions.

In February 2020 the C2 OC held a telecon to consider additional activities in which C2 might become engaged. Of particular interest is the OAO's "Meet the IAU Astronomers" program to encourage IAU members to engage with schoolchildren and members of the public; the C2 OC expressed interest in helping to shape the program and promote it. There was also some discussion about the external C2 website (<https://www.communicatingastronomy.org>), and a decision was made to begin moving much of the content to the server provided by the IAU to

ensure continuity from triennium to triennium. That effort has begun and will continue into the 2021–2024 triennium.

Membership in C2 crossed the 300 threshold, so our OC will grow by one in the new triennium. We are excited that the IAU's call for candidates to stand for election to the C2 OC resulted in a record number of candidates. This ensures that we'll receive a boost in energy and enthusiasm during the next three years.

Based on the positive evaluation of the Commission's application for continuation by the IAU Executive Committee, Commission C2 Communicating Astronomy with the Public will continue its efforts during the 2021–2024 triennium.

2. Working Group Report

CAP Conferences WG

by Oana Sandu Barbulete, Lina Canas, and Ramasamy Venugopal (Co-Chairs)

CO-CHAIRS:	Oana Sandu Barbulete, Lina Canas, Ramasamy Venugopal
MEMBERS:	Thierry Botti, Sze-leung Cheung, Lars Christensen, Dennis Crabtree, Doris Daou, Samir Dhurde, Kevin Govender, Ángela Pérez Henao, Pedro Russo, Kazuhiro Sekiguchi

The main focus of C2's activities in the current triennium was organizing CAP 2020, i.e., the next edition of the Communicating Astronomy with the Public (CAP) Conference. A call for proposals to host the conference was issued in mid-2018, and 14 preliminary proposals were received in the fall. The selection committee, composed of the CAP Conferences WG and the C2 officers, invited a subset of the first-round proposers to submit full proposals, and five of them did so in early 2019. Those were evaluated and ranked, and Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, was named the winner. CAP 2020 was scheduled for 21-25 September 2020.

Abstract submission and registration were opened in early 2020 with an early April deadline for the former and a late May deadline for the latter at the early/lowest rates. Then the COVID-19 pandemic intervened. It quickly became clear that the conference could not be held on schedule due to worldwide lockdowns and travel restrictions. Eventually the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) at Macquarie University, the officers of C2, and the Co-Chairs of the CAP Conference WG agreed to reschedule the conference in Sydney for September 2022.

The previous CAP Conference was held in March 2018 in Fukuoka, Japan. In all the time since the first such conference was held 15 years earlier, we had never gone more than three years between editions. Thus we decided to convene a virtual CAP 2021, to be held 24–27 May, under the central theme Communicating Astronomy with the Public in the Age of Global Crises. C2 OC member Caterina Boccato designed the conference logo. Thanks to generous support from

The Kavli Foundation, which provided a grant to strengthen the IAU’s public engagement programmes and scientific meetings, we arranged to enhance and use the Office of Astronomy for Education’s (OAE’s) license for the Hopin virtual conference platform. In addition, we were able to make registration for CAP 2021 free to all attendees.

The CAP 2021 SOC — composed of the OC and WG — arranged for keynote presentations by prominent science communicators and communication researchers. Among those confirmed is John C. Besley, Professor of Public Relations at Michigan State University (USA). He is renowned for his studies of public opinion about science and scientists’ opinions about the public in the context of trying to help science communicators be more strategic. IAU President Ewine van Dishoeck will present “IAU100: Celebrating a Century of Progress in Astronomy,” and astrophysicist Prajval Shastri of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (Australia) will address the pursuit of gender equity in science.

By the deadline in March, the SOC had received 341 abstracts for oral presentations, e-posters, workshops, and panel discussions, including 65 that were originally submitted for CAP 2020. These were submitted on the following conference topics:

- Nontraditional Ways of Communicating Astronomy During a Pandemic
- Communicating Climate Change through Astronomy
- Communicating Astronomy and Its Relevance in a Post-Factual Society
- Anti-Science Actions, Disinformation & Fake News
- Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through Astronomy Communication
- Current Challenges in Astronomy Communication
- The Media’s Role in Astronomy Communication
- Using Multimedia, Social Media, Immersive Environments and Other Technologies for Public Engagement with Astronomy
- Communicating Astronomy Across Different Regions
- Legacy of the IAU100 Celebrations
- Communicating Astronomy: The IAU Strategic Plan 2020–2030.

As of this writing, the CAP 2021 Virtual Organizing Committee — that is, the SOC augmented by more than a dozen volunteers from the general C2 membership — are building the conference program and schedule, configuring the Hopin platform, and preparing for what is shaping up to be a virtual CAP Conference just as interesting, dynamic, and successful as any of our past in-person editions.