New, and somewhat urgent, matters have since arisen, whose success will depend upon the WG PDPP continuing for at least another three years (to 2027). I cannot explain the situation in detail as it is dependent upon other (strongly related, but less formal) groups agreeing to their interests being subsumed by the WG PDPP.

In brief, the matter concerns the future of our photographic plate archives, and how (or if) we can catalogue and digitize them in a fully meaningful fashion scientifically, how (or if) plates are to be preserved but still made accessible, what digitizing engines need to be employed, and what scientific standards must be set - and met.

The urgency of the situation has arisen because very few of the extant plate archives now have anyone in charge who is suitably knowledgeable and experienced in these matters. We are therefore starting to see individual initiatives with no reference to any other efforts, and no agreed standards that can link them to some common scientific goal(s). This is extremely unsatisfactory, and we are recognizing that by far the best (and obvious!) organization to provide leadership and a united voice is the IAU WG PDPP. Plate archives are found at the international level, and it therefore needs an international body to set the standards and lead discussions.

We plan to work at the conversions mentioned above from the bottom up, and will be contacting the groups and observatories where useful conversations about what is needed can take place. In order to start this movement going I would greatly value your assurance, and that of the present Vice-President, that the Commission is likely to support our plans to move forward and set itself up as the international reference body for the topic described above. It will then be up to us (the PDPP Chair, Vice-Chair and an SOC) to draw up plans for moving forward, together with a time-line and (we hope) a newsletter to keep members informed regularly as to how things are progressing. The chief watchword is "Unification"; without that, the present disarray will head towards the loss of more archives and log-books that the astronomy community has already lost.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Griffin (Chair, WG PDPP)