

COMMISSION C1

Astronomy Education and Development

Education and development

COMMISSION C1 Working Group

Astronomy Education Resources (AstroEDU)

CHAIR

Edward Gomez

TRIENNIAL REPORT 2018-2021

1. Introduction

This working group was created with the sole purpose of transitioning astroEDU, a peer-review platform for astronomy education activities, to the IAU Office of Astronomy for Education. Between Dec 2017 and April 2019 (when this working group started) only a single activity had been published in astroEDU. The community recognizes the value in the continued existence of astroEDU but there needed to be fundamental organizational changes to preserve this facility. There were over 30 activities in the astroEDU review process but incomplete (either unreviewed, unedited or unpublished). I have taken over as the editor-in-chief, to clear this backlog of activities, some of which were submitted over 2 years previously.

2. Streamlining the review process

The main cause of delays in publishing astronomy education activities on the astroEDU is time-pressure on the assistant editor to chase authors and reviewers. Since 2019 the astroEDU team has been working on making this process of submission and review more sustainable. We have been working with the University of Heidelberg to install an Open Journal System for all new submissions. This allows the reviewer and author communication and activity status to be partly automated, removing many of the bottlenecks in the review process. Originally we installed a version in Amazon AWS but on-going cost was prohibitive. In contrast Heidelberg University has agreed to support and maintain astroEDU in perpetuity.

3. Transition to OAE

We have also been in extensive discussions with Markus Poessel, director of the IAU Office of Astronomy Education. As is the intention of this working group, astroEDU will become part of the OAE's remit. I have upgraded the existing astroEDU website software and ported the existing platform so it can be maintained and extended by OAE staff. Extensive training has been given to the OAE staff on the astroEDU process and methodologies, to assist the transition. We are creating a Memorandum of Understanding between this working group and the OAE. This will describe the relationship between

the editorial structure and OAE staff, and allow for the continued support and existence of astroEDU under the guidance of OAE.

4. Future

Unfortunately the purpose and direction of this working group was completely derailed by the pandemic and the unexpectedly stagnant state which astroEDU was in. Because of the large backlog of activities astroEDU is not accepting new activities at present. The goal for the next few months is to get through the existing backlog, using the new OJS system for facilitating the editorial process. At this point everything will be in place for astroEDU to resume with stronger editorial support and will be better placed to serve the community.

Edward Gomez