

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the  
XXXIV International Scientific Instrument Symposium  
Turin, 7-11 September 2015**  
*draft – subject to approval*

**Chaired by the Board**

President: Silke Ackermann  
Secretary: Michael Korey  
Treasurer: Marta Lourenço

The Scientific Instrument Commission held its thirty-fourth symposium on 7-11 September 2015, in Turin, Italy, where it was hosted by the Archivio Scientifico e Tecnologico della Università di Torino (ASTUT). The annual general meeting was held on Wednesday, 9 September, at the University Museum building. About 60 members were present.

The SIC President, Silke Ackermann, reiterates that the SIC is an open organisation with no formal membership. All actively participating in a symposium are by definition members and thus entitled to attend, and vote at, the AGM.

**1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Peter Abrams, Wolfram Dolz, Inga Elmqvist Söderlund, Sibylle Gluch, Anita McConnell, Peter Louwman, Tacye Phillipson, Peter Plaßmeyer, Rolf Riekher, Trienke van der Spek, Liba Taub, Rolf Willach, and Ewa Wyka.

**2) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting (2014) in Tartu, Estonia**

The minutes of the plenary business meeting from the thirty-third Scientific Instrument Symposium, held in Tartu in August 2014, are circulated, reviewed, and accepted.

**3) SIC Finances**

The SIC Treasurer, Marta Lourenço, reports on the Commission's finances from 1 September 2014 through 31 August 2015:

(Rounded numbers)

*Receipts:*

€ 75	bank interest
€ 1864	2014 grant from the IUHPS
€ 2250	2015 grant from the IUHPS

*Expenses:*

€ 56	bank fees
€ 21	interest tax
€ 135	secretariat costs (Turin meeting)
€ 28	secretariat balance
€ 640	557 to ASTUT as organiser for the Turin meeting
€ 142	website
€ 80	bibliography
€ 859	travel grants for Turin: 2 à €184, 1 à €491

Current account: € 2557 (was € 245 in 2014)

Savings deposit: € 4500 (was € 4500 in 2014)  
Total: € 7057 (was € 8170 in 2013)

Income still to be received in 2014:  
€ 30 bank interest (estimated)

Payments still to be made in 2014:

- Bank expenses (ca. € 20)
- website maintenance (€ 90)
- URL renewal grant (€ 13)
- 4<sup>th</sup> travel grant for Turin (€ 184)
- SIC website design improvement (€ 1100)

i) Due to organizational difficulties at the IUHPS/DSTM, from which the SIC receives its primary income, last year's grant was only paid in September 2014, *after* the 2014 symposium. This amount thus shows up on the present balance sheet, along with the 2015 grant, which was paid promptly.

ii) One of the three finalists awarded a travel bursary had to withdraw, as she was not allowed to leave her country of residence pending a decision on her immigration status. The Board thereupon awarded her grant to a runner-up. When the first candidate's immigration status was clarified shortly before the start of the meeting, the Board chose to re-instate her as the recipient of a travel bursary, since she had withdrawn due to no fault of her own, and to pay for the fourth grant awarded this year with the SIC's own funds.

iii) The Treasurer has indicated that the numerical amounts for the 2014 grants related to the Tartu SIC Symposium (3 Travel Grants and 1 LOC subsidy) plus the Bibliography expenses were paid in EUR, instead of USD. It should be noted that the IUHPS Grant is provided to the SIC in USD. The mistake, which was the Treasurer's full responsibility and for which she apologized, was only noted months later.

By contrast, in 2015 the IUHPS has awarded its grant to the SIC in EUR, whereas the grants related to the Turin SIC symposium (3 travel grants and 1 local subsidy) will be paid out in corresponding amounts in USD.

Rich Kremer explains that he and Sofia Talas, who are serving as the SIC's auditors until the 2017 meeting, have had a look at the books for this past year, and that they give their assent to Marta's account.

#### **4) Commission news**

##### **4.1 Advocacy**

The SIC Secretary, Michael Korey, reports that the Commission is from time to time called upon to write letters on behalf of threatened collections or institutions, to lend support where access might be in question or to encourage new initiatives that will promote the field.

Updates are given on two situations that the SIC Board has been following:

4.1.1 Karl Grandin of the Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, reports on the situation at the Stockholm Observatory Museum, which was closed by the Academy in 2013. Last year, the Academy revised its decision and set up a committee to find money with the aim of establishing a foundation for the Observatory. In the meantime, another Stockholm institution, the Academy for History and Letters, has taken interest, as has, most recently, the University of Stockholm, which is eager to maintain a cultural presence in the city centre. Discussions about a possible consortium have begun.

4.1.2 On the second case, Marta Lourenço reports that the Institute for the History of Science and

Medicine 'López Piñero' of the University of Valencia (Spain), which had been threatened with closure, has remained open, though its mid-term future is uncertain, also in light of changing political constellations in Spain.

4.1.3 In applying each year to use a part of its grant for travel bursaries for graduate students or recent PhDs, the Board seeks to advocate for the promotion of the study of scientific instruments as an academic field. In this light, the Board expresses its gratitude to Emily Margolis (Johns Hopkins University), who organised the first SIC get-together for Emerging Scholars, which took place the night before the AGM and drew 16 participants.

4.1.4 The President summarizes recent discussions on the e-mail circulation list RETE following announcements from the Science Museum, London, regarding changes to displays potentially resulting in reduced access to the collections. She then calls on Alison Boyle from the Science Museum (SM) who gives the following update on the situation:

#### Gallery closures

- The existing Medicine galleries will close this autumn, with a new suite of galleries opening on the 1st floor in 2019. There will be a small interim display of highlights from the collection, opening shortly.
- The existing Mathematics gallery will close shortly, with a new gallery opening in the same space next autumn.
- The Clockmakers' Museum opens at the Science Museum this October. Plans are in progress to complement this with a new display of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century scientific instruments, including the King George III collection (which is currently on an international tour), with an opening planned for autumn 2018.
- Due to the current decanting of over 6,000 objects, the SM conservation and registry teams are extremely busy and there is likely to be a delay on loan requests (any that have already been submitted will be processed as normal). The SM will continue to accommodate store visits for researchers, but would appreciate as much advance notice as possible.

#### Library access

- The new Dana Research Centre has its soft opening this November (with a launch conference next Spring).
- This will house 6,500 works from the Science Museum Library's STS collection and other items (including archive material where appropriate) can be ordered from their Wroughton facility.
- Material that is too fragile to travel will continue to be viewed at Wroughton by arrangement.
- A new library and archive catalogue will be available online shortly.

#### Storage

- The UK Government is reviewing the use of its properties, including Blythe House, which holds reserve collections of the Science Museum, British Museum and V&A. The SM expects to hear a decision on this in October/November after the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Should the Science Museum be required to move its collections out of Blythe House, it is planned to move the objects to Wroughton and consolidate storage across the collection. This plan would include adequate provision to get scholars to Wroughton so that they can continue to conduct research on the collection.
- Cataloguing and storage across the whole Science Museum Group are being currently reviewed to improve efficiency - this will include a revamped online catalogue for the 3d collections.

Jane Wess congratulates Alison on the many changes and thanks her for the concise update. She expresses concerns about the future of Blythe House, which should be kept to maintain central accessibility of collections. The President assures Alison that the Board would be happy to give support should she and her colleagues wish to call upon the Board.

The Board appeals to all members to inform the officers of concerns regarding access to, or survival of, collections or institutions promptly - so that consultations may take place when effective action may still be possible.

#### **4.2 Agora**

The Secretary explains that, in response to a request from several SIC members, a forum for the discussion of new projects and exhibition ideas will be tried out on Friday morning in a plenary session to be chaired by the Board. Of particular interest are projects at a nascent stage for which advice or possible partners are sought. Several members have approached the Board, and others interested in making a short presentation (3-5 minutes) are encouraged to see the Secretary before Friday, so that the 'Agora' can be structured. Presenters will also be asked to describe briefly what they hope to achieve while still in Turin, through first contacts at the Agora, and in the coming month. Members will be asked for their feedback on this pilot after the symposium. Short announcements are, of course, still welcome under 'News from members' at the end of today's AGM.

#### **4.3 Archive and documentation of meetings**

4.3.1 The President reminds members that at last year's AGM discussion had taken place about an SIC archive (see minutes of the Tartu meeting). The Board has looked into this and found that no such archive exists, but an animated exchange on RETE solicited useful markers. The Board is keen to bring the relevant material together and to make this accessible via the website. The President asks for volunteers to take this forward; this call is met straight away by a response from Emily Margolis, Paolo Brenni, Sara Schechner and Marisa Addomine, who will work together and report to the Board.

4.3.2 The President explains that the Board would like to give participants a platform to upload photographs of the Turin meeting. A similar attempt following the Tartu meeting had failed due to issues with Dropbox. Alexi Baker and Alistair Kwan volunteer to take this forward.

#### **4.4 Future of the Board**

The President reminds members that the leadership of all the IUHPS's commissions, including the SIC Board, is formally installed at the quadrennial congress of the IUHPS. She recalls that the current Board, upon assuming office at the Manchester IUHPS Congress in 2013, announced it would only serve one term – that is, until the next Congress to be held in Rio in 2017, while endeavouring to insure a smooth transition. She explains that the Board feels that the Commission was in a very healthy state and that a number of members would be excellent candidates to take the SIC forward upon the current Board's resignation.

The Secretary then explains the proposed procedure to elect the next Board:

1. **Who can vote?** All who have attended at least one of the last *five* SIC symposia (2012-2016).
2. **Who can be elected?** All who have taken part actively in the SIC during one of the last *three* symposia (by giving a paper/poster or serving on the review or another committee).
3. **Election Committee:** One current board member plus two others (none may stand for election) to gather nominations and manage election.
4. **Candidacy procedure:** Election Committee confirms nominee's eligibility, finds out for which office candidate would be willing to serve, and asks for short statement by announced date.
5. **Ballots** with candidate statements to be sent out by e-mail. Response by e-mail to election committee.

6. **Date:** Election to take place at least one month prior to 2016 symposium.
7. **Voting procedure:** Each voter may cast up to one vote for a candidate for each of the three positions. Election Committee asks three winning candidates whether each would accept the vote and be willing to serve together with the other two.
8. **Overlap:** Elected candidates to shadow outgoing Board through the 2016 symposium and up to confirmation of vote/take-over at 2017 Congress meeting.
9. **All remaining matters are to be resolved by the Election Committee.**

David Coffeen welcomes the proposals as the best way forward given that the SIC lacks formal by-laws. Jim Bennett raises concerns that no nominations might be received. The President explains that the current Board had already been approached by members with suggestions for future nominations, at which point Jim withdraws his concerns for the current cycle.

The proposal is approved by acclamation, with Marv Bolt and David Pantalony as the Election Committee, to be joined by one member of the current Board.

## 5) Future meetings

### 5.1 - 2015

The President thanks the organising team of the Turin conference on behalf of all members; this is echoed by a round of applause from the members. She also expresses gratitude to this year's reviewers, who enabled each proposed paper to be read by three different people. She reminds members of the huge amount of work that goes into the preparation of each meeting and reiterates the importance of a strong local organising committee.

### 5.2 - 2016

Only one firm proposal has been received for next year. The President calls on Professor Feza Günergün from the Department of the History of Science at Istanbul University to present the invitation for the next symposium to take place from 26 to 30 September 2016.

Feza Günergün starts her illustrated presentation by expressing her and her colleagues' delight at the possibility of the SIC coming to Istanbul. This would be the first time that the Commission would meet in this part of the world. She highlights Istanbul as a city at crossroads of cultures, trade, science, and technical knowledge. The venue would be the Congress Centre of Istanbul University, located in the old part of town with many of the main sights (such as Hagia Sophia etc.) in walking distance. She and Silke Ackermann had made contact with a number of collections that they hoped to visit during the conference (she mentions Kandilli Observatory in the Asian part of Istanbul, Rahmi M. Koç Industrial Museum, Pera Museum with an excellent collection of weights and measures, the Naval Museum, the Museum of the History of Pharmacy, as well as Istanbul Museum for the History of Science and Technology in Islam). She and her team are also working hard to organise an exhibition of manuscripts on scientific instruments. The social program would include a gala dinner on a Bosphorus boat cruise.

Professor Günergün concludes by introducing her young local team. One of the PhD students had just spent a year with Silke Ackermann at the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford. She explains that with the mandate from the SIC members she will seek funding from Turkish companies to support bursaries.

The President asks Feza Günergün to elaborate on the current political situation, as members might be concerned about the news in the media. Feza explains that she is worried about problems on the southeastern border, but that tensions in Istanbul itself had been pushed higher in advance of the elections. She feels that Turkey has experienced much more difficult times than today, that daily life

is continuing, and that all the hotels in Istanbul are booked. No academic events have been cancelled.

The President informs members that the dates had been suggested to avoid various religious holidays (Seker Bayrami and Rosh Hashanah).

The members give Professor Günergün and her team a resounding mandate to organise the 2016 symposium in Istanbul.

### 5.3 – 2017

The President reminds members that the 2017 symposium will be part of the quadrennial Congress of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science. She also reminds members of the decision taken at the Tartu meeting in 2015 (see minutes) not to organise a parallel meeting in Europe. She calls on Marcus Granato from Rio, who is member of the programme committee, to report on current plans.

Marcus explains that both he and Liba Taub (Cambridge) are on the IUHPS programme committee, but that so far there have not been any clear guidelines how to take this forward. He assures SIC members that they would support the SIC Board as much as possible.

The President asks for a quick show of hands (about 15 go up) to get a feeling of how many members present might consider attending. She and the Secretary remind members of the excellent opportunities to meet new colleagues and the potential for joint events with other Commissions. The Treasurer stresses the importance of encouraging attendees from other South American countries; for the 2012 SIC symposium in Rio this had been a challenge.

### 5.4 - 2018 and beyond

The President informs members that a 'bluffer's guide' for potential local organisers is currently being prepared by the Board to help colleagues to ascertain whether they have the resources and local commitment to organise a conference. She encourages members to contact the Board as early as possible for initial discussions and reminds participants that the SIC has never been to Austria or Spain.

Initial proposals for 2018 come from members Peter Schuster (Schloss Pöllau between Vienna and Graz) and Hans Hooijmaijers (jointly organised by Boerhaave Museum Leiden, University Museum Utrecht and Teylers Museum Haarlem). Both are tasked to develop plans in more detail in cooperation with the Board.

Rich Kremer suggests exploring Cuba as a potential destination; Alistair Kwan mentions Melbourne as a possibility. Both are tasked to explore this further.

## 6) SIC Website

The Treasurer reminds members of the discussion at the Tartu meeting, where a working party was formed to make recommendations on future developments of the website. She calls on Janet Laidla to report on behalf of the group. Janet summarises the recommendations as follows:

- 1) change domain name – or add parallel name that is easy to remember
- 2) provide a new fresh look with images ... not too many ... easily edited with low-maintenance (preferably with a free, existing platform)
- 3) keep page up to date – members should feel responsible for sending references about new publications and references
- 4) offer a bigger intro to the general public – possibly adding brief history of SIC and few paragraphs on why to study history of instruments

She then proposes several discussion points:

- 1) how to present previous conference info most usefully (for new organisers) – how to deal with dormant pages
- 2) publications and references – categories still to be decided
- 3) the future of the currently dormant bibliography

In sum, the working party suggests to start with the above concrete recommendations and do the discussion points as add-ons. She reminds members that it will never be possible to find a website perfect for all. She concludes by saying that many members of the working group had offered to stay on to advise.

The President thanks Janet and the working party for the very helpful report and also suggests that formal thanks be given to Dana Freiburger for the phenomenal work he had put into the website so far. This is met by a round of applause from members.

The President asks for a mandate from members to spend the 1,200 USD accumulated from IUHPS payments to pull in professional support for a revamp of the SIC site, with volunteers supporting the ongoing maintenance. She would explore this further with Dana (who was not present at the meeting). The members give their approval by acclamation.

The President continues the discussion by asking members whether they wish to continue the bibliography. Members express their wish that the bibliography (currently organised by the Boerhaave Museum) be continued. The Board will talk to Hans Hooijmaijers to take this forward.

## **7) SIC Publications**

Giorgio Strano, general editor of *SIC: Scientific Instruments and Collections*, reports on this series of books published by Brill for the Commission. First, he passes on the regards from Michiel Thijssen, managing editor for the series at Brill, who regrets that he is not able to attend and passes on three Brill volumes for young scholars in attendance. (Secretary's note: these are subsequently given as a prize in a raffle for emerging scholars at the conference dinner). He then reports that Stephen Johnston has stepped down as a series editor and that at his (Giorgio's) suggestion Sara Schechner has agreed to join the editorial board for the series. He explains that the planning for Volume 5, on the trade and transfer of instruments, is undergoing some revision with publication aimed for spring 2016; this volume is being edited by Paolo Brenni, Alison Morrison-Low and Sara Schechner. He reports that Volume 6 is already on its way given the strong multi-part session on astrology at the current symposium and recommends convening thematically well-connected sessions at future SIC meetings, as these can often serve as the basis for a volume in the series.

The Commission once again formally thanks Giorgio and the previous Editorial Board (Stephen Johnston, Mara Miniati, and Alison Morrison-Low) for their excellent work.

## **8) News from members**

- a. *Meteorological instruments*: Claude Labine reports that he is seeking to join with others interested in studying historic meteorological instruments in North America.
- b. *Paris Observatory Jubilee*: Susanne Débarbat recalls that 2017 will mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Observatoire du Paris. She hopes that it will be possible to produce an exhibition for this occasion, but current health-and-safety rules now prevent public access to the building.
- c. *Duisburg exhibition*: Petra Schmidl reports that on the following Sunday an exhibition in Duisburg will open on science in Islamic societies, mostly drawing from replicas at the Frankfurt Institute for the History of Islamic Science.

- d. *King Astrolabe Catalogue*: Silke Ackermann announces briefly that the David King catalogue of astrolabes is to be revived and made available online. Further details will be presented at the Agora on Friday.
- e. *New Nobel Centre*: Olov Amelin relates that plans for the new Nobel Centre are advancing (target opening 2019). The project is now collecting instruments. Olov also calls attention to 'Nobel Labs 360' for panoramic view of Nobel laureates' labs .
- f. *London Monocle Exhibition*: Neil Handley announces that a presentation of monocles, the latest temporary exhibition at the British Optical Association Museum, is to open in September and will be on show for at least 18 months.
- g. *Deutsches Museum Fellowship*: Johannes-Gert Hagmann describes the Scholar-in-Residence fellowship at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, noting that several past fellows are in attendance (Peter Heering, Marv Bolt, Michael Korey). Applications, particularly those using resources in the collections, library, or archive at the Deutsches Museum are welcome at any level of seniority; the application deadline is 16 October.
- h. *Rio Publication*: Marcus Granato presents the volume with selected papers from the 2012 conference
- i. *Instruments from the RGS*: Jane Wess reports that many instruments from the Royal Geographical Society were dispersed in the 1960s and 1970s. She would be grateful for leads as to their current whereabouts.
- j. *Danish-German Conference*: Peter Heering reports that the IPHST group on the philosophy of science will hold its first European regional meeting from 22-25 August 2016 in Flensburg. This is being co-organised with Danish colleagues and will have as its theme 'science as culture in European context'. The deadline for submissions will be in January.
- k. *EDM Devices Preserved*: Jan de Graeve reports that a large collection of EDM (electronic direct measurement) devices has been saved and, after ten years of negotiations, been donated to the University of Ghent by the family of Allan Wright. It is now known as the Allan Wright-Draper Collection.

## 9) New Business

No new business was raised, and the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes compiled by  
Silke Ackermann, SIC President *and*  
Michael Korey, SIC Secretary