

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the  
XXXVI International Scientific Instrument Symposium  
Rio de Janeiro, 26-28 July 2017**  
*draft – subject to approval*

**Chaired by the outgoing and incoming Boards**

Michael Korey and Marta Lourenço (outgoing Secretary and Treasurer)

Rich Kremer and Sofia Talas (incoming President and Secretary)

The outgoing President (Silke Ackermann) and the incoming Treasurer (Janet Laidla) had sent apologies.

The Scientific Instrument Commission held its thirty-sixth symposium from 26–28 July 2017, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as part of the 25th International Congress of History of Science and Technology of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology. It was hosted by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (26 and 28 July) and by MAST, the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences (27 July). The SIC annual general meeting was held on Friday, 28 July, at the Praia Vermelha campus of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. About 40 members were present.

Michael Korey welcomed the participants, reminding that the SIC is an open organisation with no formal membership. All persons actively participating in a symposium are by definition members and thus entitled to attend and vote at the AGM.

Michael reminded participants that a new Board had been elected at AGM of the SIC meeting in Istanbul in September 2017 and would assume office after their confirmation at this Congress by the SIC's parent organisation, the DHST. He presented the outgoing and the incoming Boards, namely  
outgoing: Silke Ackermann (Pres.), Michael Korey (Sec.), Marta Lourenço (Treas.)  
incoming: Rich Kremer (Pres.), Sofia Talas (Sec.), Janet Laidla (Treas.)  
and explained that Silke Ackermann and Janet Laidla were not able to attend the Congress and the SIC Symposium due to personal reasons. He asked for and received the consent of the participants for the two Boards to sit jointly and chair the meeting.

**1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Silke Ackermann, Paolo Brenni, Gloria Clifton, Jan De Graeve, Inga Elmqvist Söderlund, Karsten Gaulke, Samuel Gessner, Jan Huisman, Alistair Kwan, Janet Laidla, Pierre Lauginie, David Pantalony, Bjoern Schirmeier, Giorgio Strano, and Martin Weiss.

**2) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting (2016) in Istanbul, Turkey**

The minutes of the plenary business meeting from the thirty-fifth Scientific Instrument Symposium, held in September 2016 in Istanbul, were circulated, reviewed, and accepted.

**3) SIC Finances**

The SIC outgoing Treasurer, Marta Lourenço, presented her report on the Commission's finances from October 2016 to July 2017. She recalled that the SIC operates on the annual grant provided by the DHST. This year, SIC funds were used for four travel grants to emerging scholars and for a subsidy to MAST, who hosted the SIC Symposium on 27 July (bus transfer + coffee breaks). One of the travel grants was financed thanks to the unspent amount from a pending travel grant from the Istanbul 2016 Symposium, which the DHST had permitted us to carry over to this year.

Furthermore, \$600 were allocated for the new SIC website. Annual costs for the maintenance of the

website would have to be allocated every year.

Marta added that due to the change of treasurer, the SIC Bank Account had to be transferred from Lisbon to Tartu, with some extra costs (€5) .

The report contained the following key points:

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(Rounded numbers)

*Receipts:*

€ 2218                      2017 grant from the IUHPS (ca. \$2500)

*Expenses:*

€    42                      bank expenses

€    29                      secretariat expenses for Istanbul 2016

€  1232                      4 travel grants for Rio 2017: €275 (\$300) each + transfer costs for 3 of them (no Eurozone Bank)

*One of this year's awardees withdrew his participation due to immigration difficulties. The Board decided to divide his award over the three remaining awardees, after the refund was completed. However, given the late notice, it was not possible to include these transactions in the present Financial Report.*

€    523                      MAST subsidy as LOC for the 2017 meeting

€  1000                      website design improvement

€    273                      old website maintenance + server costs + URL (Dana Freiburger)

Previous balance:        € 6621 (on 31 September 2016)

Total Income:            € 2218

Total Expenditure:      € 3099

Bank balance             € 5740

One of the two external auditors, David Pantalony, had read and approved the financial report. Inga Elmqvist Sönderlund, the second auditor, expressed her regrets at not being able to do so, due to serious health problems.

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

##### **4.1 Advocacy**

Michael Korey explained that the Commission had been called upon in the last years to support threatened collections or institutions, or to encourage new initiatives that would promote the field.

4.1.1 Karl Grandin, Director of the Center of the History of Science of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, presented an update on the situation of the Stockholm Observatory Museum, a matter that the SIC Board has been following for several years. He recalled that the Museum was run by the Academy of Sciences under the successful direction of Inga Elmqvist Sönderlund, until its closure in 2014. Since the last report in Istanbul, the situation is that the Academy of Sciences still owns the Old Observatory building. Part of it is still hosting various organizations and the Stockholm amateur astronomers, but since a year and a half almost all of the bottom floor area, where the museum displays used to be, is being rented out to Folkuniversitetet ('People's University') in Stockholm. The acute cost-reduction scheme of the Academy has thus been taken care of, and the need for a long-term decision not so pressing.

Folkuniversitetet is also one of the two organizations that have expressed an interest in buying the premises. The other is the City of Stockholm's educational offices. Both organizations have expressed an interest to continue some kind of museum activity in collaboration with the Academy's Center for History of Sciences, but only very tentative discussions have been held so far. All instruments are still owned by the Academy through the Center, and most of them are in storage, available for research and loans for exhibitions (quite a few are currently on display at Uppsala University Museum).

Marv Bolt asked if some action could be taken individually or by institutions, Karl responded that to move the situation forward several millions dollars would be needed. Karl confirmed that he was the person to be contacted by visitors who wish to see the historical instruments.

4.1.2 Marta Lourenço gave an account of the situation at the University of Valencia. She reminded members that due to the economic crisis in Spain a few years ago, all research institutions suffered and the library and material heritage of the Institute for the History of Science in Valencia were threatened. The Institute launched an International call for support and the SIC wrote a letter in this sense. Things evolved positively and the situation was now good.

4.1.3 As happened on the occasion of the last SIC Symposia, an informal get-together took place for emerging scholars attending the Rio meeting. The Board expressed its gratitude to Emily Margolis (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore), who had once again initiated and organized this gathering. For the 2018 SIC Symposium, she would like to start planning and advertising the gathering earlier. She reported that the group welcomed suggestions for a name.

4.1.5 No new acute cases of endangered collections were brought to the attention of the SIC Board. Michael Korey invited people attending the AGM and the broader SIC community to alert the Board of matters requiring attention in due time, before it is too late to consider appropriate action.

## **4.2 New SIC website**

The address of the SIC's relaunched website is: <http://scientific-instrument-commission.org/>  
Marta Lourenço specified that this is the result of a two-year-process and that the site was developed by web designer András Ratonyi after an open call and input from an SIC working group under the direction of Janet Laidla. She underlined that it was now time to get suggestions from the community, and made a first comment about the fact that more images are needed. The Board and the SIC community expressed their thanks for the work carried out by the Janet Laidla and the working group and for the helpful input of the long-serving, past webmaster Dana Freiburger.

The potentials of the new website, whose infrastructure can be expanded, were then discussed by the participants. A group of volunteers, made up of Marvin Bolt (Corning Museum of Glass), Janet Laidla (University of Tartu), Pedro Raposo (Adler Planetarium), Taha Yasin Arslan (Istanbul Medeniyet University), and Emily Margolis, agreed to examine this issue and to collect ideas, suggestions and proposals coming from SIC members.

Pedro Raposo underlined the importance of working not only on the website, but also on social media. Rich Kremer raised the question of how to update the bibliography presented in the website. The Librarian of the Boerhaave Museum used to take care of it, and she will be asked whether she accepts carrying on with this task. Roland Wittje underlined the importance of having links with other databases. Peter Heering stressed that the database should ideally not only provide the list of publications, but make the publications themselves directly available.

## **4.3 Michael Korey then read a statement from Silke Ackermann as outgoing SIC President (see the attached appendix)**

**On behalf of the incoming SIC Board, Rich Kremer expressed to the outgoing Board his deepest gratitude for what they have achieved in the last years.** The new Board will do its best to preserve and strengthen the openness and vibrancy of the SIC. It will also aim at enhancing opportunities for younger scholars to join the SIC, encouraging international collaboration among museums and considering instruments in lesser-studied fields such as the life sciences, pharmacology, medicine, or industry. The new Board, following the outgoing Board's example, will serve only one four-year term.

## 5) Future meetings

### 5.1 (2017)

Rich Kremer expressed the community's profound gratitude to Marcus Granato and the SIC2017 LOC for their excellent collaboration and support. A special "thank you" also to Marta Lourenço, who has been co-ordinating with Marcus the SIC's efforts at the Rio Congress.

### 5.2 (2018)

Sofia Talas noted that the outgoing Board was given a mandate from last AGM in Istanbul to initiate the organization of the 2018 SIC Symposium in the Netherlands. The first discussions led to the proposal from our Dutch colleagues that the Symposium would be jointly organized by the Boerhaave Museum in Leyden, which will present its new gallery displays (set to open in December 2017), and Teylers Museum in Haarlem (which has also opened a new wing this year). Both the outgoing and incoming Boards agreed on the decision. At Rio AGM, Ad Maas, from the Museum Boerhaave, gave a slide presentation to invite the SIC members to attend the next Symposium.

### 5.3 (2019)

Sofia Talas reported that contacts were established by Rich Kremer and herself to explore the possibility of having a SIC Symposium organized in Cuba. This possibility was already presented at the AGM in Istanbul and Rich Kremer had received strong support from the assembly to pursue these contacts further. The participation of Claudia Felipe, Head of the Heritage Department of the University of Havana, at the SIC Symposium in Rio provided a valuable opportunity to make this idea more concrete. Claudia gave a slide presentation and on behalf of the University of Havana, invited the SIC to organize its 2019 Symposium in Cuba. The AGM was enthusiastic about this possibility and gave the Board a unanimous mandate to pursue in this direction.

### 5.4 (2020 and beyond)

The AGM discussed other possible sites for the next years. Michael Korey recalled that a proposal had been presented at the Istanbul Symposium by Mubashir Ul-Haq Abbasi (for Islamabad and Lahore, Pakistan). Sébastien Soubiran, University of Strasbourg, said that his institution would be glad to host one of the next SIC symposia, once the new University Museum would be ready (2021 or 2022). Sofia Talas mentioned Rome as a possible hosting site, particularly as the city and region are rich in historical scientific instruments. The University of Ghent, where a new museum will soon open, would also be an interesting possibility, as well as Belgrade, where the last Universeum meeting was held.

The site that will host the next quadrennial Congress of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology was also discussed, as the vote to select it was to be held on the following day within the General Assembly of the DHST. The SIC Board has one vote during this process (alongside the other DHST Commissions and national representatives). The candidate venues were Melbourne (Australia), Prague (Czech Republic), and Auckland (New Zealand). After an animated discussion, a clear majority of the attendees expressed a preference for the congress to be held in New Zealand.

*[Note after the meeting: The vote of the General Assembly went to Prague].*

## 6) SIC Publications

Giorgio Strano, general editor of *SIC: Scientific Instruments and Collections*, sent a letter to the Board as a report about the series. He had hoped to be able to present the sixth volume, *Earth and Sky in Conflict*, edited by Richard Dunn, Silke Ackermann, and himself at the Congress. Unfortunately, poor health prevented two authors from making timely delivery of their contributions to the volume. It will likely be released in autumn, and he hopes to present it in Leiden. Meanwhile, another volume has been started: *Scientific Instruments between East and West* (a provisional title), edited by Neil Brown, Feza Günergun and Silke Ackermann. The volume will probably include 16 papers from the Istanbul Symposium of 2016. It is possible that this volume will also be ready in time for the Leiden meeting.

As for future volumes, Giorgio underlined his hope that the meeting in Leiden would provide material for the completion of at least two other volumes: 1) *Scientific Instruments for Education*, based in part upon past sessions organized by Peter Heering; 2) *Glass in Scientific Instruments*, drawing upon past sessions organized by Marvin Bolt. He hopes that Peter and Marv are still willing to go forth with such volumes, and will organize other sessions on these two topics to supplement the available material. It goes without saying that strong sessions on other important topics are always very welcome, as they represent the backbone of the SIC series. The Board will advise Giorgio on possible themes emerging from the papers presented at the Rio meeting.

Once again, the Board warmly thanked Giorgio for his invaluable role and involvement in the publication of these important volumes.

## 7) News from members

- a. *Seminar "Material Culture in the History of Physics"*: Christian Forstner (Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main) reported that together with Johannes-Geert Hagmann and Peter Heering he is planning this seminar in March 2018. The Seminar will be open to international Master's students in history of science and related subjects. They are still waiting for the funding decision of the Heraeus-Foundation before making an announcement on RETE, the SIC's mailing list.
- b. *The Adler Planetarium now part of the Philadelphia-based Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine*: Pedro Raposo announced this new membership, which will provide funding opportunities to scholars seeking to use the Adler's collections.
- c. *Webster Photographs Collection now available for research*: Pedro Raposo announced that photographs of scientific instruments taken in museums and collections all over the world by Roderick and Marjorie Webster have been cataloged. The respective records are now accessible via the Adler Planetarium's website.
- d. *Adler Planetarium Historic Photograph Collection*: Pedro also announced the Adler has been digitizing its collection of more than 35,000 photographs documenting the history of the Planetarium from 1930 to 2013, which include many photographs of scientific instruments on display. A large number of digital images is already available through the Planetarium's website.
- e. *Syntax of an Astrolabe*: Elisabeth Cavicchi reported on the exhibition at Harvard Collection of Scientific Instruments Foyer Gallery through October 2017. It includes an architectural structure that interprets and represents the geometrical space and proofs associated with the astrolabe. The architectural structures can be moved to other museums or galleries (contact Francesca Liuni at [fra.liu@hotmail.it](mailto:fra.liu@hotmail.it) with suggestions in this sense). Francesca Liuni thanked the SIC for including her preliminary work in the SIC 2015 meeting. The comments of SIC members there were formative for her further development of this work, which received the SMArch Architecture Thesis Prize at MIT in 2016.

- f. *Science Museum Group Journal*: Sam Alberti announced that the Journal, which is currently revamping itself, has a prize to encourage and reward research articles by talented early career scholars.
- g. *Prize for the new galleries of the National Museum of Scotland*: Sam also announced that in May 2017 the new Science & Technology and Art & Design galleries at the National Museum of Scotland won the UK Museum + Heritage Award for Best Permanent Exhibition.
- h. *New book on teaching instruments*: Marta Lourenço reported news from Pierre Lauginie, who announced the publication of the "Encyclopédie des instruments de l'enseignement de la physique du XVIIIe au milieu du XXe siècle". Marta underlined the importance of these three volumes, which include significant contributions.
- i. *New building and exhibitions for the Canada Science and Technology Museum, Ottawa*: Michael Korey reported on behalf of David Pantalony on the new building for the Museum, which will reopen on November 17, 2017. The Museum is also preparing a larger storage and a cutting-edge facility for conservation, research, collection-based seminars, libraries and archives, and offices.
- j. *Project "Deus ex machina"*: Michael Korey gave a brief update on the research project on Renaissance planetary automata about which he and Samuel Gessner have presented papers at previous symposia. With support from the German Cultural Foundation, he and Samuel have realized a cameo exhibition on the topic ("The Wondrous Course of the Planets"), which is now on show in Dresden (through January 7, 2018). A version of the exhibition will open in Kassel at the end of August

## 8) AOB

- a. Taha Yasin Arslan added his personal thanks to the outgoing Board with the gift of "Turkish delight" sweets.
- b. Peter Heering noted that two papers of the Symposium were given via Skype (one from the US, by a participant with immigration difficulties, and another from Brazil), and asked for the reasons leading to this decision. A discussion ensued and the incoming Board agreed to examine the issue.
- c. Sébastien Soubiran (Strasbourg) stressed the importance of enhancing the collaboration of the SIC with historians of science and medicine, possibly at the next 2021 General Congress.

Minutes compiled by  
Sofia Talas, SIC Secretary

Attachment

Statement by Silke Ackermann, SIC outgoing President

Dear friends, dear colleagues,

When Paolo, Sara and Hans handed over the SIC Board baton in Manchester in 2013 to Marta, Michael and myself, they left a house in very good order. The SIC had been recognised as the most active commission within the IUHPS with a series of successful conferences, a new series with Brill had been launched, and a succession-procedure had been established for the first time (of which we were the result).

Being able to build on these successes was a real privilege and the trust put into us by the community was a huge honour – and very daunting at the same time.

We had decided early on that we would serve for one term of four years (i.e. from 2013 to 2017) before handing over to the next Board in order to honour the huge talent within our group and to encourage dynamic and fresh ideas to come forward. Given our various other professional commitments we decided that we would work very closely together, standing in for each other when the need arose regardless of formal ‘roles’ – thus the ‘Three Musketeers’ were (re)born, as we tend to refer to ourselves in less serious moments (of which there were many!).

Following a period of listening to members of our community during our ‘apprenticeship’ (i.e. the year after our election, but before taking over), we agreed on a list of goals that we wanted to achieve in the four years ahead. The most important of these were:

- 1) A fresh, dynamic, enticing website that would act as the Commission’s ‘business card’ world-wide;
- 2) Endeavoring to substantially lower conference fees to enable participation from younger colleagues and those without institutional funding by insuring robust local support from the Board; and
- 3) Maintaining openness, supporting emerging scholars, and encouraging outreach to other disciplines and fields.

We never had any doubt that the only way to achieve this within a relatively short space of time was by relying on 'broad shoulders', i.e. by seeking advice and support from others in the community. The response we had right from the start was overwhelming and humbling - a true sign for the generosity and vigour of our community, if any sign was needed.

The website is the most visible outcome of this 'devolved action', but there are many more examples one could list, such as the 'young researchers' group', our tireless abstract-referees, the electoral commission, or the auditors of our budget.

Apart from the wonderful community we had the honour to serve for the past four years, one of the greatest delights for me personally was having the pleasure to work closely (and frequently VERY late at night!) with Marta and Michael. We had a huge amount of fun – and I am afraid there are now far too many videos on the internet taken of our daring artistic triple acts ... 😊.

The last formal act of our tenure is to thank you all for your trust and support these past four years – and to hand over the virtual baton to our successors Janet Laidla, Sofia Talas and Rich Kremer. We wish them every success in their term of office and we have now doubt that the SIC will be even stronger in four years' time!

*Silke Ackermann, 28 July 2017*