

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the
XXXVII International Scientific Instrument Symposium
Leiden, 3-7 September 2018**
draft – subject to approval

Chaired by the Board

President: Rich Kremer

Secretary: Sofia Talas

Treasurer: Janet Laidla

The Scientific Instrument Commission held its thirty-seventh symposium from 3-7 September 2018, in Leiden and Haarlem, the Netherlands. It was hosted by Teylers Museum, Haarlem, on Wednesday, 5 September, and by Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, Leiden, the rest of the week. The SIC annual general meeting was held on Friday, 7 September at Rijksmuseum Boerhaave. About 125 members were present.

Rich Kremer welcomed the participants to the AGM. He thanked Amito Haarhuis, Director of the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, and Marian Scharlou, Director of Teylers Museum, for hosting our 37th Symposium, and praised staff of both museums for their friendly and efficient support of our meeting. Kremer reminded members of the tragic fire that, on 3 September 2018, had destroyed the Museo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro and expressed the SIC's solidarity with the Museo's staff and our Brazilian members, Marcus Granato, Beto Pimentel and their colleague, Marta Lourenço, all of whom have worked closely with the Museo Nacional. Kremer reminded AGM participants that the SIC is an open organization with no formal membership. All persons actively participating in a SIC Symposium are by definition members and thus are entitled to attend and vote at the AGM. Finally, Kremer introduced fellow board members, Sofia Talas (Secretary) and Janet Laidla (Treasurer), and thanked them for their many contributions to the on-going life of the SIC.

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Gaye Danişan Polat, Simon Schaffer, Jenny Bulstrode, Günther Oestmann, Takis Lazos, Karsten Gaulke, Peter Plaßmeyer, Rolf Riekher, Peter Hering.

2) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting (2017) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Secretary Talas recalled that the minutes of the plenary business meeting from the 36th Scientific Instrument Symposium, held in July 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, had been posted on the SIC website several months ago for circulation and review. She asked for comments or corrections. Hearing none, the minutes were approved as written.

3) SIC Finances

Treasurer Laidla, presented her report on the Commission's finances from August 2017 to September 2018. She recalled that the SIC operates on the annual grant provided by the DHST. This year the sum was \$ 1800 (\$ 1770 after transfer costs), which is \$ 600 less than previous years. If this is a continuous trend, we will have to rethink our expenses. This year we continued as planned because we had already taken on financial commitments.

Laidla showed the overview of expenses for 2017 at the request of previous treasurer Marta Lourenço to show the final report.

IUHPS/DHST GRANT (US\$ 2400, ie. 2 218 EUR, transferred 25.04.2017)

CONFERENCE: SIC 2017 RIO	
3 Travel Grants (US\$ 300 each + transfer costs for 4 of them, no Eurozone Bank)	
Travel Grant Rio (Nan Zhang) + transfer costs	€ 383
Travel Grant Rio (Taha Yasin Arslan + transfer costs)	€ 383
Travel Grant Rio (Claudia Torres + transfer costs)	€ 345
Travel Grant Rio (Pouyan Shahidi Marani, transfer costs both ways, refunded the grant because could not attend)	€ 121
MAST subsidy as LOC for the 2017 Symposium (US \$ 600)	€ 523
ADMINISTRATION	
Bank expenses (estimate total 2017)	€ 40
WEBSITE	
Website design improvement, new domain and server costs + stipend for the webmaster Andras Ratony (forthcoming in December)	€ 900

Summary 2017

Total income 2017	€ 2 218
Total Expenses	€ 2 695
SIC RESERVES as of 9.11.2017	€ 5 735 (of which € 400* is reserved for the webmaster) *Actually paid 333.53 €
SIC RESERVES estimated at end of 2017	€ 5 335

Then continued with the report of the year 2018. The expenses were similar to last years.

As there were many young scholars interested in the meeting this year the SIC board decided to give out 3 sums of \$ 300 and two additional smaller grants of \$ 200. One of the recipients could not attend and returned the sum.

IUHPS/DHST grant 2017 August-2018 August

INCOME	TRANSFER FROM FORMER TREASURER	€ 5735
INCOME	DHST GRANT (19.04.2018)	\$ 1770
EXPENSE	Grant for webmaster	€ 333,53
	SIC CONFERENCE	

EXPENSE	4 travel grants (Kadri Tinn and Taha YASIN ARSLAN \$ 300, Convin Splettsen and Anna Simon-Stickley \$ 200)	€ 863,07
EXPENSE	Subsidy for the 2018 symposium \$ 600 (to lower the conference fee to students and young scholars)	€ 512,38
EXPENSE	Bank expenses (all transfers)	€ 11,19
EXPENSES TOTAL		€ 1720,17
SIC RESERVES		€ 4014,83
		\$ 1770
FUTURE RUNNING EXPENSES 2018/2019	SIC webpage (webmaster and server space, estimated)	\$ 500

The two external auditors, David Pantalony and Tayce Phillipson, reported that they had read and approved Laidla's financial report.

4) Commission news

4.1 Advocacy

Kremer explained that the SIC has been called upon, in the past years, to express its support for threatened collections or institutions, or to encourage new initiatives that would promote the field. He invited participants to present any such situations, recalling that in August 2018 the Board had posted a message, in this sense, to Rete mailing list.

4.1.1 Karl Grandin, Director of the Center of the History of Science of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, announced that the threats to the Stockholm Observatory Museum, that he had been reported for several years to the SIC, have diminished. The observatory building has been bought by the Stockholm School Properties Company (SISAB), and the plan is that 'Vetenskapens Hus' (the House of Science) – a collaboration between Stockholm University, the Royal Institute of Technology and the City of Stockholm – should have regular school programs in the building, and at a later stage there should be public museum activities. At the present time, they are however struggling with solving the problem of radon gas entering the building (that functions like a chimney) from the ground.

4.1.2 James Caplan briefly described the difficult situation of the heritage of the Marseille Astronomical Observatory. He explained that it is important to keep an eye on it, but that there is no need for a direct help for the moment.

4.1.3 Kremer recalled the fire that destroyed a large part of the Museo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. He noted that a petition had been launched and encouraged members of the SIC to sign it. He announced that the SIC Board would write a letter of solidarity to the direction of the Museo Nacional. He also asked Beto Pimentel, from Rio de Janeiro Federal University, for more recent news. Beto described the initiative of Brazilian museology students to collect photos of the Museo and its collections before the fire. He specifically urged SIC members who had visited the Museo on the occasion of the 31st SIC Symposium in 2012 to respond to this call for pictures. Paolo Brenni recalled that he had shot many pictures, copies of which he would supply to the Brazilian photo collectors.

4.1.4 Kremer briefly described the situation of Dartmouth's Shattuck Observatory (founded 1853). To preserve it from scheduled destruction (to construct a new dormitory for students), Dartmouth's Department of Physics & Astronomy launched a petition drive, which was signed by about 2000 people from across the globe. In January 2018 Kremer delivered a public lecture about the history of the Observatory to a local crowd. Then in July 2018, College officials decided that construction costs would be too high and announced that the dormitory project had been abandoned. Despite this official reason, the public pressure campaign undoubtedly had played a role in saving the historic observatory.

4.1.5 No further cases of endangered collections were brought to the attention of the SIC Board.

4.2 SIC website update

Janet Laidla recalled that Andras Ratonyi, the SIC webmaster, is updating our website four times a year. She requested that if anyone has changes to propose, they should kindly send them to her. Janet will then coordinate with Ratonyi to implement the updates. She hopes that members are enjoying the new webpage.

4.3 A new on-line astrolabe catalog, "Astrolabe Explorer"

Silke Ackermann presented a pilot project that she and colleagues at the Museum of the History of Science (Oxford) are conducting. Entitled "Astrolabe Explorer," the wikidata site creates the ability to bring together data from across the web about astrolabes, allowing crowd-sourced volunteers to update and maintain a catalogue of extant astrolabes. The prototype project can be consulted at <http://glam-discovery.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/astrolabes/>. Silke urged SIC members to visit the site and to contribute to its expanding list of described instruments.

4.4 SIC bibliography update

The future of this bibliography had been earlier discussed in Rio, at the 2017 SIC AGM. Kremer reported that the SIC bibliography was compiled from 1997 to 2004, by SIC members Gerard Turner, David J. Bryden, A.V. Simcock and more recently by Peter de Clercq. It currently includes more than 3500 entries, listed in 13 separate pdf documents. In the earlier lists, entries are arranged alphabetically by subject; in later lists, by author. Kremer asked whether and how the SIC community currently uses this bibliography. Currently there are, of course, other bibliographic tools (e.g., Google Scholar, Isis CBExplore), but none of these are curated by instrument scholars, so items such as exhibit catalogues, for instance, may be missed. He asked the community whether they thought it would be worthwhile to update the SIC database and extend it into the future. The question raised a lively discussion among the participants; many agreed that it would be useful to fold the existing SIC database into on-line searchable, fully open-access ISIS Bibliography. Several people volunteered to collaborate to this task. It was decided that the Board would open a conversation with Stephen Weldon, Bibliographer for the History of Science Society, about creating procedures to convert our bibliographic entries into a form uploadable to his database and to then upload all the new entries, marking SIC curation so that database users can search for SIC curated items. Members also urged the Board to talk with officials at the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave to explore whether their library staff, into the future, could be charged with curating new SIC bibliographical entries as contributing editors to the Isis CB (see <http://isiscb.org/contributing-editors>). The Board agreed to bring concrete plans for reviving the SIC Bibliography to the AGM at the 2019 SIC.

4.5. Use of social media

Pedro Raposo reported some discussions he has held with other SIC members on this issue. They agree that social media can have both negative and positive impacts. Of course, social media should not supposed to replace our Rete mailing list, but could be useful to convey news about exhibitions or other events. Raposo asked the AGM participants about their involvement with Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Facebook appeared as the most widely used by the community, but some participants expressed strong reservations about its owners and corporate policies. Other free open-

access tools may be available, similar to Wikis or a blog, as Jasmin Janka pointed out. Pedro wrapped up the discussion, concluding that all platforms have pros and cons. He, Taha Arslan and other members of the SIC will continue reflecting about this question and report back to the SIC as possible suggestions emerge.

4.6. Young scholars gathering

As happened at the 2017 SIC Symposia, an informal get-together took place for emerging scholars attending the Leiden/Haarlem Symposium. The Board expressed its gratitude to Martin Weiss and Taha Arslan, who organized this year's gathering at a local restaurant in Leiden. Martin announced that 22 young scholars participated and that the meeting was both productive and pleasant.

5) Future meetings

5.1 (2019)

Sofia Talas recalled that the Board had been mandated at the 2017 AGM in Rio to continue exploring the possibility of having an SIC Symposium organized in Cuba. Claudia Felipe, Head of the Heritage Department of the University of Havana, had attended the SIC Symposium in Rio. The Board remained in conversation with Claudia during the past year. Sofia noted that hotels in Cuba are expensive but there will be the possibility of staying in so-called "casas particulares", a kind of Bed & Breakfast. A travel agency selected by the University of Havana can handle such reservations. As for the scientific organization, besides the University of Havana, which will be the main organizer, other institutions will be involved, such as the Cuban Physics Society, the Cuba Chemistry Society and the Office of the Historian of Havana (responsible for heritage and tourism). At the AGM, a slide presentation was presented on behalf of the University of Havana, to officially invite the SIC community to meet in Cuba. The AGM participants expressed unanimous support to accept the Board's recommendation that SIC 2019 Symposium be held in Havana. The Board agreed to set dates and post the call-for-papers as soon as possible so that members can start planning their travel, secure visas, etc.

5.2 (2020)

In the months before the AGM, Rich Kremer had discussed with Alison Boyle, from the Science Museum, London, the possibility of holding the 2020 SIC Symposium in London. At the AGM, Alison formally invited the SIC community to London. She noted there will be many changes in the Science Museum, with more instruments getting back into the Museum and a new research center being opened. The SIC Symposium would also spend one day at the Greenwich Royal Observatory/National Maritime Museum. Alison indicated that accommodations in London are expensive, and that she will look for less expensive options. She added that for the UK Museums in this era of Brexit, it is important to host international communities of scholars.

5.3 (2021)

The 2021 SIC Symposium will be held in Prague, as part of the 26th International Congress of History of Science and Technology of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IUHPST). This location was approved in July 2017 at the last Congress of the IUPST.

5.4 (2022 and beyond)

The AGM discussed possible sites for after 2021. In Ghent, for instance, a new university museum recently opened and in Strasbourg a new museum will open in the early 2020s. Paolo Brenni recalled that the SIC has never met in Vienna, noting that we currently have no members from that city. In the past, Peter Schuster expressed interest in hosting the SIC at the Schloss Pöllau in Steiermark, about 100 km southwest of Vienna, but it may not be easy to find organisational support for such a venue. Silke Ackermann underlined that Spain has great collections, never visited by the SIC; Rich Kremer promised that the Board would explore this suggestion. Hans Hooijmaijers proposed that

after London and Prague, it would be good to visit once again either North or South America. Ottawa was proposed, and David Pantalony, from Canada Science and Technology Museum, noted that, although the SIC had in 1986 met in Ottawa, the Museum is now totally renovated, with new research and storage facilities. The German Optical Museum in Jena has also been recently renewed and Timo Mappes, its Director, proposed it as a possible host, underlining that a new conference centre, close to the Museum, is available. Silke Ackermann wondered about Eastern locations, such as Iran, Pakistan or India. Rome was also mentioned; Paolo Brenni said he has many contacts there who could be involved in organizing an SIC Symposium.

5.5. (2018)

Rich Kremer expressed the community's profound gratitude to the local organizers of the 2018 SIC Symposium. He particularly thanked the directors of both the museums that hosted the Symposium, the Rijkmuseum Boerhaave and the Teylers Museum. A special "Thank you" went to Hans Hooijmaijers and Trienke van der Spek and their colleagues for their wonderful collaboration and support of this year's symposium.

6) SIC Publications

Giorgio Strano, general editor of *SIC: Scientific Instruments and Collections*, presented the sixth volume of the series published by Brill. Entitled *Heaven and Earth United*, the volume was edited by Richard Dunn, Silke Ackermann and Strano. Dunn presented the book, which focuses on the astrological contexts in which instruments have been found.

Giorgio drew attention to the "look" of the volume that differs from the earlier Brill volumes. He explained that the new aesthetic is related to the fact that our series had been transformed into a full series, mainly thanks to Rosanna Woensdregt from Brill, who has been collaborating with the SIC for more than ten years. Rosanna was present at the AGM and the Board warmly thanked her for serving our scholarly community so effectively.

Strano also announced that, given our new status as a full series, we should produce one volume per year. He reported that the seventh volume, *Scientific Instruments between East and West* (a provisional title), is under preparation under the editorship of Neil Brown, Feza Günergun and Silke Ackermann. For the eighth volume, Giorgio solicits proposals from individual members.

The Board and the participants warmly thanked Strano and all the editors for their invaluable role, work and involvement in the publication of these volumes. Rich Kremer underscored that, as far as he knows, the SIC is the only commission of the DHST to support a regular publication series.

7) Policy for SIC participation "in absentia"

In response to a question raised at Rio Symposium in 2017 about several papers that were presented via skype, Rich Kremer opened the question of SIC policy concerning people who cannot attend a Symposium but would like nevertheless to present a paper. There were several cases, again this year, of people unable to extend a visa, find travel funds, etc.

The current Board recommends that we not to adopt a written policy but rather empower each Board to deal with "abstentia" requests on a case-by-case basis. They recommend this plan for several reasons: i) the SIC does not have any written bylaws; ii) the Board can envision too many scenarios to cover in any simple written policy; iii) the current Board trusts future boards to preserve the SIC as a "welcoming community" that values face-to-face exchanges in its annual symposia. Members generally agreed with the Board's recommendation; so the Board, going into the future, will handle case-by-case requests for participation in SIC Symposia by absent members.

8) News from members

- a. Françoise Langlois, Vice-President of ASEISTE (the French association for the preservation and study of teaching scientific instruments and techniques) presented the most recent volume published by this organization, *Encyclopédie des instruments de l'enseignement de la Physique du XVIII^e au milieu du XX^e siècle*. She pointed out that the ASEISTE is very interested in getting in touch with other people who work on teaching collections in connection with school curricula (teachers and pupils).
- b. Dominique Bernard, University of Rennes, announced that he had found and restored, with the help of Paolo Brenni, 1000 instruments kept at the University of Rennes. He presented the book he recently published on this collection *Un trésor scientifique redécouvert*, noting that this is a pedagogical volume in which only 90 instruments are presented. He warmly thanked Brenni for his invaluable help to conduct the restoration and study of the collection.
- c. Jörg Zaun, Technische Universität Dresden, announced that his University will host in 2021 (probably in August or September) a joint meeting of UMAC, the ICOM Committee for University Museums and Collections, and Universeum, the European association for the preservation, study and valorisation of university heritage. He underlined that this would be a great occasion to visit many collections and warmly invited SIC members to attend.
- d. Alison Boyle, Science Museum London, presented an update on Museum's collections storage move, as the Museum has now set dates for the period when the collections will be inaccessible. With such a large-scale packing project this is unavoidable, but the Museum will be able to give people enough notice to plan visits until the access has to stop in April 2019. The new storage will open in 2023. The majority of collections will be photographed in the move and put online.
- e. Nicolas de Hilster presented his newly published book *Navigation on Wood, Wooden Navigational Instruments 1590-1731: An analysis of early modern western instruments for celestial navigation, their origins, mathematical concepts and accuracies*, based on his PhD research. The volume describes, in details, technical aspects of navigation and the way instruments were used.
- f. Michael Korey made an announcement on behalf of Julia Ellinghaus (jellinghaus@uni-wuppertal.de), who has begun a three-year, DFG-funded project on iconography on (not of!) scientific instruments at the University of Wuppertal within the research group of Volker Remmert. She welcomes comments and suggestions for instruments and collections to be examined.

9) AOB

None

At the conclusion of the AGM, the Board awarded this year's "buzz word prize" (papers using the term "tulip") to Taha Arslan (a tulip constellation in a tenth-century Arabic astronomical manuscript), Bernd Scholze (a bouquet of tulips at the wedding of an eighteenth-century experimental lecturer) and Emma Angelini (tulips inspired Jacquard's invention of the punch-card power loom).

Minutes compiled by

Sofia Talas, SIC Secretary, in collaboration with Rich Kremer, SIC President, and Janet Laidla, SIC Treasurer