

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT IN ASTRONOMY EDUCATION

Chairperson and Editor: **J.R. PERCY**

JOINT DISCUSSION 4

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This Joint Discussion was sponsored by IAU Commission 46 (The Teaching of Astronomy), whose work affects and benefits all IAU members. The JD was chaired by Lucienne Gouguenheim and John Percy, who are grateful to the Organizing Committee of the Commission for their advice and assistance. The editor is especially grateful to Carolyn Moon, Erindale Campus, University of Toronto, for typing these proceedings quickly and carefully from a very heterogeneous manuscript.

In addition to the papers published here, there were papers by M. Othman (The Needs of 'The Lone Astronomer') and by N. Raghavan (The Role of Planetaria) for which manuscripts were not received. Two poster papers, by J. Matthews (on "Off-the-Shelf" Computer Software in the Astronomy Lab), and by Robbins (on Using Computers to Personalize a Large Class) were also presented as brief oral reports. A limited number of copies of the full proceedings of this JD, including discussion, and abstracts of the papers by Matthews and Robbins, are available from the undersigned.

John R. Percy, Editor

ASTRONOMY EDUCATION - AN OVERVIEW

Lucienne Gouguenheim
Observatoire de Paris-Meudon, F-92195 Meudon Cedex, France
E-mail: gouguenheim@obspm.fr

Each IAU member should be concerned about the quality of astronomy education, both in the schools and among the general public, because education plays a direct role in attracting and training new generations of astronomers; it contributes also to awareness, and understanding of astronomy among the taxpayers who support it.

Even more important than informing the taxpayer of the use made of his money, in terms of discovery and hot news, is the training of free citizens, having critical minds and able to ask themselves the right questions concerning the Universe in which they are living, and not only the practical and useful ones which the taxpayer has to ask. Facing the increasing complexity of modern science together with the dangerous growth of false sciences such as creationism, the astronomer remains a link between a rational thought process and the citizen. It is the aim of our commission to encourage this link.

I had the opportunity, one year ago, to take part in the "European Science Summit" organized in Brussels by the European Parliament. The organizer stated