

Foreword

Dear reader,

We live in a time when astronomical discoveries, often related to major technological advances, have become a very interesting topic for the general public, who follow them through the media. As a consequence, the communication of the results obtained by scientists has become a priority for many important scientific institutions and large research projects. News agencies and press offices have been organized so that press releases about the most spectacular discoveries are periodically distributed to the media and the public, making use of impressive images, easy to follow explanations and attractive multimedia presentations. The public communication of astronomy has become a fundamental tool to strengthen the relationship between the astronomical community and the rest of society.

Teaching astronomy through the different educational stages is a fundamental step towards increasing our ability to communicate science efficiently. Only by being able to communicate and teach astronomy properly we will be successful at attracting new generations of young people interested in the discovery of the mysteries of the Universe. They will become the researchers of the future and constitute the human resource that will deal with the big questions which astronomy poses to us nowadays.

The present book contains the proceedings of “Teaching and communicating astronomy”, a parallel session of the Joint European and National Astronomical meeting (JENAM) held in Granada from September 13th to 17th, 2004. In this JENAM parallel session we tried to reach all those professional astronomers who have an interest in science outreach, amateur astronomical societies, astronomy teachers in the various levels of educational systems, astronomy outreach professionals, staff from press offices, from observatories and other astronomical institutions and space missions, scientific journalists, planetarium and science museum staff, web designers of pages with astronomical contents, etc. All of them provided an enriching multidisciplinary vision about astronomy teaching and dissemination.

The main topics covered in this parallel session were

- Astronomy in the school curriculum, astronomy education of teachers, and astronomy education research. The use of new technologies and the role of the history of astronomy for the education.
- Public astronomy education: the role of planetaria and mass media.
- Astronomy communication resources (Internet, preparation of press releases, the making of a newsworthy scientific story).

- Media training for scientists, communicators *vs.* scientists, good and bad examples of popular science communication. Correctness of media coverage of science. Practical production and evaluation of communication products.
- Professional and amateur astronomers: how can we help each other.

The convenors of the meeting were G. Bernabu (Departamento de Física, Ingeniería de Sistemas y Teoría, Universitat d'Alacant), M. Stavinschi (Astronomical Institute of the Romanian Academy) and V. Martínez (Observatori Astronòmic de la Universitat de València). We wish to thank also M. Gómez and A. Ortiz-Gil (Observatori Astronòmic de la Universitat de València), B. Martínez (CEFIRE Benidorm), L. Christensen (ESA) and L. Lara (Universidad de Granada), for their help and advice in the initial planning of the session.

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The Editors,
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