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BOOK REVIEW

Future Professional Communication in Astronomy. *Proceedings of the Colloquium held at the Palace of the Academies, Brussels, 10–13 June 2007.*

André Heck and Léo Houziaux (eds.)

Mémoire de la Classe des Sciences, Coll. in-8°, 3^e série, tome XXVII, n° 2047, Académie royale de Belgique, Bruxelles 2007, 255 p. ISBN 987-2-8031-0238-9, 32 EUR

These are the timely and well-edited proceedings of a colloquium dealing with the present state and the future of “communication” in astronomy. While communication in the past was mainly restricted to printed journals, conferences and colloquia, things have changed dramatically in the last decades. Journals have gone online, and runs of paper copies are slowly declining. 25 astronomers and representatives of various publishing institutions met in Brussels in June 2007 to discuss the future and the different options of information communication and -exchange. 16 contributions are supplemented by summaries of discussions held at the meeting.

After a general overview of one of the organizers, who has played a key role in various aspects of information exchange, several representatives discuss future plans of their publications: K.B. Marvel presents the AAS journals (ApJ parts I and II, ApJS, AJ, which are just being transferred from the University of Chicago Press to Institute of Physics Publishing). P. Murdin represents the RAS and its main journal, the MNRAS.

“Open Access” is of course one of the key words of this conference. Producing a journal (either on paper or electronically) is expensive. For the AAS journals, these costs are shared between authors and subscribers. Future plans are to abandon “paper copies” at all, although “printable pages” will continue to be provided. For MNRAS, it is the subscribers who pay. And if it would have “open access”, authors would have to be charged for publication. Some research funding agencies demand that scientific results that they have sponsored should appear online, and freely available (at least after a certain time). Various approaches were outlined by representatives of publishers (Wiley-Blackwell, Springer, Elsevier, EDP Sciences). S. Plaszczyński introduced a project for “open access” in the field of high energy physics. To replace “repositories” and collections of “preprints” that may have never made it to the pages of journals for various reasons, a SCOAP model was initiated. This “Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics” will be a global network of funding agencies, laboratories and libraries that will provide the necessary funding for publishing material in the main journals for high energy physics (involving four publishers). M. Kurtz outlined the “Open access policy” of Smithsonian/NASA Astrophysics Data System (ADS), while T. Mahoney voiced some caution, since open access may lead to a deterioration or even collapse of the publication process. W. B. Burton and H. A. Abt discussed long-term trends in research literature, while C. Madsen and L. L. Christensen discussed aspects of communication of specialists with politicians and the public.

We could only give a brief summary of this book. Many thought-provoking ideas simply defied being abstracted. Anyone who is interested in the publication process in astronomy and its aspects in the future will find a lot of interesting reading in these proceedings.

Hilmar W. Duerbeck, Astronomy Group, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2, B-1050 Brussel