

Minutes of the XXIII International Scientific Instrument Symposium
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon
Dresden
6-11 September 2004

President: Paolo Brenni
Secretary: Sara Schechner
Treasurer: Marian Fournier

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Robert Anderson, Gerrit Veeneman, Gerard Turner, Peter de Clercq, Sofia Talas, David Pantalony, Julian Holland, Fabrizio Bonoli, Alan Simpson, Francis Yeo, Marjorie Webster, Peter and Elena Hadrava.

The Scientific Instrument Commission recognized the passing of Helen Turner, wife of Gerard Turner. The Commission will send a letter of condolence.

2) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting in Newport News, 2003

The Minutes of the 22nd Plenary Session, held at the Mariners' Museum, Newport News in October 2003 were circulated, reviewed, and accepted.

3) SIC Finances

Last year, the Treasurer, Marian Fournier, reported in Newport News that the Commission had €2567.49 in its bank account. The current balance this year is €1986.49.

Receipts:

\$1900 grant from the IUHPS
 \$1000 for the annual conference
 \$600 for the website
 \$300 for running costs

Expenses:

€850 (\$1000) appropriated for the expenses of the Symposium in Dresden.
\$750 to Shaw Kinsley for work on bibliographic database on the SIC website
\$436 to Shaw Kinsley for software expenses incurred in the bibliography project.

4) Report of Ongoing Commission Activities

A. Online Resources and Initiatives

SIC website, <http://www.sic.iuhps.org/>

The Commission's website has a new page with links to online resources. The first order of business was to post links to digitized *trade catalogues*. These include:

Max Planck Institute –“virtual laboratory” of experimental psychology and physiology
Astronomical Observatory of Palermo
Smithsonian Institution–catalogues of instrument makers, 1800-1914

We will keep updating this list of online trade catalogues.

The Commission formally thanks Dana Freiburger for his work as webmaster of the SIC site.

The SIC Bibliography continues to be compiled by Peter de Clercq. It is now online on the SIC website, and updated two to three times a year. Shaw Kinsley has undertaken, at the Commission's request, to reorganize the bibliography in order to integrate all the sections and make the whole into a searchable, online database. The Commission purchased software for this project, and Shaw has put up a test version of part of the Bibliography on the server at Oxford. We expect to launch this publicly soon after the Symposium. Future updates to the online bibliography will be made directly by Peter de Clercq.

Shaw Kinsley has received \$750 for his work. Thanks to Stephen Johnston for his help in loading and testing the program onto the Oxford server and to the Museum of the History of Science for providing us space for this project.

Transit of Venus Website

Reporting on behalf of the Transit of Venus Committee (Stephen Johnston, Sara Schechner, and Steve Turner), Stephen Johnston described progress made towards the development of a collaborative online, historical database that interconnected past Transit of Venus expeditions, instruments, astronomers, makers, and institutions. The project had first been proposed to and approved by the Commission at the Stockholm meeting. Since then, the committee worked with a computing group at Oxford in order to develop the infrastructure of the database. The contract for the work requires the Commission to have an Oxford web address for the site, but there will be a prominent link on the Commission's own website.

The website went live in the spring of 2004 in advance of the Transit of Venus in June 2004. Institutions and individual contributors may upload images and data directly to the website once they have secured a password from the Commission's site manager. Details can be found at <http://transits.mhs.ox.ac.uk/>.

Online Register of Scientific Instruments

Paolo Brenni reported that Online Register of Scientific Instruments (<http://www.isin.org>) is active again after technical problems delayed some submissions. The Fondazione Scienza e Tecnica in Florence recently added about 800 instruments to the Register, and currently there are more than 7000 instruments in the database. The Online Register continues to be supported by the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford with the Commission.

The Commission formally thanked the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford for its support.

Online Thesaurus of Instrument Names

Last year Paolo Brenni had begun discussions with Steve Turner and Roland Wittje about the possibility of creating a thesaurus of instrument names in diverse languages. Steve reported here that a thesaurus is being created as a byproduct of the task of generating the indices to the trade literature being put online by the Smithsonian Institution.

B. SIC Publications

Under the sponsorship of the Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienze in Florence, *Nuncius* has been publishing selected papers from SIC meetings in a special section of one issue each year. Paolo Brenni reported that the new editor, Marco Baretta, proposes to slim down *Nuncius*. To this end, the Istituto has offered the Commission space in *Bibliotheca di Nuncius* in the form of our own, separate volumes of *Bibliotheca di Nuncius*, with our own series numbers. This remarkable opportunity will cost the Commission nothing. Paolo expressed the sentiment of SIC members when he thanked the Istituto for its “precious help.”

Jim Bennett enthusiastically endorsed the new plan, saying, “The original arrangement was wonderful, and this is extraordinarily wonderful!”

Other members raised questions that were answered by the SIC officers or discussed by the group. Charles Mollan asked whether there would be an editorial board. Paolo remarked that the officers were soliciting recommendations for an editor. Those with names to propose or anyone wanting to volunteer should contact the President or Secretary of the Commission (Paolo Brenni or Sara Schechner) directly. Charles remarked that he thought an editorial board should be established to advise the editor. This will be considered too.

Ronald Smeltzer asked about the circulation of *Bibliotheca di Nuncius*. Is it the same as *Nuncius*? Does a subscription to *Nuncius* include the *Bibliotheca*? He worried that many libraries subscribing to *Nuncius* would not purchase a separate monograph series. Mara Miniati said that *Bibliotheca di Nuncius* can be bought as single volumes without subscribing to *Nuncius*. Sara Schechner remarked that this could be an opportunity to increase our circulation in smaller institutions that would not otherwise be able to afford or wish to buy *Nuncius*. Paolo Brenni agreed to check with the publisher to clarify how subscription works and what the circulation is for the *Bibliotheca*.

Anthony Turner asked if all contributions to the SIC volume were to required be in English. Jim Bennett said that it has long been understood that English is preferred because it is the most common language among readers, but that English is not required as a matter of principle.

Topics for the next issue of *Nuncius* and the future SIC volumes of *Bibliotheca di Nuncius* were discussed. At the last plenary meeting in Newport News in 2003, the Commission agreed that Jim Bennett would edit several papers presented at our meetings in Athens and Newport News for the

2004 volume of *Nuncius*. At that same meeting, we also agreed to publish papers from the special meeting on “Scientific Instruments in the University,” which was held at Dartmouth College in June 2004. It was suggested that the Dresden Symposium’s session on “Central European Instruments of the 16th to 18th Centuries” be published in a future issue.

Those attending the business meeting desired that these minutes record the Commission’s formal thanks to Jim Bennett for editing the selection of papers from Athens and Newport News, as well as the Commission’s gratitude to Paolo Galluzzi for providing SIC this opportunity to publish them in *Nuncius*.

5) Future Activities and Meetings

A. Scientific Instrument Symposia

2005 Beijing

The XXIV Scientific Instrument Symposium will be held as part of the IUHPS Congress in Beijing, China. “Globalization and Diversity: Diffusion of Science and Technology throughout History” has been selected as the theme for this Congress, and more information can be found on the congress web site at <http://2005bj.ihns.ac.cn/>. The Congress dates span July 24-30.

About 30-40 people have expressed interest in attending this meeting. The SIC officers will work with local organizers to plan for one to one-and-a-half days of papers, and an excursion to the old Jesuit Observatory and relevant collections.

Jane Insley asked if we could link our session to that of another commission. Jim pointed out that a link could prevent us from having a broad spectrum of papers. He also pointed out that a general session has been accepted on “Mathematical Practitioners in Early Modern Europe,” so our field is becoming of greater general interest.

“How will papers be placed in sessions?” Roland Wittje asked. The SIC officers will look into the logistics for organizing our session.

2006 Florence

Paolo Galluzzi confirmed the invitation for the XXV Symposium be held in Florence at the Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza, which was approved by the Commission last year.

Giorgio Strano said that the Museum might be closed for renovations, but we could still visit its collections. Paolo recommended that we stick with Florence

As this will be the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the SIC, we would like to have some activities to celebrate this occasion. (SIC officers solicited photographs from earlier meetings to include in a festive slide show.)

2007 Cambridge, Massachusetts or Cracow?

Last year, the Commission accepted the invitation to hold its XXVI Symposium in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 2007 at the new facility of the Harvard Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments.

Stanislaw Waltos and Ewa Wyka invited the Commission to meet in Cracow for 2007. Waltos described the sites and collections that might be featured at such a meeting.

The SIC officers proposed that we meet in Cracow in 2008 in order to coordinate a Commission Symposium in Europe with the meeting being planned jointly by the Antique Telescope Society, the SIC, and other societies in the Netherlands to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the telescope. Our SIC meeting would be separate from the telescope meeting, but timed so that members may attend both easily.

What does the Commission want to do? Randy Liberman suggested Cracow in 2006, Harvard 2007, Florence 2008 (which has logic for telescope history). The officers decided to delay making a decision until further information could be gathered from the host institutions.

B. Other Future Meetings

Autumn 2008, Holland

Sara Schechner reported that she and Paolo Brenni met with Bart Fried and Ken Launie of the Antique Telescope Society to discuss a joint meeting in 2008 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the invention of the telescope. The Commission agreed to participate in such a meeting.

6) News from Members

Report on “Scientific Instrument Collections in the University”

Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire
24-27 June 2004

Rich Kremer reported on the international meeting, “Scientific Instrument Collections in the University,” held at Dartmouth College, in Hanover, New Hampshire in June 2004. He described the conference themes and workshops. Eighty-five people attended; half from overseas. The organizing committee included Rich Kremer, David Pantalony, Frank Manasek, and Sara Schechner. More information can be had at the conference website, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sicu/>.

Silke Ackermann mentioned that there was now a new gallery on 18th century natural history at the British Museum. Another gallery on the subject of time has also been approved.

Tatiana Moiseeva announced plans for a dictionary of scientific terms used by Lomonosov. She would like information from SIC members.

Peter Plassmeyer is working on a project on artillery apparatus.

Klaus Staubermann announced the possibility of a workshop on 20th century scientific instruments. It might be jointly organized by the Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum and the Universiteitsmuseum Utrecht.

7) Other New Business

No other matters were raised by members.

8) Thanks to the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon

Formal thanks were given to the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon for hosting the Symposium.

Respectfully submitted by
Sara J. Schechner
SIC Secretary