

Minutes of the XXXII International Scientific Instrument Symposium

Manchester, July 23–26, 2013

President: Paolo Brenni

Secretary: Sara Schechner

Treasurer: Hans Hooijmaijers

The Scientific Instrument Commission held its thirty-second annual symposium on July 23–26, 2013 at the University of Manchester as part of the 24th ICHTM, the International Congress on the History of Science, Technology and Medicine (July 21–28, 2013). The plenary business meeting was held on Wednesday, July 24, at the University. About 50 people were present.

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sofia Talas, Marta Lourenço, Inga Elmqvist, David Coffeen, and Yola Coffeen.

2) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012

The minutes of the plenary business meeting from the thirty-first Scientific Instrument Symposium, held in Rio in October 2012, are circulated, reviewed, and accepted.

3) SIC Finances

The SIC Treasurer, Hans Hooijmaijers, reports on the Commission's finances from September 2011 until July 2012:

(Rounded numbers)

Receipts:

€ 70	interest
€ 1770	grant from the IUHPS

Expenses:

€ 185	bank fees
€ 640	grant to MAST as organizer for the Rio meeting
€ 80 (\$ 100)	website
€ 80 (\$ 100)	bibliography
€ 610 (\$ 700)	two travel grants for Rio à € 305 (\$ 350)

Current account:	€ 2100 (was € 125 in 2012)
Savings deposit:	€ 6070 (was € 7750 in 2012)
Total:	€ 8170 (was € 7875 in 2012)

Payments still to be made in 2013:

- travel grants two students
- visit to Stonyhurst
- website (\$ 100)
- bibliography (\$ 100)

These payments will be handled by Hans before the accounts are handed over to the new treasurer (Marta).

4) Report of Ongoing Commission Activities

A. Online Resources and Initiatives

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

The website has again been updated by Dana Freiburger. The Commission formally thanks him for his devoted service as webmaster of the SIC site.

The SIC Bibliography was compiled this past year by Dalila Wallé of the Museum Boerhaave. The Commission formally thanks her as well. The Bibliography is accessible online – please visit the SIC website to see which journals are regularly culled for inclusion and for a contact address to propose additional titles.

B. SIC Publications

Giorgio Strano, general editor of *SIC: Scientific Instruments and Collections*, reports on this series of books published by Brill for the Commission. Volume III, *Cabinets of Experimental Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, drawing largely on papers presented at the 2011 SIC Symposium in Kassel, has just appeared; Jim Bennett and Sofia Talas were the guest editors. A fourth volume is to be edited by Mara Miniati, Silke Ackermann, and Rich Kremer and will address “instruments on display.” Giorgio proposes that the fifth volume might treat the “trade and transfer of instruments,” as discussed in several sessions of the present symposium and of the 2012 meeting in Rio. (Note: A separate volume, with a selection of papers from Rio edited by Marcus Granato and Marta Lourenço, is in preparation.)

On behalf of Sofia Talas and himself, Jim Bennett offers thanks to the general editor for the high standard that the series has attained and for Giorgio’s efficient, thorough, and often hidden editorial work. The Commission formally thanks Giorgio and the Editorial Board (Stephen Johnston, Mara Miniati, and Alison Morrison-Low) for their excellent work and expresses its hope that the series may continue with further thematically focused volumes. Brill has also shown a clear preference for such volumes over general conference proceedings.

5) Future Activities and Meetings

Scientific Instrument Commission Symposia

2014 Tartu, Estonia

The Board had reported at the Symposia in Kassel (2011) and Rio (2012) on contacts with the Museum of the University of Tartu (Dorpat), Estonia, the oldest university in the Baltic, which had expressed interest in hosting an upcoming symposium. Lea Lippik of the Museum came to Manchester and gave a presentation underscoring this proposal for 2014. She described the many activities undertaken recently for the protection of the scientific heritage of the University and the surrounding region. The historical observatory with its famed Fraunhofer refractor was refurbished and re-opened, and work is now being done on the instrument collections and anatomical theater. She stressed that all of the University collections are situated in a compact area reachable by foot and that ample meeting space would be available for the Symposium sessions within University buildings. Nearby are also sites relating to the meridian arc established by Struve, now on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as well as several other collections and historic sites that could be visited on an excursion – for example, Tallin.

The proposal that Tartu be the host of next year's Symposium is seconded and approved by acclamation. The new SIC Board (see below) is entrusted with the task of setting the date, choosing the topic, and helping coordinate the program, and the SIC Secretary will post this news on RETE. The Commission formally thanks Lea Lippik for traveling to Manchester to make this presentation, and its members look forward to next year's meeting.

Further venues

Paolo Brenni reports that official invitations to host a future symposium have now been received from the University of Turin, Italy, as well as from the Niagara Science Museum in Niagara, New York. Drawing on past experience, he stresses the importance of having a team of local organizers in place, backed up by strong institutional support, and entrusts the incoming Board to follow up on these invitations.

6) Commission News

a. *Praise for the SIC*: Paolo Brenni reports that Frank James, lead organizer of the present ICHSTM, has praised the SIC as the best organized commission taking part in the Congress.

b. *Stonyhurst*: An SIC excursion to Stonyhurst College is to take place on Friday afternoon, July 26, after the last session of the SIC Symposium. The excursion has been organized by Dana Freiburger, who reports briefly how he came to know the history, site, and collections at Stonyhurst with the support of a Travel Grant from the Scientific Instrument Society (see his article in issue 106 of the *SIS Bulletin*). The Commission expresses its gratitude to Dana for his superb organization of this excursion.

c. *Letters of Support*: The President and Secretary report that the Commission is often called upon to write letters on behalf of threatened collections or institutions. Most recently, the Commission has been notified that the Swedish Academy of Sciences has decided to close the Stockholm Observatory Museum, which had been visited on the 2001 SIC Symposium. Karl Grandin, who heads the Academy's Center for the History of Science, with oversight for the Observatory Museum, offers background on the Academy's decision to close the museum and put the collections into storage, and also reports on the most recent developments since the Academy's decision was announced. In particular, the Friends of the Museum and several donors who enabled the renovation of the Observatory and its public opening as a museum in 1991 have now entered into a discussion with the Academy about the Observatory Museum's future. Paolo Brenni reports that the outgoing and incoming Boards of the SIC have been consulting on this matter, and that after the General Assembly of the IUHPS on Saturday, 27 July, at which a "Manchester Manifesto" on the preservation of historic scientific heritage is to be adopted, an official letter from the Commission will be sent to the Academy expressing support for the continuance of the Observatory Museum. (Secretary's note: The text of the Manifesto is now expected to be finalized only at the end of 2013; the letter to Stockholm will thus be sent beforehand.)

d. *New Officers*: Paolo Brenni recalls that an election took place in 2012 for the new SIC Board. Silke Ackermann will be the new President, Michael Korey, the Secretary, and Marta Lourenço, the Treasurer. After a year of careful preparation and shadowing of the outgoing Board, they will assume office for four years after official confirmation at the General Assembly of the IUHPS. (Secretary's note: this confirmation took place, as planned, on July 27.) The new Board, represented in Manchester by Silke and Michael, presents gifts to the outgoing officers, and thanks them for their long and active service on behalf of the Commission. A hearty round of applause underscores the gratitude of the participants in the plenary.

On behalf of the new Board, Silke expresses how honored all three new officers feel to have been elected to serve the instrument community, and how daunted they are by the example of the three outgoing officers. She then briefly touches on the greatest challenges ahead, namely the threatened closure of collections and the consequences of seriously underfunded institutions and external bodies, which are also a concern with regard to the ability to organize and attend meetings. The new Board thus calls on all members for help and support in finding new and innovative ways to combat these challenges and to make the SIC even stronger. During the coming four years, the Board will actively encourage individual members to assume certain roles within the Commission and to consider standing for the next election in 2017.

The outgoing and incoming officers jointly conduct the rest of the meeting.

7) News from Members

a. Roland Wittje announces the next event of the Universeum Network, a meeting to be held in Hamburg, Germany (June 12–14, 2014), on the topic of research with university collections. For more information visit <http://www.universeum.it/meetings.html>.

b. Richard Dunn reports the completion of a project (by the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, Cambridge University Library, and the AHRC-funded Longitude project) to digitize the papers of the Board of Longitude. A link to the project website, which includes essays and other accompanying materials, has been added to the “References” section of the SIC website.

c. Rich Kremer reminds all of the launch of the electronic journal *e-rittenhouse*, which aims especially to publish papers on scientific instruments and their culture in the Americas; contributions may be submitted in English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese.

d. Michael Korey announces that the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon in Dresden, Germany, has re-opened in April 2013 after a multi-year renovation and extends the greetings of his colleagues Peter Plaßmeyer and Wolfram Dolz. He also reports that a volume honoring the memory of the active SIC participant Inge Keil (*Weiter sehen /Seeing Further*), containing essays in English and German on the history of the telescope and of early-modern science in Augsburg, has appeared as Vol. 45 of *Acta Historica Astronomiae*; an announcement with further details will appear in RETE. Finally, he congratulates Karsten Gaulke (Astronomisch-Physikalisches Kabinett, Kassel) and his colleagues for the work that led to the recent designation of the hillside Wilhelmshöhe Park as a UNESCO World Heritage site, recalling that many present in Manchester had attended the 2011 SIC Symposium in Kassel, which concluded with Karsten’s behind-the-scenes tour of the 18th-century waterworks and insights into their connection with the contemporary experiments in hydraulics and pneumatics conducted at the princely court in Kassel.

e. Paolo Brenni reports with sadness on the recent passing of Frank Greenaway, former keeper of chemistry of the Science Museum (London).

8) New Business

No new business was raised, and the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes compiled by
Michael Korey
SIC Secretary