

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the XXXIII International Scientific Instrument Symposium
Tartu, August 25-29, 2014

President: Silke Ackermann
Secretary: Michael Korey
Treasurer: Marta Lourenço

The Scientific Instrument Commission held its thirty-third symposium on August 25-29, 2014, at the University of Tartu. The annual general meeting was held on Wednesday, August 27, at the University. About 50 people were present.

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Karen Beare, Steve Beare, David Coffeen, Yola Coffeen, Stephen Johnston, Alison Morrison-Low, Rolf Riekher and Sofia Talas.

2) Review of Minutes from Last Meeting (2013) in Manchester, England

The minutes of the plenary business meeting from the thirty-second Scientific Instrument Symposium, held in Manchester in July 2013, are circulated, reviewed, and after one correction (in item 7e, Frank Greenaway should have been listed as 'keeper of chemistry' rather than 'director' of the Science Museum) accepted.

3) SIC Finances

The SIC Treasurer, Marta Lourenço, reports on the Commission's finances from 1 October 2013 through 31 August 2014:

(Rounded numbers)

Receipts:

€ 1	bank interest
€ 0	grant from the IUHPS**

Expenses:

€ 43	bank fees
€ 37	secretariat costs
€ 640	grant to the University Museum as organizer for the Tartu meeting
€ 75 (\$ 100)	website
€ 75 (\$ 100)	bibliography
€ 900	travel grants for Tartu: 2 à €200, 1 à €500
€ 31	bank transfer fees for latter

Current account:	€ 245 (was € 2100 in 2013)
Savings deposit:	€ 4500 (was € 6070 in 2013)
Total:	€ 4745 (was € 8170 in 2013)

**Income still to be received in 2014:

€ 1795	IUHPS grant (payment delayed due to organisational difficulties at IUHPS)
€ 65	bank interest (estimated)

Payments still to be made in 2014:

- Bank expenses (ca. € 22)
- website maintenance (€ 75)
- bibliography (€ 75)

Rich Kremer explains that he has been informally asked to have a look at the books for this past year, and he gives his assent to Marta's account. Silke proposes that Rich Kremer and Sofia Talas serve as auditors for the next three years (until the next symposium taking place as part of the larger Congress in 2017), and this is approved by acclamation.

4) Report of Ongoing Commission Activities

Advocacy

Michael Korey reports that the Commission is often called upon to write letters on behalf of threatened collections or institutions. Shortly before the Manchester congress, for example, the Commission was notified that the Swedish Academy of Sciences had decided to close the Stockholm Observatory Museum, which had been visited on the occasion of the 2001 SIC Symposium. Together the old and new Boards initiated correspondence with the Swedish authorities to express their concern, to ask the Academy to reconsider its decision and to offer the help and experience of the SIC's members so that the instrumental heritage of the Museum would remain accessible to visitors and scholars alike. This contact has continued informally in the past year. Karl Grandin of the Academy reports on recent progress, noting that the Academy had set up a committee to address the issue and that conversations had begun with other interested parties toward the establishment of a common trust to run the Observatory Museum. Most recently, this past June the Board has written a letter on behalf of the Institute for the History of Science and Medicine 'López Piñero' of the University of Valencia (Spain), which was threatened with closure, in spite of strong assessments of its research by the leading Spanish evaluation authority and the Institute's acknowledged commitment to the preservation of material scientific heritage and to the public dissemination of science and history. Marta Lourenço gives an update, noting that the planned closure had been tabled and that funding for the Institute had been restored and its research output recognised, though the Institute's long-term future was still uncertain.

Michael also reports on the 'Manchester Manifesto', a statement on the promotion of history of science adopted by the General Assembly of the Division of the History and Science and Technology (DHST) of the International Union for the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS) at the Manchester congress, which was approved for distribution by the Council of the DHST and circulated via RETE (see <http://www.dhstweb.org>). He expresses the Board's hope that the Manifesto will have a broad impact along with the Board's explicit wish, as expressed to the DHST, that the SIC and the DHST may work together to insure that scientific instruments are increasingly mentioned in such public statements and to advocate strongly for the preservation of the material heritage of science and technology as well as for sustained professional and financial support toward this end.

Once again, members are called upon to inform the Board as early as possible of institutions and collections under threat.

Symposium organisation

On behalf of the SIC, Silke Ackermann thanks the local organisers at the University Museum for their tremendous work facilitating this year's symposium. She mentions several changes put in place this year by the Board and opens the floor to general discussion about these:

- 1) Reviews: Silke notes that all the abstracts submitted to this year's symposium were read by at least two, and in many cases three, reviewers. She thanks the 12 members who served on the review committee (names listed on the Tartu website for the symposium). The review process was positively received.
- 2) Fees: In line with the new Board's pledge, and in recognition of the fact that many participants attend the SIC symposia on their own funds or with only limited institutional support, Silke notes that much effort went into keeping the symposium fees as low as possible this year. She thanks Janet Laidla on behalf of the University Museum for working so closely with the Board to make this possible. In the lively discussion which follows, there is broad consensus on the following points:
 - i) The lower registration fees are welcomed, especially by those on a fixed income or with limited support, though it is hoped that the focus on fees may not have a detrimental effect on the choice of venue. (For those coming from abroad, travel costs are often much higher than fees.)
 - ii) Where possible, a lunch option should be included in the fees or made available as a modest add-on, to facilitate conversation. (In Tartu, lunch was available at several places in close proximity to the symposium venue.)
 - iii) The schedule and list of sessions should be available as a print-out, whereas the book of abstracts can be provided electronically (on the website, if internet access is readily available at the symposium venue, or on a USB stick).

Online Resources and Initiatives

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

The website has again been maintained by Dana Freiburger. The Commission formally thanks him for his service as webmaster of the SIC site. In keeping with the Board's wish to involve the broader instrument community in its activities to improve the SIC, members are asked to volunteer for a working group to re-examine the website. An eight-member working group is formed under the chairmanship of Geza Gyuk and is asked to offer its recommendations to the Board in the coming months.

Hans Hooijmaijers informs the SIC that Dalila Wallé of the Museum Boerhaave (Leiden), who had updated the ***SIC Bibliography*** previously, has been unable to do so due to software issues. An update was expected for October 2014; the last entries were added in February 2014.

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 IV, *Scientific Instruments on Display*, has just appeared; Silke Ackermann, Rich Kremer, and Mara Miniati were the editors. Giorgio explains that papers are now being collected for the fifth volume, on the trade and transfer of instruments, as discussed in several sessions of the Manchester symposium and of the 2012 meeting in Rio; Paolo Brenni, Alison Morrison-Low, and Sara Schechner are the editors of this latter volume. He reports that future volumes may cover the topic of

scientific instruments used for teaching and that an instrument-based dissertation is under review.

The Commission once again formally thanks Giorgio and the Editorial Board (Stephen Johnston, Mara Miniati, and Alison Morrison-Low) for their excellent work as well as the editors of the individual volumes for their contribution to this series.

Marta Lourenço announces that a separate volume, with a selection of papers from the SIC section of the 2012 Congress in Rio and featuring 12 articles by Brazilian authors, *Scientific Instruments in the History of Science: Studies in Their Transfer, Use and Preservation*, edited by Marcus Granato and herself, has now been published by MAST (downloadable at the website <http://www.mast.br>).

Noting that the SIC Brill volumes are, by design, thematically focused and thus cannot accommodate all papers presented at the SIC symposium, Estonian colleagues call attention to the *Acta Baltica Historiae et Philosophiae Scientiarum*, a journal of the Baltic Association of the History and Philosophy of Science, as a possible publication organ for interested symposium participants.

5) Future Meetings and Activities

Scientific Instrument Commission Symposia

2015 Turin, Italy

The Board had reported at the Symposium in Manchester (2013) on contacts with the Università di Torino, in Turin, Italy, which had expressed interest in hosting an upcoming symposium. Mara Fausone of ASTUT (Archivio Scientifico e Tecnologico della Università di Torino), the organisation charged with collecting and preserving the scientific heritage of the University, has come to Tartu to offer a presentation underscoring this proposal for 2015. She describes the rich scientific heritage of the Turin region, including the Academy of Sciences founded by Lagrange at the end of the 18th century and the Royal College “Carlo Alberto” (founded 1838) with its collection of historic instruments and meteorological data. ASTUT has been working to preserve the University’s material heritage of science for 20 years and is itself housed in a site of importance for industrial archaeology: a complex that had served as a tobacco factory for 200 years. She highlights the University’s collections of criminal anthropology, anatomy, and physics as describes the possibility of visits to the national automobile and cinema museums in Turin, as well as to the internationally renowned former court collections of the Egyptian museum, the armoury and the picture gallery.

The proposal that Turin be the host of next year’s Symposium is seconded and approved by acclamation. The Board is entrusted with the task of setting the date, choosing the topic and helping coordinate the program. The SIC Secretary will post this news on RETE, beginning with a preliminary announcement and a request to inform the Board of other relevant meetings happening on or around the proposed time frame during the second week of September 2015. The Commission formally thanks Mara Fausone for traveling to Tartu to make her presentation, and its members look forward to next year’s meeting.

Further venues

Silke Ackermann reports that she is pursuing new contacts in Istanbul and is cautiously hopeful that they might be willing to host the meeting in 2016. Other participants offer Palermo, Rennes, and Chicago as sites for a subsequent meeting.

The 2017 symposium is planned to take place as part of the quadrennial ICHTM, the International Congress on

the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Given the distance and expense of travel to Brazil for many SIC members as well as the fact that the 2012 SIC symposium was held there, Paolo Brenni cautions that the 2017 Congress might see only limited SIC attendance; he thus asks whether a thematically focused, SIC-only meeting might additionally be scheduled that year. The consensus of the respondents is that the risk of there being only a small meeting is outweighed by the importance of having the SIC visible within the broader history-of-science community. Furthermore, the presence the SIC at the Congress in Brazil is seen as making a statement that the study of instruments and the material culture of science is not purely a concern in the Northern Hemisphere.

6) News from Members

- a. *SIC Archive*: Paolo Brenni asks, in response to a query from Robert Anderson, whether the SIC has a physical archive. Silke responds that the current Board has set up a Dropbox folder to maintain the digital materials it has received from the previous Board and that this is currently being expanded so that it may be routinely passed to the next Board. The current Board will inquire of the past SIC presidents about the existence of physical objects and documents and then decide on the erection of such an archive.
- b. *UNIVERSEUM*: Roland Wittje reports on the most recent meeting of the Universeum network of university museums in Hamburg, Germany, and announces that the next meeting will be held in Athens, Greece (11-13 June 2015). For more information visit <http://www.universeum.it> .
- c. *Publication announcement*: Charles Mollan reports that the volume he has edited, *William Parsons, 3rd Earl of Rosse: Astronomy and the Castle in the Nineteenth-century Ireland*, has now appeared under the imprint of Manchester University Press. Members of the Scientific Instrument Society (SIS) are eligible for a discount.
- d. *New Nobel Center*: Olov Amelin reports on the planning for a new Nobel Center in Stockholm designed by the architect David Chipperfield. The building (ca. 25,000 sq meters) is both to hold an expanded Nobel Museum with a collection of modern scientific instruments as well as to be the site of many of the Nobel Prize-related festivities. The opening is tentatively scheduled for 2018.
- e. *New Online Journal*: Jim Bennett calls attention to the new, peer-reviewed and online-only *Science Museum Group Journal*, the first issue of which has recently appeared and is available at <http://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/>. He notes that through this journal the Science Museum very much wish to contribute to research and that in spite of the slightly confusing name, the journal explicitly welcomes contributions by authors outside the Group (with its museums in London, Manchester, York/Shildon, and Bradford).
- f. *New Initiatives in Haarlem*: Trienke van der Spek reports that Teylers Museum plans to expand its permanent collection and intends to display replicas of instruments in the former laboratory of Nobel Prize-winner and Teylers curator H. A. Lorentz, which is currently undergoing renovation and is to be opened to the public by the end of 2015. She welcomes feedback from the members of the SIC on these and other initiatives at Teylers, including plans to replicate the large Cuthbertson friction electrostatic generator used by van Marum.
- g. *Exhibition at Greenwich*: Richard Dunn reports that “Ships, Clocks & Stars: The Quest for Longitude,” an exhibition marking the 300th anniversary of the passage of the Longitude Act, is on view at the

National Maritime Museum through 4 January 2015. During 2015-16 a touring version will travel to two venues in the USA and to Sydney, Australia. An accompanying book, *Finding Longitude*, by Richard Dunn and Rebekah Higgitt, has also been published.

- h. *New Scientific Glass Collection*: Marv Bolt relates that he has assumed a new position as the first Curator of the Science and Technology of Glass at the Corning Museum of Glass in upstate New York, where he is building up a scientific glass collection. In this capacity he welcomes receiving de-accessioned objects from other collections or tips pointing toward interesting possible acquisitions.
- i. *Meetings in Rio de Janeiro*: Speaking on behalf of Marcus Granato, Roland Wittje calls attention to the Third International Seminar on Material Culture and Cultural Heritage of Science and Technology, which is to be held 24 – 27 November 2014 in Rio (http://www.mast.br/iispct/invited_speakers.html). Peter Heering announces that the International History, Philosophy and Science Teaching Group will hold its Biennial Conference in 2015 in Rio de Janeiro; further information will be posted on RETE.

7) New Business

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

Minutes compiled by
Michael Korey
SIC Secretary