



The La Silla News Page

The editors of the La Silla News Page would like to welcome readers of the thirteenth edition of a page devoted to reporting on technical updates and observational achievements at La Silla. We would like this page to inform the astronomical community of changes made to telescopes, instruments, operations, and of instrumental performances that cannot be reported conveniently elsewhere. Contributions and inquiries to this page from the community are most welcome.
(J. Brewer, O. Hainaut, M. Kürster)

News from the NTT

O. R. HAINAUT

The last three months have again been very quiet, with a total technical down time of 1.7%. As the telescope behaved very well, we had enough time to continue improving the system to make it even more reliable and user-friendly. To mention just a few of these improvements that are visible for the observer:

- In the framework of the implementation of the calibration plan, a large collection of calibration Observation Blocs (OBs) have been installed, including OBs for photometric standards for EMMI and SuSI, and for spectrophotometric standards for all EMMI's grisms (no more "how long should be the exposure time for LTT6248 with Grism #1?"). Flat-fields, biases, darks, and wavelength calibrations are also defined. These OBs, in combination with the new "Calibration Request Form" (to order day time calibrations) make easy the calibration of the most complex observing modes. For SofI, a large series of photometric standards have been measured. Information about all these calibrations is available on our

web page (from the ESO web, follow the links to La Silla, NTT, Observations, then Calibrations).

- The differences of focus between the active optics image analyser and the scientific instruments were calibrated: so, when an image analysis is performed, the telescope is also focused. We are now running the active optics in parallel with the observations whenever it is possible (i.e. when a suitable guide star is available, and when the scientific exposures are longer than 5 minutes), so the optics is maintained in its optimal configuration, including the focus.

- P2PP version 1.2.1 was installed; this solves the problem of the long OB cloning time, which was quite frustrating for short exposures, and even worse when one had fetched the wrong OB.

There were lots of changes in the Team over the past months: Chris Lidman was transferred to Paranal, where he will work on ISAAC. The Team and the observers, will miss his extensive knowledge of SofI and his excellent

support at the telescope. Fortunately, he had time to fully train the NTT fellows, Vanessa Doublier and especially Leonardo Vanzi, who will be the SofI instrument scientist until Chris' replacement is contracted. Norma Hurtado, the Telescope and Instrument operator who was well known, among other things, for her vigorous musical tastes, has also been transferred to Paranal, where she now drives UT1. Although we miss her expertise and her humour, we have already found an excellent replacement: Ariel Sanchez, who was formerly at the 3.6-m, joined the Team in 1999. And finally, after 6 years at the NTT, Philippe Gitton left ESO. Philippe joined the La Silla Observatory as a Cooperant (while I was myself finishing my cooperation), then was hired as an engineer. His contribution to the NTT in general and to the NTT upgrade was enormous; to mention only the most obvious, the Active Optics was tested, tuned, improved, fixed by Philippe, who left us with a reliable and efficient system.

New SOFI Grisms – NTT and IR Teams

C. LIDMAN

A new grism, with a resolving power of one to two thousand, was installed and tested over the new year. To cover most of the 0.8 micron to 2.5 micron range, the grism is used in orders 3 to 8 and with the broad-band filters (Z, J, H and Ks) as order-sorting filters. The details are listed in the following table. The resolution is listed for the 0.6 arc-second slit.

For orders 3 and 4, the usable range is defined respectively by the Ks and H filters. For higher orders, it is defined by order overlap.

Order	Dispersion (Angstroms)	Usable Range (microns)	Resolution
3rd	4.63	2.00–2.30	2200
4th	3.44	1.49–1.81	1500
5th	2.71	1.20–1.28	1400
6th	2.22	1.17–1.24	1400
7th	1.87	0.89–0.93	1400
8th	1.58	0.86–0.95	1400

We expect this grism to be most useful in orders 3 and 4. The higher orders will be less useful. Those observers

who wish to use the grism in higher orders should contact the NTT team (nttt@eso.org).