

New Staff at ESO



Suzanne Ramsay

Since accepting my new job in ESO's Instrumentation Division, I have been telling friends and family that this post makes me 'poacher turned gamekeeper'. I'm not sure how well this phrase translates into the many languages spoken at ESO – I think it might prove a challenge to Google Translation or Babelfish! Basically, until December I had spent a very happy career developing instruments at the UK Astronomy Technology Centre/Royal Observatory in Edinburgh for delivery to UKIRT, Gemini and, latterly, ESO, as instrument scientist on the KMOS project. However, the lure of a post which would bring me closer to the European ELT project was great, and so after 18 years it was time to leave ROE and to enjoy a new perspective – that of the observatory staff.

As well as my involvement with ELT and VLT instrumentation projects, I aim to maintain my research interests. These are in the area of star formation, more specifically in exploring the role that observations of molecular hydrogen can play in helping us to understand the environment of young stars. The chance to participate in the E-ELT project coupled with the exciting and positive working environment at ESO are just two of the many reasons I am delighted with my move. For years I had stated a desire to live and work in a country where the spoken language is other than English. I do have to keep reminding myself of this as I wrestle with the day-to-day issues of banking, telephony and apartment rental armed only with school-level German, but so far I'm really enjoying the challenge.

Michael West

I joined ESO in August 2007 as the new Head of the Office for Science in Chile.

As a young high school student, reading Carl Sagan's book *The Cosmic Connection* changed my life and motivated me to become an astronomer. After obtaining my Ph.D. in astronomy from Yale University in 1987 I held various research and teaching positions around the world, most recently as Head of Science Operations at Gemini South and before that as a professor of astronomy at the University of Hawaii for eight years. My research interests include globular clusters as probes of galaxy formation and evolution, clusters of galaxies at low and high redshifts, and the large-scale structure of the Universe. I began my research career as a theorist but gradually moved into observational work.

As professional astronomers we are very fortunate to be able to do what we do for a living. For this reason I am active in astronomy education and outreach, as a way of giving something back to the public whose taxes fund our astronomical explorations. I currently head a newly formed IAU working group on New Ways of Communicating Astronomy with the Public. I also had the pleasure of serving as chief astronomy content advisor for the Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawaii, a 28 million USD NASA-funded museum

that weaves together astronomy and Hawaiian culture into a unique story of human exploration. In addition, I am author of a general interest book titled *A Gentle Rain of Starlight: The Story of Astronomy on Mauna Kea*.

I am delighted to be part of ESO and enjoy my new position very much. It is hard to imagine a more exciting time to be doing astronomy and to be working at ESO. I see my role as that of a 'science enabler' whose most important duty is to help ESO Chile astronomers, fellows, students and visitors succeed in their research. The opportunity to mentor younger astronomers and to be an advocate for more senior ones is very gratifying. I also enjoy helping to build bridges between ESO and the Chilean astronomical community as well as with the other international observatories in Chile.

I look forward to meeting the many members of ESO's diverse community. If you are passing through Santiago sometime, please stop by to say hello!

