Announcement of the Topical Symposium

"Science with the E-ELT" at JENAM 2008

8–12 September 2008, Vienna, Austria

The next Joint European Astronomy Meeting and National Astronomy Meeting (JENAM) will be held on 8–12 September 2008 in Vienna (Austria). Its unifying theme is to explore the "New Challenges to European Astronomy". In that framework, ESO and Opticon are jointly organising one of the nine JENAM 2008 topical Symposia, viz. Symposium #1 on "Science with the E-ELT".

This Symposium is a timely opportunity to discuss and assess the main science goals of a major potential ground-based observing facility for European Astronomy, the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT) project, which is now in the midst of its three-year (2007–2009) detailed design study and due for decision to build by early 2010. Prime motivations are to inform the community on the scientific perspectives opened up by such a facility and, especially, to gather feedback on the science goals and requirements needed to help make the E-ELT the best possible scientific tool for European astronomy in the next decades.

Input from the community is eagerly sought on every aspect of such a facility: scientific impact, including in synergy with other major observatories on ground and in space; technical and operational requirements to get maximum science value. To participate to the Symposium, you just need to register for the main JENAM event at *http://www.univie.ac.at/jenam2008/*. Your contribution to the debate will be invaluable to help steer the project to the future needs of European astronomers.

Fellows at ESO

Michelle Doherty

My interest in Astronomy began in the final years of high school and continued throughout my undergraduate studies in physics at the University of Sydney. I wrote my final Honours thesis in astronomy and subsequently moved to England to pursue a PhD at the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge. There I worked with the instrument CIRPASS (Cambridge Infra-Red Panoramic Survey Spectrograph), developing an interest in near-infrared spectroscopy and, in particular, fibre-fed spectroscopy.

During my doctorate I worked on projects related to the star-formation rates of distant galaxies (at redshift $z \sim 1$) and the nature of extremely red galaxies at high redshift. After receiving my PhD in 2005 I moved to ESO Garching to take up a fellowship. For my duties I chose to be involved in science operations at Paranal, travelling out to Chile once every three months. I very much like the practical side of the job, i.e. being involved in the operations of the observatory, and eventually transferred to complete my fellowship in Chile. My scientific research interests have expanded, primarily through new collaborations at ESO, and now include studying massive galaxies at high redshift, clusters of galaxies at high redshift and using planetary nebulae as dynamical tracers in nearby clusters of galaxies.

Rachel Gilmour

Unlike many astronomers, as a teenager I was not at all interested in astronomy, particularly the practical sort that involved standing in the cold drizzle waiting for a gap in the clouds! However, whilst studying physics at university I found myself in the astronomy building at midnight on a Friday, and realised that I was hooked. After completing my Masters project at Oxford looking for gravitational lenses, and taking a year out, I started a PhD at the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh investigating X-ray detected AGN in galaxy clusters.

Although I mainly worked with X-ray data for my research, the highlights of my PhD were the occasional trips to 'real' observatories in Chile and La Palma. After surviving, and enjoying, the exhausting experience of a five-night run on the INT in January, I was keen to work at an observatory. This fitted well with my scientific aims of obtaining optical data for my X-ray sources, as well as my desire to work in a different culture, so I accepted an ESO fellowship in 2005.

I have found the experience of working at Paranal both challenging and enjoyable. Being part of a large team, with problems to be solved in real time, is quite different from my research life back in Santiago. It has been interesting to learn about so many different observing techniques, and the buzz of the observatory means that there is always something new going on. I particularly enjoy the opportunities to meet scientists with many different specialities, and to observe the whole spectrum of (optical) astronomical objects, from planets to gamma-ray bursts. I plan to expand on these interests in the forth year of my fellowship, when I hope to go to a UK institute to continue my research and to learn more about communicating astronomy with the public.