

Management Changes on La Silla

For the information of visiting astronomers I announce some changes in the La Silla management. Effective March 1, 1988, the management responsibilities at La Silla are shared by five department heads/group leaders. These are:

H.E. Schuster, VLT Site Services and Schmidt Telescope
Torben Höög, Maintenance and Construction
Daniel Hofstadt, Technical Research Support
Jorge Melnick, Astronomy Department
Bernard Duguet, Administration

Together they form the Management Team/La Silla. Daniel Hofstadt is the chairman of the MT/LaS and he reports to me on behalf of the Observatory's Management Team.

H. VAN DER LAAN, Director General

scopes: NTT, 3.6-m, CAT, ESO 1.5-m and ESO shares of MPG's 2.2-m and the Danish 1.5-m. Some or all of this new capacity will be allocated in a revised manner, such that a number of programmes can receive very substantial portions of telescope time, to be made available over a one to four year period. The net new time available in four years, applying weighting factors for the intermediate-size telescopes *vis-à-vis* the NTT, amounts to about 2,000 nights, half of which on the 3.6-m and the NTT. Some or all of these are to be allocated to, say, between one and two dozen *key programmes*; allocations to vary from minimally twelve to maximally fifty nights per year per programme.

Evidently, the introduction of such a scheme would be difficult to nearly impossible under circumstances of constant total telescope time. It is the major positive increment afforded by the completion of the NTT which provides this new opportunity for European astronomy without negative effects for ongoing activities. Whether some or, ultimately, all of the new capacity is allocated in the new manner must clearly depend on the proposal pressure. The histograms for the 3.6-m and 2.2-m allocations, shown in Dr. Breysacher's article, can in future also be broadened by the use of some of the additional time.

The Growth of ESO Astronomy

In the previous issue of the *Messenger* Professor Woltjer gave an overview of developments within ESO during the past dozen years. From a position of relative instrumental backwardness, European astronomical facilities have achieved world-class status. With the decision to proceed with the construction of the VLT, we must now also pay close attention to the further enhancement of the quality of our community's programmes and the development of long-term European

goals in astronomy. In the next decade it is essential to prepare the next generation for an all out exploitation of the VLT's unique potential.

Schedules and Procedures

If we are to make a good start with the key programmes in period 43 (April through September 1989), then the schedule is as follows:

- Initial response to this preliminary enquiry: before 30 April 1988.
- Discussion of principles and procedures and of response to preliminary enquiry in ESO's STC and OPC: May 1988.
- Information and call for proposals in the *Messenger*, No. 52, June 1988.
- Proposal deadline for programmes starting in period 43, 15 October 1988.
- Outside refereeing in November 1988; time allocation upon recommendation by the OPC in December 1988.

Given the large investments in telescope time foreseen, the proposals require deep and careful argumentation. They must have much added value compared to normal proposals, opening research domains not hitherto accessible with ESO facilities. Normally the proposers who constitute the observing team will represent several institutes; hopefully the teams will usually be multinational. Since economic scheduling will require a good fraction of the observing to be done in "service mode", it is highly desirable to involve ESO astronomers employed on La Silla in the observing teams. (This has the additional advantage of involving these young astronomers in community programmes, which will make working on La Silla even more interesting, and will ease their way back into community em-

ployment.) Alternatively, observers must be prepared to spend substantial periods on La Silla.

One can foresee thematic proposals which set out a programme of work covering up to four or five years. The initial proposal is to contain the scientific justification as well as the observing and the interpretive strategies. It is to include an overview of the observing nights required as a function of time in the total programme period as well as specify the telescope(s) and instrument(s) to be used. The instruments may be existing ESO common user instruments, instruments to be provided by the observing team or instruments proposed to be constructed in collaboration for the purpose. (In the latter circumstances the planning must take place on a case by case basis.) In addition, an overview of the team members, their respective specializations and relevant experience, and the resources available for data reduction and analysis. Time allocation will be for the whole programme in principle, with an initial annual instalment; subsequent instalments dependent upon the contents of progress reports.

Readers/users are herewith invited to submit, before 30 April 1988, a statement of their intention to make use of this new part of ESO's programme. Forms, specifying the format of your response along the lines of the two preceding paragraphs, are available upon request from the Visiting Astronomers Section at the ESO Headquarters.

Final Remarks

Key programmes are not meant to simply be long-term acquisitions of large databases, which are thought to be good for several purposes, some of which are initially specified and others which have not yet been thought of. Such programmes are of course going on, perfectly justifiably, on the Schmidt and on several of the smaller telescopes. A successful key programme proposal will address a major astronomical theme, provide (a) very specific goal(s) and outline a structured research strategy.

Key programmes can involve post-graduate students from start to finish of their Ph.D. thesis programme, providing them with a coherent research context and using their full time efforts as well as all of their youthful enthusiasm. Analogous reasoning makes the participation of postdoctoral fellows very attractive.

Key programmes, as the term suggests, must open new research domains. They will require careful peer review and will be subject to public scrutiny by the ESO user community.