The new IAU President, Dr. Catherine Cesarsky, addressing the Closing General Assembly.


Photo: E. Janssen, ESO

The next IAU General Assembly will take place in Rio de Janeiro, in 2009. The year 2009 will be a very special one for astronomy, as it is the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first observations with a telescope. The IAU has proposed that 2009 should be designated the International Year of Astronomy; UNESCO has endorsed this resolution, and it is hoped that the UN will soon follow. This will provide an exceptional opportunity to highlight astronomy's role in world culture and science, and many related initiatives will be undertaken in countries and internationally around the world. 2009 is also the 90th anniversary of the IAU, and on 22 July of that year the longest duration total solar eclipse of the 21st century will take place. Thus, the 2009 General Assembly will be a very special one – the centrepiece of the International Year of Astronomy activities.

Report on the Conference on

# Library and Information Services in Astronomy: LISA V

held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 18–21 June 2006

**Uta Grothkopf** (ESO)

**LISA V, the latest in the series of conferences on Library and Information Services in Astronomy, was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in June 2006. More than 100 astronomy librarians, data archive specialists, publishers, and astronomers from 24 countries discussed tools and trends in information retrieval and management. As with previous conferences, ESO played a major role in the organisation and support of LISA V.**

Information retrieval, access and storage are changing at a fast pace. Traditionally, astronomy has often been a leader in pursuing and implementing evolving technologies earlier than other subject areas. The reasons are the comparatively small number of core journals and databases in astronomy that are excellent testbeds for new tools and techniques, as well as generous funding from space agencies and non-profit organisations. Hence, astronomy librarians are often already applying technologies in their day-to-day work with which colleagues in other disciplines are just becoming acquainted. LISA (Library and Information Services in Astronomy) conferences provide an excellent forum to keep astronomy librarians informed about news in the fields of networked databases, digital data creation and preservation as well as experimental navigation and knowledge discovery tools.

So far, five LISA conferences have been held: the first international meeting ever held specifically for astronomy librarians took place in Washington, DC in 1988; LISA II was hosted by ESO in Garching, Germany in 1995; LISA III and IV were held in Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, Spain in 1998 and Prague, Czech Republic in 2002, respectively.

In June 2006, the fifth LISA conference took place in Cambridge, MA, USA, co-hosted by the Libraries of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The conference was attended by 105 participants from 24 countries. Among them were once again almost 20 colleagues who attended thanks to financial aids provided through the Friends of LISA (FOL) committee; FOL traditionally raises funds from vendors, professional societies, institutions, and individuals in order to help astronomy librarians in resource-poor countries to attend LISA conferences. ESO traditionally has made generous donations to FOL. In addition, the local organisers managed to col-

lect funds from an impressive number of commercial and institutional sponsors.

The conference motto, "Common Challenges, Uncommon Solutions", reflected on the fact that LISA conferences provide an opportunity for astronomy librarians from all over the world to exchange ideas with their colleagues about professional problems they have encountered in their own libraries, as well as the solutions they have found. LISA is unique in this sense as no other meeting showcases so many individual projects from our subject area.

The meeting organisers (with Uta Grothkopf, ESO, and Christina Birdie, IIA, co-chairing the SOC and Donna Coletti from Harvard CfA chairing the LOC) were able to attract the highest number of invited speakers ever. This was possible thanks to the excellent conference location with invited speakers from Harvard University and MIT, among them keynote speaker John Huchra, Professor at Harvard University, and Owen Gingerich, Professor Emeritus at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

The programme consisted of 37 talks, organised in eight sessions, as well as 35 posters, a poster review and a panel discussion. Some of the highlights of the conference included talks on libraries in the VO era, citation analysis for observatories, the history of astronomy and astronomical archives as well as the future of scientific publishing.

Figure 1 illustrates a few subjects covered by LISA conferences and how their fraction of the programme has changed over time. *Collection Development*, including topics like literature acquisition from foreign countries and handling of non-print material, outnumbered all other topics at LISA I, but played a far smaller role during subsequent meetings. *Electronic Journals* started to become available around LISA II (with the electronic *ApJ Letters* first being published in 1995) and had developed into a well-established topic by the time LISA III was held in 1998. E-journals introduced new business models in libraries where traditional purchasing of material is supplemented or even substituted by licensing (leasing) contracts; this, in turn, led to the *Open Access* movement that aims at open availability of scientific literature without subscription fees.

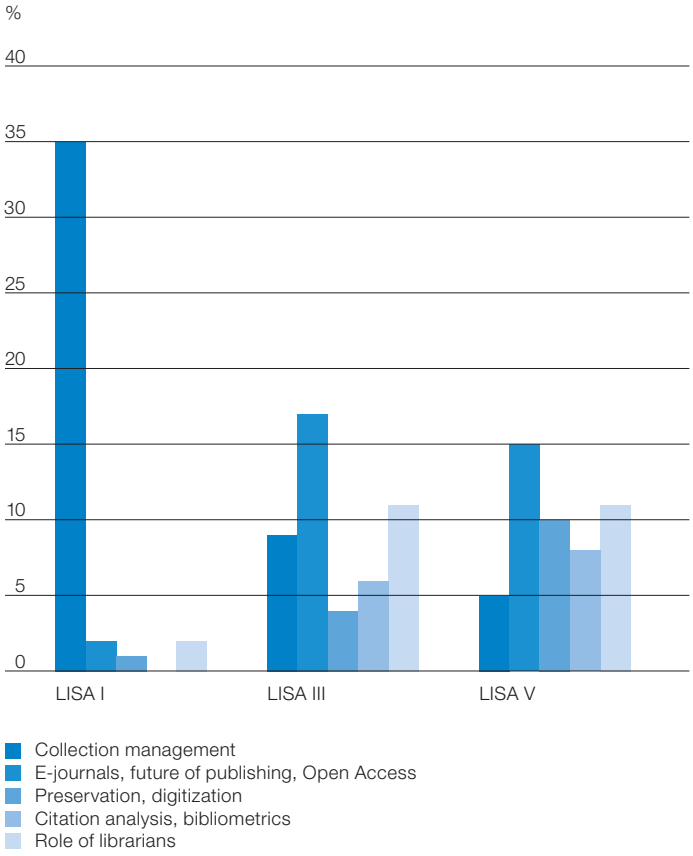


**Figure 1:** Selected subject areas covered by LISA I, III and V and their fraction of the programme. For explanation, see the text.

In order to guarantee future access to print as well as electronic documents, a long-term archiving strategy must be in place. *Preservation* and *Digitization* were strongly represented topics at LISA conferences in particular during recent meetings. *Citation Analysis and Bibliometrics* are comparatively 'young' subject areas that are receiving more and more interest by managements and funding authorities; in most observatories, librarians are engaged in compiling telescope bibliographies and deriving statistics. Our final example of topics, the *Role of Librarians*, has been a constant matter of attention at LISA conferences as the work area of astronomy librarians evolves and opens new professional opportunities.

The conference proceedings will be published in print and electronic format in the ASP conference series and will be edited by Sandra Ricketts (AAO), Eva Isaksson (University Helsinki Observatory) and Christina Birdie (Indian Institute of Astrophysics). Given the fast pace with which technologies and work procedures in libraries are changing, many participants felt that the current four-yearly cycle of LISA conferences should be shortened. So, after the proceedings have been published, it may be time to start planning LISA VI ...

## Related websites

LISA V information: *http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/library/lisa/*
Author instructions and news regarding the proceedings: *http://www.astro.helsinki.fi/library/lisa5/authors/*
General website for information on past and future LISA conferences: *http://www.eso.org/libraries/lisa.html*

## Further reading

Corbin B. G. and Grothkopf U., LISA – The Library and Information Services in Astronomy conferences. In: Organisations and strategies in astronomy (OSA), Vol. 7, Heck A. (ed.), Springer, Dordrecht, ISBN 1-4020-5300-2, in press (*http://www.eso.org/libraries/lisaconferences.pdf*)