

## Concluding Remarks: LISA Meetings, Past and Present

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**Abstract.** A short history of how the Library and Information Services in Astronomy (LISA) conference came into existence is given, with some remarks about the character of each meeting. Memorable moments of the conference just held are mentioned. The author's thoughts on the future of LISA is briefly discussed.

### 1. Beginning of the LISA Meetings

Perhaps a history of how the Library and Information Services in Astronomy (LISA) conferences began will be of interest. As my husband, Thomas Corbin, is an astronomer who spent his career at the U.S. Naval Observatory (USNO), I would sometimes attend conferences with him. In 1982, we attended the IAU General Assembly in Patras, Greece. I had asked if I might make a brief presentation to Commission 5 (Astronomical Data and Documentation) concerning astronomical libraries. The president of the Commission graciously agreed, and I discussed various projects of interest to astronomy libraries. I also suggested that it would be useful to have an international meeting of astronomy librarians, perhaps arranged and sponsored by Commission 5.

The group supported the idea of such a meeting, and over the next few years I continued to discuss such a meeting with my colleagues and with Gart Westerhout, then Scientific Director of the U.S. Naval Observatory, also a member of Commission 5. He thought such a meeting was a good idea and agreed to keep the idea in front of Commission 5. My husband and I did not attend the IAU General Assembly in Delhi, India in 1985, but I suggested that Dr. Westerhout discuss the proposed meeting with Commission 5. Robyn Shobbrook, then librarian at the Anglo-Australian Observatory, was also in Delhi and represented astronomy libraries. Dr. Westerhout returned from India and reported that Commission 5 warmly welcomed such a meeting and would ask for financial support from the IAU. He also reported that he had volunteered the USNO to act as host for the conference and volunteered the librarian, myself, to do the planning! I had never been involved with conference planning in any way, but with help from many colleagues, especially Sarah Stevens-Rayburn, Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI), Ellen Bouton, National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO), Adelaide del Frate, Coordinator of NASA libraries, and staff members at the Naval Observatory, we planned the conference.

## **2. LISA I - U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C. July 1988**

In July, 1988, the first LISA conference was held in Washington, D.C., just before the IAU General Assembly in Baltimore, Maryland. The IAU provided part of the financial support, and the meeting was designated as IAU Colloquium 110. It was a very successful conference with 125 librarians and astronomers in attendance from all over the world. It was an exciting time as librarians met face to face with colleagues they had corresponded with for many years. Close contacts among astronomy librarians had always existed, but the contacts became more formalized with the LISA meeting. Unfortunately, there was no group photograph taken as we were so new at planning meetings we did not realize there should be a group photo. ASTROLIB, the internet announcement list, was an outgrowth of LISA I. Ellen Bouton, librarian at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, agreed to manage the list, which still exists, and this has proven to be an excellent way for astronomy librarians to communicate.

Dr. George Wilkins, Royal Greenwich Observatory, Co-Chair of the Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC) suggested the name of the conference: Library and Information Services in Astronomy. The proceedings, published by the U.S. Naval Observatory, were edited by Dr. Wilkins and Sarah Stevens-Rayburn, the other Co-Chair of the SOC.

## **3. LISA II - European Southern Observatory, Garching, Germany, May 1995**

When LISA I was held, there was no idea at the time to have another meeting, or make the conference a series of meetings. However, after five or six years had passed, we began to discuss the possibility of another meeting as the first had been so successful. LISA II was held in Garching, Germany in May 1995, sponsored by the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Uta Grothkopf, librarian at ESO, was the gracious host for this conference which involved many more European and Eastern European librarians than LISA I. By this time the electronic age was upon us, and LISA II focused on the many electronic projects in the world of astronomy and astronomy libraries. Many astronomers also participated in LISA II. The conference was again supported by the IAU, and it was designated an IAU Technical Workshop. The proceedings were published in 1995 in vol. 39 of *Vistas in Astronomy*, edited by Fionn Murtagh, Uta Grothkopf and Rudi Albrecht.

## **4. LISA III - Instituto de Astrofisica de Canarias, Tenerife, Spain, April 1998**

Three years after LISA II, LISA III was held in the very lovely setting of the Canary Islands. There were new faces both from the Americas and Europe. The electronic age was well upon us and all aspects of this new technology relating to astronomy were covered in the meeting. History of astronomy was covered as well in this conference. There was no IAU support for this meeting as the IAU decided they did not have the funds to support what they considered "series" meetings. Monique Gomez, our host, was very successful in finding

support from the European Union and the Spanish Government. Those of us who attended LISA III will never forget the special guests, the beautiful peacocks who wandered in the park just outside the conference hall. The proceedings were published in 1998 in the *Conference Series of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific*, vol.153. edited by Uta Grothkopf, Heinz Andernach, Sarah Stevens-Rayburn and Monique Gomez.

#### **5. LISA IV - Astronomical Institute Charles University, Prague and the Astronomical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, July, 2002**

LISA IV, was held in the very beautiful city of Prague in a state-of-the-art conference hall in one of the oldest universities in Europe, Charles University. Our hosts, Marek Wolf and Radka Svaskova, planned a wonderful series of activities including an opening reception, a splendid concert, a memorable conference dinner, and two excellent tours. A large group of European librarians attended, and a total of 25 countries were represented. Liz Bryson and Françoise Genova, co-Chairs of the SOC, planned an excellent program packed with information. Presentations covered topics from the virtual observatory to preservation of historical materials. A large number of poster papers were on display, representing the variety of library projects underway in astronomy libraries throughout the world. Again, there was no IAU funding for the meeting, but Marek Wolf was successful in obtaining support from Sun Microsystems. The proceedings will be published by the U. S. Naval Observatory and edited by Brenda Corbin, Liz Bryson, and Marek Wolf.

#### **6. Friends of LISA**

Although there was no official Friends of LISA (FOL) Committee for LISA I, we were able to assist librarians from developing countries in attending the meeting with funds provided by the IAU specifically for this purpose. However, the FOL became a formal entity when planning began for LISA II and has functioned for all LISA meetings since LISA II. The FOL Committee consisted of Ellen Bouton, Brenda Corbin and Marlene Cummins for LISA II, and added Ron Enders (Ellen's husband) as treasurer of FOL for LISA III and IV. FOL solicits funding from publishers, astronomical institutions, and other organizations, and asks for individual donations from librarians. Each meeting has been enriched by the attendance of librarians from developing countries who provide the meeting with diverse viewpoints relating to the world of astronomy libraries. It is hoped that other librarians will volunteer to take over the FOL duties for LISA V.

#### **7. Future of LISA Meetings**

It appears that 4 years between LISA meetings is about the right amount of time. Many librarians who were active in planning and attending LISA conferences are now retired or thinking of retirement. Probably most of the librarians on the LISA Planning Committee will be retired by the time of LISA V. The need

now is for a new generation of astronomy librarians to step forward to help carry on the future LISA meetings. Already some institutions are thinking of volunteering to host LISA V.

IAU Commission 5 has offered support and collaboration in the LISA conferences from the very beginning and helped gain financial support from the IAU for LISA I and II. There are now two librarians who are full members of the IAU and both are members of the Commission. Other astronomy librarians are consulting members to the Commission. Much of this collaboration has come due to interaction occurring at LISA meetings between librarians and astronomers. Librarians serve as members on the IAU Working Group on Libraries and also the Working Group on Electronic Publications. This cooperation will continue and grow as further LISA meetings take place.

LISA meetings are important in that they allow colleagues, both librarians and astronomers, to meet face to face and discuss issues relevant to our field. LISA provides cross-pollination. One result is that librarians now collaborate with other librarians and astronomers in international projects which are so necessary as databases become linked. Many of the papers at LISA IV discussed the necessity for linked databases, especially in large projects such as the virtual observatory. These meetings provide an opportunity for librarians and astronomers to share their ideas and discuss future projects. One hopes that the meetings will continue to take place to foster even more cooperation. LONG LIVE LISA!



Views of LISA I, Washington DC, 1988. Top - Banquet: Tom Corbin (USNO), Brenda Corbin (USNO), Angus MacDonald (Royal Obs., Edinburgh), Janet Dudley (Royal Greenwich Obs.), Gart Westerhout (USNO). Bottom - conference attendees, Dupont Circle Hotel, Washington



Views of LISA I, Washington DC, 1988. Top - Banquet: Robyn Shobbrook (Australia), Ethleen Lastovica (South Africa), Jenny Davies (Australia), Wayne Warren (USA), Gert Kiers (The Netherlands), Jack Weigel (USA), unidentified woman. Bottom - Lobby of the US Naval Observatory: Helen Knudsen (CalTech), Ellen Bouton (NRAO), Sarah Stevens-Rayburn (STScI), Gart Westerhout (USNO)