This is a month-to-month summary of editing the LISA V proceedings, seen from the point of view of one of the editors of the LISA V proceedings. At the time of writing this, several months have passed since the proceedings had been finished - the whole process was so exhausting that it was necessary to wait for a while and forget all about the editing in order to gain some perspective to those 14 months that it took.

June 2006

During the LISA V conference, I was still just an ordinary contributor to the future LISA V proceedings. During the conference, all contributors were asked to sign a form, arranging the publication of their paper in the conference proceedings volume to be published by the ASP. At the final session, we were even given the deadline: end of July. I was wondering, "so soon?" but thoughts of my upcoming vacation drowned all thoughts about the proceedings.

July 2006

Back from my vacation at the end of July, I received e-mail from Sandra Ricketts. One of the editors had stepped down, and a third editor was needed to keep the number of editors at three. I had been suggested. I spent a few moments wondering whether I really would have time for such a big job, before giving an enthusiastic 'yes' for an answer.

A string of hectic days followed. Authors needed to get instructions and a deadline. Also, a number of colleagues were starting their vacations. There was a need to act quickly. At this point, advice and support from Uta Grothkopf was invaluable to get us started in the right direction.

August 2006

The first day of August was really active: we put up a website with instructions for authors, another password protected website for editors, and sent e-mail for authors. At this point, we already had three papers, one of which was to give the editors work for months to come. Later in August, a handful of authors provided us with more early manuscripts.

I must confess that I was almost too enthusiastic at this early point, taking on ever more tasks with ease. Christina was away for a while, and Sandra was busy at times. For me, August has always been the laziest month at work, so I could steam on quite freely.

The ASP instructions were being updated at this time, causing a delay. When we at last mailed some detailed instructions to the authors, most of them had no problems - but there was one author who reacted differently: " LaTeX?!? So, um, what do those of us who've never used it and have no idea how to use it do?" She even wrote a blog entry about it later titled "I. Detest. LaTeX."

Astronomers wrote their texts with LaTeX, but what about astronomy librarians? I think that writing a paper with tools that astronomers are using can be an empowering experience to a librarian, an opportunity I wouldn't miss. Most authors sent their papers in pretty good LaTeX, other papers needed some work - that was particularly true for the bibliographic sections. And whenever it seemed that an author could not tackle LaTeX, I promised that it would be okay to send any paper in another format and then I would do the LaTeX, I think it is now safe to confess how much I enjoyed it and the challenges it provided. There was something in every paper that needed some looking into, and I would not rest until I had mastered the various technical secrets.

With LaTeX, and a number of other things too, I received invaluable technical help from Lisa Roper, who was kind enough to let us add her to our mailing list for editorial mails, so she could monitor our progress. I still remember coding a mammoth three-to-four page table and struggling with its fine points until

Lisa suggested a solution.

September 2006

I will always remember September as the month when endless files were arriving, and there was also a constant stream of questions, corrections, requests for more time. Best of all I remember looking very quickly at an paper, compiling the LaTeX, spotting out a number of technical problems, and writing back to authors. At this point, it was primarily me running all this huge correspondence, as the editors certainly could not start reading - really reading - such a large amount of manuscripts yet. Instead, the feedback was about filenames, correct LaTeX coding, and doing technical things correctly in general. I felt very much at home with it all. This was probably my favourite part of the whole editing job.

Authors sending their manuscripts wanted quick acknowledgement. If they didn't hear back soon enough, they would send a nervous e-mail asking for confirmation of receipt. At the end of September, I found myself checking my mail all the time, no matter what the time was.

A couple of days before the deadline I knew what no matter what you state in the instructions, authors will have their own ways of doing things. If they are asked to send their manuscript attached to e-mail, they are likely to put their stuff to their ftp site, for example. It was quite interesting, but also a bit frustrating to play Sherlock Holmes to gather files hidden all over the 'net!

October 2006

Right after the deadline, it was time for reminders, and then some more of them. Retrospectively, I must say that I wish that we had tackled the invited speakers much earlier and in a much more active manner. As it turned out, we lost one contribution because the speaker in question was a busy person with no time to look at a presentation that took place several months ago. We cannot know whether we could have secured her paper if we had been asking about it right after her talk at the conference. But it could have saved us several vain efforts of re-establishing contact with her.

At this point, we had decided which of the editors would do what. I was mostly working with the LaTeX, Sandra with the English, and Christina with the references. We were of course free to comment any inconsistencies that we could possibly spot.

November 2006

In November, we had a handful of late manuscripts coming in. A new effort to catch the attention of our invited speakers was also made. But by now, most of our correspondence was about revisions of the manuscripts. LaTeX detail still dominated at this point, besides of infinity of detail involving style. Running headers and such proved to be a never-ending source of capitalizations to correct.

By now, I felt that we were gaining quite a glimpse to the personal lives of our authors. There were lots of health problems they (or others close to them) reported. And there was also a baby born during this busy autumn to one of them.

Until now, I had been making the alterations to manuscripts we had, but then Sandra asked about uploading changes, and a SCPonly repository was created to host the ever changing stuff. It worked quite well - I remember only one occasion when I had to worry about replacing a new copy with an older one.

December 2006

It was in December, I think, when the size of our editorial undertaking was dawning to us in its glory. No matter how much we were doing, there was infinity of other tasks waiting for our attention. Many of these tasks were small, like the mysterious disappearing apostrophes. And quite many authors hadn't obviously bothered to inspect instructions too closely, resulting in a wide variety of bibliographic styles.

The last two regular authors finally sent their papers, but what were our invited speakers doing? One of them never wrote a paper, but sent her PowerPoint instead. We turned it into LaTeX, but were finally forced to exclude it since the presentation consisted of such bare bones that no one without good notes from the session wouldn't been able to follow it afterwards.

We sent yet another batch of reminders to other invited speakers and were rewarded with two manuscripts. The panel discussion overview also arrived before our Christmas break.

January 2007

I had planned to start reading, REALLY reading the papers during my Christmas vacation. Foolish me. But I started that in January instead, finding it surprisingly slow going. Could we ever finish editing at this rate? On top of that, after I upgraded to Acrobat Reader 8, I saw a lot of strange problems and had to downgrade to version 7 for the time being.

A manuscript can have lots of problems. It can have LaTeX problems, it might have dead URLs. The figures could need fixing - particularly, I had to redo a number of graphs myself in order to get crisp vector graphics. But the most frustrating problem, from editorial point of view, is when the editors cannot fathom what the author means. There were a few papers which needed a lot of fine-tuning in order to reveal their well-hidden meaning.

The giant table that gave me lots of work in August was completely redone again, as the font size seemed too tiny. We toyed with the idea of dropping it altogether. By now, it had caused so much work, though, that we kept it in the end - probably for the same reasons for which authors keep their flotsam and jetsam - because it seems such a pity to drop if after all those hours that went into compiling something.

We were also introduced into the possibility of clickable URLs. I said "yes" to them, little suspecting how much stress they would cause months later. By now, I was weeding lots of URLs from the text into footnotes.

Some authors had started to ask about our progress, but we were very far from the finish line. Again, there was another round of reminders to a handful of invited authors. This time we received one more reply from an author with a heavy weight on her shoulders. We received her paper in the end, but it would keep us on our toes until the very last days of editing.

Then there was another invited speaker who had never received our e-mail, simply because her mail system filtered everything with "lisa" in the headers, as they used to receive spam matching that particular string of characters. We only reached her after writing to the helpdesk of her employer and luckily omitting "lisa" from that mail.

Previous LISA volumes used to have a separate section for posters, but this time there were so many posters that it seemed advisable to arrange everything thematically. Luckily, that proved to be pretty easy, as almost all poster papers had been submitted to be included specific sessions in hopes that they could become talks instead of just posters. There was just one paper that did not seem to fit anywhere, until it found its proper niche in the introductory part of the proceedings.

February 2007

Reading all the papers took weeks, but in the early February I had read them all. And I could see no end in sight. All the papers were full of things to fix: over wide margins, punctuation problems, giant image files, obscurely worded sentences. New problems seemed to arise every time we looked at something! Earlier, we had probably just skimmed the abstracts, but now I saw that many abstracts needed work too. There were some particularly long abstracts that had to be cut into pieces, and parts of them were pasted into the main text.

Sandra was reading papers I had finished with, and some days we were working almost in unison, while there were times one of us would be busy with something else. And then Christina would have wait for Sandra to finish before uploading papers with corrected references.

In February, the paper which had been missing because of "lisa" in mail headers finally arrived, leaving us two missing manuscripts (one of them the PowerPoint that we would finally exclude from the proceedings).

March 2007

This was one slow month, partly because Sandra was away for well-deserved vacation. The high point was sending mail to authors, asking them to check their contact information. Also, we set up a LISA V photo site in order to get a few more photos we could use in the proceedings volume. At this point, we did not even have the official conference photos yet.

April 2007

Time seemed to flow freely forward, so it was high time that our publisher provided us with a deadline in the end of July. We were quite relieved to accept it. Also, as my vacation would take place in July, I was determined to get finished before that. Accordingly, the pace of work grew again faster for the next two months.

May 2007

During the editorial process, we had been printing out what must be a ton of pages, and we would be printing even more. If we had thought that we had done a thorough job earlier, we must have been dreaming. The editorial email exchanges are full of listings of errors and problems we had spotted and mostly fixed. When I agonized whether we should use "webpages" or "web pages", I was wondered whether we were starting to nitpick.

Our last missing author again replied to her mail and promised she would send her paper in mid-June. I must confess that I had practically given up hope at this point. We did make another attempt to contact our "PowerPoint author", but realized in the end that this busy library director would never have time to write a paper a year after her talk.

We received the official conference photographs at long last. There were dozens and dozens of photos, of which we could include just a handful. The bigger pity was that we were not allowed to do anything else with them, like sharing them with other conference participants.

June 2007

In the beginning of June, our mailboxes were still flowing with long lists of corrections. There were a few papers that could be edited ad infinitum, and yet there would be new things we had to fix. But at the same time, we were quite aware of time running out.

There was one paper that did not seem to really fit in this volume, but after some advice from previous editors, we realized that all the contributions we had accepted would have a place in the proceedings - all of them.

Finally, there was the big day when there was enough stuff to make a dry run to see how all the little LaTeX parts could be merged into a big whole! I had been expecting a lots of errors, but all went surprisingly well - and it was easy to locate a piece of sloppy code which made all the margins over wide from that point on.

Wading through my June 2006 mails, the process seems endless. There was an incredible amount of little things to check - who was there, who was not? Did we really include everyone in the list of participants? Which official photos to pick? Why were the contents acting up? Who took which photo? Who was the person in another photo? And how to code the captions for all the conference photos that would be scattered throughout the book? How to fit a paper called "Closing remarks" into the first part of the book? How to include a mention to the "PowerPoint author" (as I had started to call her) into the preface? Why was the preface so plainly formatted? The splendid cover image, with the cover blurb, developed an adventurous life of its own.

And then there was our last missing manuscript - with the author now reporting about her progress at ever more regular intervals. It seemed like a miracle when it finally arrived in my mailbox - a well written and enjoyable paper, worth all that waiting! When we thought that all was well, the author later resent a heavily edited version in the last minute.

On to new challenges - the hyperref stuff. The book contained so many URLs that we wanted to make them clickable for the electronic version. Lisa Roper had given us good instructions, which I finally applied at this stage. Wow, it worked - but in some cases, it took some effort to figure everything out.

All this went really well, but the document called "submission form" caused us lots of editorial anxiety and suffering! The number of volumes we really needed was of course different from the number that had been originally been agreed on. The organizers had paid for the postage, but later on, we needed to locate more money for a few extra copies. Personally, I found this far more complicated than anything else during the whole process.

After completing the submission form, we received our volume number, and soon after that the username and password for uploading everything to the publisher. This caused some frantic work, most of it checking and rechecking everything. There were inverted commas galore, no matter how many times we checked! And it was not the editors who noticed that the title page had a misspelling of "astrophysics" as "astrohysics"!

During this stressful time, it felt good to read the calm and clear advice that Lisa Roper from ASP kept sending to answer all our tricky questions. We would never have achieved so much in so little time without her help.

July 2007

In July I was again away from work, enjoying my vacation - except for some minor corrections and replacing the cover image file. Otherwise, my holidays were warn and relaxing, while in Australia, Sandra was shivering because of some surprise snow.

Then there was the "Preflight Report", and the ASP review, listing some errors and problems to fix and giving us our last chance to improve the book. On July 30, I was back at work, already very busy with the corrections.

August 2007

One of the most bothersome last minute tasks was to improve the quality of images. This was something that should have been tackled much earlier. And it was, sort of - but in reality, images that look good on the screen and even printed with your faithful but tired institutional printer will inevitably give you surprises. Some gridlines were too thin after all, and there were several images with low resolution. Worst of all were some graphs that would become unintelligible in black and white. They had looked okay earlier, but suddenly there was dark grey on dark grey. Bothering the authors about their images at this late stage produced either better images, or in some cases worse.

Also, we received another version of cover image and a new cover image blurb. The image in itself was splendid, but we had to look really hard to decide whether the stars would be visible enough.

It was in late August when we finally received the proof. The timing was definitely not perfect, as Sandra was going away for a short holiday trip. I was away too, but downloaded the proof anyway despite the whole hour it took. Alas, some gridlines had disappeared, and there was another problem graph.

We could not breathe out yet, despite having come this far. Had we already sent the mailing list to the publisher? No, we had not! Were all the addresses and e-mail addresses current and correct? There was no other way to check but to send email to each and every author. And almost everyone replied. Wow, it was a busy week or two in my mailbox!

September 2007

More address updates, more minor corrections, more fixing of some figures. More authors deserving copies that had not already been paid for - i.e. principal authors who were not at the conference. We had to send e-mail to a number of responsible persons to arrange money for the extra copies from the LISA funds - after that, they were locked for use for LISA VI.

In mid-September, there was another final proof. Just to show that there would be no end to our ability to find errors, a whole new batch of errors surfaced. The most astonishing of them all was that there was a paper with images starting with number 4. Note to future editors: always check that all numbers like that start from number one. Do not trust the software, only trust your eyes!

We finally approved the proof on September 20. Even then, I could not help myself but spotted a citation that needed to be placed differently.

The ASP was quick and put the electronic version online right at this time. Eagerly, I looked through it and managed to locate several problems - the conference photo looked strange online, for example, and then there were some clickable URLs causing problems. There was some misunderstanding at this point, and I had to apologize to the hardworking ASP people. I was told later on that most editors are so tired at this stage that they don't bother to inspect the electronic version too closely. Trust a librarian to hunt for errors forever!

October 2007 and onwards

After we approved the final proof, and after the last errors we would fix were fixed, the sudden silence in my mailbox was almost unreal. No editorial emails for over two weeks! Then, on October 17, I received the printed volume. Inspecting it and giving permission to the publisher to send all the other printed volumes to the participants would be our final editorial decision. Now was the time to thank everyone. At work, I served cake for our faculty and staff to celebrate the occasion.

Last but not least, there was a minor amount of mails from authors who had not received their copies for some reason, and one from an author who was not

entitled to a copy and who was wondering whether co-authors could have been
given at least e-access to papers they had co-authored. That is certainly a
thought for future editors to think about.

I had been expecting more feedback from the authors - complaints about changes
in their papers and such, maybe even some small praise. But alas, they seemed
quietly content with the volume - at least I hope so.

What would we have done differently, now that the big effort is over? I don't
really know. It would have been excellent to have been able to produce the
proceedings sooner, so the contents would have been more current and had more
impact. That would have meant for us to produce a poorer quality - for example,
less checking of URLs, citations, capitalizations... I doubt that the publisher
would have appreciated that! We could really have benefited from tackling the
invited authors much earlier, as they and their manuscripts were the most
difficult to catch later on.

During the process, we learned about quite many editorial traditions only after
having breached them. For example, there was logic to the order of editors that
we learnt about only after the order had been long since fixed. Our most
important resource, apart from the immensely helpful Lisa Roper, were former
LISA editors, who would always give us sound advice no matter how tricky our
questions. And we really enjoyed their appreciation, as they were the people
who really knew what we were facing during this process.

Last but not least, we have to feel thankful for the LOC, whom we had to
consult time and again, and who would willingly fulfil our requests for lists
of participants, photos, and such. And our local computer people were
invaluable, helping us to set up whatever we would need to handle the vast
amount of files. I was quite proud, though, when I read the prefaces of
previous LISA volumes and realized that we were the first editors who had
handled the technical challenges of editing by ourselves, at least mostly. That
was probably because I'm a nerdy sort of librarian who enjoyed all the
challenges of LaTeX etc. I don't think that all editorial teams need each their
nerd - instead, it's important that the editors find out what they are good at,
and enjoy what they are doing, despite all the inevitable hardships. That's my
final message for future editors: it can be very fun - remember to enjoy it!