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Observatory Operations: Strategies, Processes, and Systems II

Roger J. Brissenden
David R. Silva
Editors

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Contents

POSTERS: OBSERVATORY SCHEDULING

POSTERS: OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

POSTERS: USER SUPPORT

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2 General Operations II
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Introduction

The advent of the next Decadal Survey process in the United States is a timely reminder that the nature, output, and (in particular) cost of observatory operations has captured renewed attention of funding agencies on national and international levels. While every ground and space observatory has its own individual and unique characteristics, each shares with the others a common need to execute technical and science operations in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible. At the same time, the user community at large has come to expect a basket of services from self-serve electronic help desks to large, calibrated, multi-purpose legacy datasets.

Building on our successful SPIE conference in 2006, we invited the observatory operations community to gather to discuss lessons learned and progress made. As before, we were particularly interested in discussions of what works vs. what does not work, as well as what was planned vs. what actually happened. Discussion of the interplay of science operations, technical operations, and observatory development was particularly encouraged — especially as it impacted the maximization of science value return. We were also interested in hearing how observatory legacy data sets are planned for and created, and of the different approaches taken by ground- and space-based observatories. Progress reports from new facilities coming on-line as well as existing facilities facing major new operational challenges were particularly welcomed.

The result was an interesting and successful two-and-a-half day conference that attracted contributions from a broad range of the international ground- and space-based observatory community. The oral sessions were well attended by participants of the Astronomical Telescopes and Instrumentation Symposium at large, demonstrating the heightened awareness that a project does not end at launch and first light. But the most valuable result was the chance to discuss common challenges and mull over possible solutions face-to-face.

We thank our program committee for their service, our participants for their carefully prepared manuscripts and presentations, and the SPIE staff without whom none of this would have been possible.

Roger J. Brissenden
David R. Silva