

Report of the Space Telescope Users' Committee (STUC) Meeting, October 1993

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CC:

Subj: HST Users Comm report

Oct 4

Here is the STUC report from the meeting of Sept 27,28. I will have neat Tex versions with me later this week, but the words will be the same. This report has been agreed by the STUC membership, including Hobbs and Windhorst, who did not attend the meeting.

HST Users committee meeting Sept 1993

The committee met Sept 27,28 in the GSFC area. Members absent were Hobbs and Kirshner. Windhorst participated in part by telephone.

We are pleased to note the number of actions taken following our last report. We have instigated the procedure of checking all the recommendations

and action items from the previous meeting report. The following are the issues that the committee wishes to put on record.

1. We remain very disturbed at the possible budget cuts to the project and the STScI. We regard the uncertain status of GO funding as unsatisfactory and would like to be informed when it becomes clarified. We also wish to be informed of any significant proposed changes to user services and the archive that may occur as a result of budget cuts.

We have been active since the last meeting in making our concerns felt to several organisations, individuals, and groups over the budget cuts threatened in the next few years. We are very pleased that the Senate subcommittee appears to be supportive of restoring HST funding and operating the full 15 year planned mission.

We have set in place plans for a full briefing of the HST budget to a subcommittee of the STUC with some expert outside advisors. This review is to take place in the week of January 17. We will use the findings of this subcommittee in understanding the implications of any budget changes, and in explaining budget problems to the astronomy community that we represent.

2. We note that the STScI has responded to users whose early cycle programs may not be completed before the repair mission, by proposing to carry over largely incomplete high priority proposals. However, we

are not certain that this is necessarily the way to do the best science, as cycle 3 programs were not designed for the refurbished HST, and as cycle 3 was advertised as oversubscribed and unlikely to be completed. Cycles 1 and 2 proposals should have a higher priority for carry-over. We suggest that PIs of incomplete proposals should justify in writing any further observing time their programs need, with the refurbished telescope, after the observing status of cycles 1 through 3 is finally known. Carry over of incomplete GO proposals should depend on these justifications. We are concerned about conflict between carried over and cycle 4 approved proposals and targets: if these occur, collaborations should be encouraged. Incomplete GTO observations should be carried over with exposure adjustments to achieve the defined science goals.

3. The proposed new method of updating and emailing proposal status files was strongly approved. It is suggested that the files also contain the name, email and phone number of the proposal TA, and also that normal calendar dates be used instead of day of year dates. The plan to manage large or difficult proposals by assignment of a shepherd-scientist was also strongly approved.

4. The issues of GO/GTO conflicts was discussed. In order to facilitate tracking such situations it is suggested that the phase 1 proposal form contain a specific section asking the proposer to note overlaps with other approved targets or archival data. We would like to be informed of the overall conflict situation as it develops.

5. We appreciate hearing the SMOV plans and organisation, and the ERO plans. We would like to be included in the email list to receive reports of progress during the time following the repair mission and through SMOV.

6. We were pleased with the FOS flat field program and the progress in understanding the FOS scattered light in the UV. Users should be informed of this situation and how to deal with it, as soon as possible, and pipeline processing and the archive updated accordingly. New calibration data should be announced when available, and a 0.1-0.2 redshift galaxy observed as a calibrator during cycle 4.

7. We remain concerned over the very tight schedules and budgets for STIS and NICMOS. We request a simple summary of the current STIS and NICMOS scientific capabilities, and proposed NICMOS filters, to be mailed when available. We endorse the need for an advanced camera instrument for the 1999 refurbishment mission. The AO and efforts to find new funding for this are strongly supported.

8. We are pleased at the initiative shown by STScI in announcing a special opportunity to propose observations of the Jupiter-comet collision in July 1994.

9. We are pleased at the plans announced for streamlining and improving the proposal process, from phase 1 through phase 2 and RPSS,

placing more detailed control of decisions in the hands of the observers. These plans address many of our earlier suggestions and user complaints. We would like information as the system is developed, at the next meeting, and hope that much of it will be in place for cycle 5.

10. We congratulate the teams responsible for the excellent state of preparation for the refurbishment mission. We are happy with the complement of tasks and hope that the JIS exercises will lead to realistic planning of the EVA schedules and priorities. We would like to be informed of the final EVA timeline as it is defined.

11. We hope that efforts will continue to coordinate STScI with STIS and NICMOS teams for calibration and software development.

12. We note that the problem of logging and tracking calls from users still persists. We would like the STScI to look further into ways of doing this.

13. We suggest that STScI look for ways to learn of research results from observers, by requesting direct summaries, or requiring it in phase 1 proposals. This database can be used as reference in writing reports or planning publicity. We would like a presentation from UPD at the next meeting.

14. We request that plans for cycle 5 and the review panels be discussed

at the next meeting.

15. We noted the lists of filters and calibration plans for WFPC2.

We understand that these are being developed with some interaction with cycle 4 observers, and suggest that cycle 4 observers be kept informed..

16. We suggest that in view of the current schedule for our budget review in January and the repair mission/SMOV activities, the next STUC meeting be on Jan 27,28 at STScI.

We thank those who took time to attend our meeting, and especially Mal Niedner for local arrangements.