

Global Astronomy Survey : Jamaica

First Submission: Errol Rickman (SpOC) [see human resources section] 4 March 2009

SPoC Approved : Yes

1. Professional (Research) Astronomy:

i. Number of Universities offering Astronomy? Names?

Answer: One, the University of the West Indies

ii. Number of Universities offering Physics.

Answer: University of Technology, Northern University, Mico University, Caribbean University.

iii. Number of Academics Trained.?

Answer: Many, Professor Mercedes Richards, Dr. Claude McNamara. Professor John Lodenquai (Late). Many undergraduates from the U.W.I.

iv. University Number of Astronomical Facilities?

Answer: There are two observatories in Jamaica. One (1) which is in Stony Hill St. Andrew with a 21 inch Newtonian reflector telescope. The second is a small Dome sited on the roof of the Physics Dept. Building at the UWI Mona Campus with a 12 inch reflector. The Astronomical Association of Jamaica, Based at the UWI Mona with faculty and amateur Members have small Refractors and Reflectors Ranging in size from 12" inches to 3" inches,. total number about 20 units available

v. We would classify asPhase 2

(2) Public Understanding of Astronomy

i. What Government Outreach Programs exist?

Answer: None except the Farquarson Institute of Public Affairs and the Institute of Jamaica who recently awarded Professor M. Richards and Dr. Michael Chin the Gold Musgrave medal for Science.

ii. What non Govt. Astronomy /Science projects take place?

Answer: The Astronomical Association of Jamaica a member of the SGAC has been active in promoting the IYA2009 programs during 2008 with star Parties and entry in competitions e.g. Yuri's Night etc. with regular monthly meetings and viewing events like eclipses and occultation, transits and Comet Hunting. Emails are sent to over 150 members weekly, relaying informing of IYA 2009 activities and promotions.

iii. Comment on presence of Astronomy/ Science in media/

Answer: Local TV and Radio rarely put on programs but the AAJ has started to issue press releases and got front page billing in the daily newspaper on Venus as the morning and evening star. On the 25th of March 2009, the first in 9 Months. In general, response is very low.

vi. Comment on Astronomy in the general culture?

Answer: Only when events occur e.g. Eclipses, Meteor showers or comets...

v. Evaluation;

Answer: Phase 3.

(3) Astronomy in Schools?

i. What Governmental Astronomy/ Science Program outreach for schools?

Answer: Many science programs with exhibitions and competitions are done with assistance from Govt. but astronomy is hardly represented except initiated by a particular school.

ii What non governmental astro/ Science and outreach programs for schools take place?

Answer: The AAJ has recently started visits to schools and has set up the first Astronomy Club for students. It has been inaugurated at the Campion College with a very big “Star Party” to celebrate the “100hrs of Astronomy” on the 2nd of April 2009. The chairman of this club 17 year old Jason Ewer was a winner of the November 2008 Essay competition put on by the SGAC IYA 2009 committee. Earlier we had a Viewing session at Rock Hall All Age School with Primary students. The AAJ is seeking The Governments participation in getting a program of

Astronomy into schools across the Island. The AAJ is exchanging ideas with other Islands in the Caribbean to formulate a program of Astronomical Science which could be spread through the Carina Website in Trinidad. There is a lack of teachers who have basic astronomy knowledge at this time.

iii. Comment on the presence of Astronomy in the School curriculum what setbacks?

Answer: Yes. Prominent in the prep schools preparation of GSAT students but centered on The Solar System. There are sufficient students in math's and science programs, but mainly earth sciences... setbacks are mainly, not enough teachers with experience in astronomy.

v. What phase would you give it ?

Answer: We estimate that the potential is there from the response we get at schools so we would give it a Phase 2.

The foregoing was written by the President of the AAJ Mr. Errol Rickman in association with the Vice President Mr. Stanley Smellie who is also the SPOC for the AAJ Jamaica. Our membership has over 150 persons and increasing weekly. The history of astronomy in Jamaica goes back to the 1780's and a large telescope was shipped from Jamaica to Glasgow University

and during the 1920's Professor Pickering and Hamilton did extensive studies recording Nebulosity's etc. **See the Jamaica Page on the SGAC website.**

Comments:

Proposed Changes by Marc Cornwall (National Point of Contact (Jamaica) Space Generation Advisory Council) [see human resources section] 10 June 2009

Section 1(i)

University of the West Indies (3rd year course, not undergraduate programme)

Section 1 (ii)

Only University of the West Indies (other universities offer biology, chemistry and engineering programmes but no explicit physics programme)

Section 1 (iii)

Several including: Prof. Mercedes T. Richards, Dr. Claude McNamara, The Late Prof. John Lodenquai, Some UWI graduates go on to do astronomy at overseas universities

Section 1 (iv)

- a. Stony Hill Observatory in St. Andrew. 21 inch Newtonian reflector.
- b. Small Dome sited on the roof of the Physics Dept. Building at the UWI Mona Campus. 12 inch reflector.
- c. The Astronomical Association of Jamaica, Based at the UWI Mona with faculty and amateur members have small refractors and reflectors ranging in size from 12 inches to 3 inches – about 20 in total.

Section 1 (v)

Phase 2 - this due to the fact that astronomical research is carried out on a small scale at the

tertiary level but there is no undergraduate programme to complement this academic level research. The observatories are underused and consequently difficult to upkeep. Many academics are based off the island.

Section 2 (i)

a. Scientific Research Council (Popularisation of Science Project)

b. Institute of Jamaica (science awards – 2008 Gold Medal to Prof Mercedes T Richards and Dr Micheal Chin in science)

Section 2 (ii)

The Astronomical Association of Jamaica (AAJ) has been active in promoting the IYA2009 programs during 2008 with star parties (e.g. Yuri's Night) and entry in competitions (Space Generation IYA2009 essay competition) with regular monthly meetings and viewing events for eclipses, occultations, transits and comet hunting. Emails are sent to over 150 members weekly, informing on general and IYA2009 activities and promotions.

Section 2 (iii)

Local TV and Radio rarely put on programs but the AAJ has started to issue press releases and got front page billing in the daily newspaper on Venus as the morning and evening star on the 25th of March 2009 – the first in 9 Months. In general, response is very low.

Section 2 (iv)

Only when events occur – e.g. eclipses, meteor showers or comets. The benefits that come with knowledge of astronomy or focus on astronomical research are not immediately visible, or obvious.

Section 3 (i)

Several with exhibitions and competitions are done with assistance from Govt. but astronomy is hardly represented except if initiated by a particular school, or as a small factor in a broader science theme

Section 3 (ii)

The AAJ has recently started visits to schools and has set up the first Astronomy Club for students. It has been inaugurated at the Campion College with a very big "Star Party" to celebrate the "100hrs of Astronomy" on the 2nd of April 2009. The chairman of this club 17 year old Jason Ewer was a winner of the November 2008 Essay competition put on by the SGAC IYA2009 committee. Earlier we had a viewing session at Rock Hall All Age School with Primary

students. The AAJ is seeking the Jamaican Government's participation in getting a program of Astronomy into schools across the Island. The AAJ is exchanging ideas with other Islands in the Caribbean to formulate a program of Astronomical Science which could be spread through the Carina Website in Trinidad. There is a lack of teachers who have basic astronomy knowledge at this time.

Section 3 (iii)

Prominent in GSAT (pre-high school curriculum) students but centred on The Solar System (number of planets and Copernican model). Also small component in pre-university (A Level) curricula which is optional and focuses on Cosmology.

Section 3 (iv)

There are sufficient students in math's and science programs, but mainly earth sciences. Setbacks are mainly lack of teachers with experience in astronomy. The interest is generally low save for science/physics students.

Section 3 (v)

Phase 2 – recognise potential due to response from the schools.