



RESOLUTION B4

Endorsement of the Washington Charter for Communicating Astronomy with the Public

The Washington Charter was one of the outcomes of the 2nd International Conference on Communicating Astronomy with the Public held in Washington DC in October 2003. Council endorsed the Washington Charter in March 2004. Nineteen other societies, organizations and facilities have endorsed the Charter, including the BAA and PPARC.

At the Communicating Astronomy with the Public 2005 meeting in Garching last June a revised version of the Charter was proposed. This softened the language and also tidied up some of the phraseology. This was endorsed by the attendees and accepted by the IAU Working Group. The revised version is appended.

The IAU General Assembly is requested to confirm endorsement of the Revised Washington Charter.

The Washington Charter for Communicating Astronomy with the Public

As our world grows ever more complex and the pace of scientific discovery and technological change quickens, the global community of professional astronomers needs to communicate more effectively with the public. Astronomy enriches our culture, nourishes a scientific outlook in society, and addresses important questions about humanity's place in the universe. It contributes to areas of immediate practicality, including industry, medicine, and security, and it introduces young people to quantitative reasoning and attracts them to scientific and technical careers. Sharing what we learn about the universe is an investment in our fellow citizens, our institutions, and our future. Individuals and organizations that conduct astronomical research – especially those receiving public funding for this research – have a responsibility to communicate their results and efforts with the public for the benefit of all.

Recommendations

For Funding Agencies:

- Encourage and support public outreach and communication in projects and grant programs.
- Develop infrastructure and linkages to assist with the organization and dissemination of outreach results. Emphasize the importance of such efforts to project and research managers.
- Recognize public outreach and communication plans and efforts through proposal selection criteria and decisions and annual performance awards.
- Encourage international collaboration on public outreach and communication activities.

For Professional Astronomical Societies:

- Endorse standards for public outreach and communication.
- Assemble best practices, formats, and tools to aid effective public outreach and communication.
- Promote professional respect and recognition of public outreach and communication.
- Make public outreach and communication a visible and integral part of the activities and operations of the respective societies.
- Encourage greater linkages with successful ongoing efforts of amateur astronomy groups and others.

For Universities, Laboratories, Research Organizations, and Other Institutions:

- Acknowledge the importance of public outreach and communication.

- Recognize public outreach and communication efforts when making decisions on hiring, tenure, compensation and awards.
- Provide institutional support to enable and assist with public outreach and communication efforts. Collaborate with funding agencies and other organizations to help ensure that public outreach and communication efforts have the greatest possible impact.
- Make available formal public outreach and communication training for researchers.
- Offer communication training in academic courses of study for the next generation of researchers.

For Individual Researchers:

- Support efforts to communicate the results and benefits of astronomical research to the public, convey the importance of public outreach and communication to team members.
- Instill this sense of responsibility in the next generation of researchers

Authored by CCAP. Washington DC, October 2003 - Revised by CAP 2005, Garching bei München. June 2005.