



## **COSPAR News**

**December 2020 Issue 7**

### **End of Year Message from the COSPAR President**

I am sure all of us welcome the end of 2020, a year when the pandemic disrupted our lives, threatened our health, weakened our economies, and the wellbeing of many of us. I take some comfort in being able to report to you that COSPAR, in my judgement, has been remarkably adept in addressing these and other challenges we have confronted.

At the beginning of 2020 we were pursuing our normal activities. The Program Committee for COSPAR 2020 was putting together the program for the Assembly to be held in August in Sydney, and planning on final approval at its March meeting. The President, Executive Director and Secretariat were continuing to implement the actions called for in the Strategic Action Plan, which was adopted by the Bureau in March 2019. The Bureau was scheduled to meet in March to, among other items, approve the evaluation process for the Assembly to be held in 2024 which would be considered by the Council at the COSPAR 2020 Assembly.

Then the pandemic arrived with a vengeance in France. In-person meetings of the Program Committee and the Bureau were not possible. The Program Committee was able to complete the program for COSPAR-2020 through electronic communications. The Bureau also approved essential actions electronically.

By early April it was obvious that we could not hold the Assembly in August and so a decision was taken to postpone the Assembly to its current dates, 28 January to 4 February 2021. We had some expectations at that time that in-person attendance would be possible by January 2021, and so we chose dates when the outstanding conference facilities in Sydney were available to accommodate the program that had been developed for COSPAR-2020, in exactly the same rooms.

As Churchill said, 'never waste a good crisis'. So we decided to engage with the COSPAR community, most of whom were sheltering in place, to discuss how to position COSPAR for the post-pandemic era. There were six issues of *Conversations in Confinement*, from early April to early June, in which essays were written and responses were submitted from across the COSPAR community. Although the original topic was positioning COSPAR for the post-pandemic era, the discussions broadened to include two main themes: COSPAR has an opportunity and an obligation to help humanity in the world we will now live in, and how do we function and pursue our mission, particularly when there are restrictions on international travel. We are acting now on the important suggestions for how we can engage to help humanity, and we are adapting all our meetings to the restrictions that are imposed upon us.

In June, organizations in many countries, national academies, professional societies, universities, and also the general public, pledged to combat systemic racism and other forms of discrimination. COSPAR issued its own statement committing to uphold the principles of inclusivity and diversity, to promote equitable opportunities, and to oppose all forms of discrimination. Moreover, we

developed an action plan to promote particularly gender equity. The plan extends the actions called for in the Strategic Action Plan, and includes revisions to the COSPAR Bylaws that codify our commitments.

In August, it became obvious that a largely in-person Assembly in Sydney in January would not be possible. Rather, COSPAR-2021 must be hybrid with essentially all of the international COSPAR community participating remotely. Rather than view this as an impediment to success, we, together with Russell Boyce, Chair of the Local Organizing Committee, Iver Cairns, Program Committee Chair, and their professional staff, viewed this as an opportunity for COSPAR to distinguish itself by offering a global gathering that is stimulating and rewarding, with far more opportunities for engagement with each other and for more access to content than is normally possible in a large in-person Assembly. Throughout the fall, the technology necessary to offer this extraordinary Assembly is being implemented, pre-recordings of presentations are being completed, and I am confident that COSPAR-2021-Hybrid will be one of the best COSPAR Assemblies, and a model for how to offer an international conference in this era of the pandemic, and, perhaps, also in the future.

With the introduction of open source journals and other changes in the world of scientific publications, COSPAR also needed to adapt. We renegotiated our contract with Elsevier, the publisher of our journals, with better and more predictable financial terms. Further, our Panel on Planetary Protection (PPP), which is ably led by Athena Coustenis, Chair, and Niklas Hedman and Gerhard Kminek, Vice Chairs, is adapting to the addition of commercial companies exploring and using planetary bodies. The PPP is empowered by the UN Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space to set the international standards for compliance with the planetary protection requirements of Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty which apply to both governments and commercial companies.

COSPAR Panels and other activities have also adapted to the constraints imposed by the pandemic and are pursuing their responsibilities through virtual meetings. Our Panel on Space Weather has been particularly active. All our Panels will participate in COSPAR-2021-Hybrid, including our new Panel on Innovative Solutions which will initiate its activities virtually. The Task Group on Establishing a Constellation of Small Satellites has been able to do its work through virtual meetings and is making excellent progress in promoting a constellation of small satellites that will contribute to the forecasting of space weather; this effort is of importance and interest to COSPAR Members with developing space programs.

So, as the year closes, what do we have to look forward to? Certainly in the immediate future, while the pandemic still rages, we will have more of the same. However, with promising news on vaccines, perhaps a return to a more enjoyable world will be possible. And perhaps humanity will learn from the pandemic that the only way to deal with a global crisis, whether it is a pandemic or the consequences of global climate change, is through international cooperation, and that in a world with a growing population that stretches resources to the point of breaking, we need a scientifically literate society that respects and values the results of scientific research and the guidance it provides for our survival. And we must learn to share widely the benefits of our advancing civilization with all nations and all people. No one should be left behind. All should be raised up, reducing the inequities that are the bane of our current world.

Best wishes for the year ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. A. Fisk". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Len A Fisk  
President of COSPAR

## Space Science Snapshot:

The Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP), developed and operated by Australia's national science agency, [CSIRO](#), has radio conducted its first survey of the entire southern sky, mapping approximately three million galaxies in just 300 hours.



(Image credit: CSIRO)



## 43rd COSPAR Scientific Assembly

*Connecting space research for global impact*

### Roundtable of Space Agency Leaders

**Date: 30 January 2021**

**Time: CET 14.00 - 15.30**

Don't miss this opportunity to attend and ask questions at COSPAR's first [virtual roundtable discussion](#) with leaders of space agencies from Australia, China, France, Germany, Greece, ESA, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, and the USA.

The panel will address various topics of interest to the space science research community, including:

- Hazards and challenges of climate change and relevant space observations;
- Observations and initiatives required for the forecasting of space weather;
- Scientists-industry relations and the challenges of emerging private actors.

Log on to the COSPAR 2021 Hybrid Platform on 30 January 2021 at CET 14.00 to attend this unique roundtable. Questions for the panel can be sent in advance to [cosparcom@cosparhq.cnes.fr](mailto:cosparcom@cosparhq.cnes.fr) or submitted during the event via the chatbox.



## **43rd COSPAR Scientific Assembly**

*Connecting space research for global impact*

### **Pre-Recorded Full Presentation Upload Deadline:**

**31 December 2020**

[www.cospar2021.org](http://www.cospar2021.org)

Please note that as a presenter, you have until **31 December 2020** to upload your pre-recorded full presentation(s). Instructions for recording and uploading your summary and full-length presentation(s) can be found on the [LOC website](#).

For any questions concerning the virtual platform, your presentation or other issues, contact [speaker@cospar2021.org](mailto:speaker@cospar2021.org)



## **COSPAR Community**

### **In Memoriam: Mikhail Panasyuk**

COSPAR is greatly saddened to announce the recent passing of Professor Mikhail Panasyuk, COSPAR Vice-President from 2018, and Russian National Representative to COSPAR from 2014. He had been an active Associate for many decades.



## **COSPAR Member News**

### **ROSA Turns 25**

The Romanian space agency, ROSA, celebrated its 25th anniversary last month. Read more [here](#).

## **Other COSPAR Meetings**

**44th COSPAR Scientific Assembly, 16-24 July  
2022, Athens, Greece  
Call for Scientific Event Proposals**

COSPAR Associates and all other readers are invited to submit proposals for scientific events which will comprise the programme for COSPAR 2022 by returning the [proposal form](#) by 15 December 2020. Proposals will be considered from mid-December 2020 by relevant COSPAR Scientific Commissions, Panels and the Programme Committee.



## **On the Radar**

**China Launches Lunar Sample Return Mission**

China has launched a lunar sample return mission from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province. The Long March-5 rocket is carrying the largest and heaviest (at 8.2 metric tons) robotic lunar probe, *Chang-e-5*, with a mission to collect approximately 2 kg of soil and rocks from the Moon. The sample is expected to return to Earth mid-December.



## On the Radar

### UK to Set Up Space Hubs

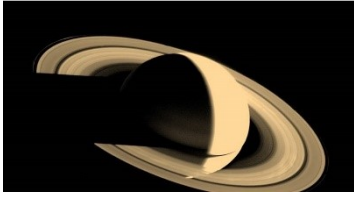
The UK space sector is to get government backing to set up a number of space hubs across the country. Funding is going to seven locations, including the North West and West Yorkshire, to ensure space is a priority for regional economic growth and attract commercial investment from space companies to these areas.



## Space Science Quote

“In spite of the opinions of certain narrow-minded people, who would shut up the human race upon this globe, as within some magic circle it must never outstep, we shall one day travel to the moon, the planets, and the stars, with the same facility, rapidity, and certainty as we now make the voyage from Liverpool to New York.” Jules Verne (*From the Earth to the Moon*, 1865).

## Space Science Highlights from the Past



In this month in 1977 *Voyager 1* started to cross the asteroid belt, en route to a flyby of Jupiter, and overtook *Voyager 2*. Four days after its closest approach, the spacecraft took a magnificent image of Saturn and its rings with the planet in a crescent phase, its night side dimly illuminated by ring-shine. *Voyager 1* completed its observations of the Saturn system on 14 December 1980.

### Contribute to COSPAR NEWS!

If you have an announcement or item of news for the COSPAR--and wider space--community, please send it to [leigh.fergus@cosparhq.cnes.fr](mailto:leigh.fergus@cosparhq.cnes.fr)

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