

Dear colleague,

The 8<sup>th</sup> COSPAR Capacity-Building Workshop held from 20<sup>th</sup> January-2<sup>nd</sup> February 2008 at the Library of Alexandria, Egypt has just finished and this is a report on its activities. The topic of the workshop was X-ray astronomy, in particular the Chandra, XMM/Newton and Swift missions, so it covered a very broad range from the classical galactic and extra-galactic X-ray sources to Gamma-ray bursts. It was attended by a total of 31 full participants from Egypt (19), India (4), Turkey (4), Nigeria (1), South Africa (1), Morocco (1) and Ukraine (1). Details about the workshop can be found at [www.cosparhq.cnes.fr/Meetings/meetings.htm](http://www.cosparhq.cnes.fr/Meetings/meetings.htm) or [www.cais.cu.edu.eg/astro](http://www.cais.cu.edu.eg/astro). The workshop website will in due course contain also the lectures and the project reports.

An innovation at this workshop was the attendance for the first two days, when the introductory lectures were given, of 5 extra participants for whom the full workshop was considered inappropriate. This was introduced mainly for Egyptian undergraduates, though in practice was not limited to these. In addition, an afternoon programme was put on for high-school students from Cairo as well as some local staff, totalling about 100 people in all.

The Library provided a magnificent setting for the workshop and we had a most interesting tour in which the facilities and programme were explained. There was also a day trip to the Pyramids, followed by a workshop dinner at which the Minister and Deputy Ministers of Science were our guests, together with a number of distinguished visitors from Cairo University and The American University in Cairo. However, in case you should get the wrong impression we should also tell you that the “students” and their advisors worked extremely hard on the projects which were as usual a feature of the workshop. The computer lab was open and fully occupied until around 9 pm. For the most part the workshop proceeded without notable incident except for a severe storm which disrupted our internet connection, vital for access to the data archives, for the last 3 days. Fortunately by this time all students had some data at least by this time so it was rather an inconvenience than a tragedy.

The workshop was supported financially by the Ministry of Science, the University of Cairo, the Centre for Advanced Interdisciplinary Science, the Library of Alexandria, the International Astronomical Union, the European Space Agency (both the International Office and ESAC), the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, the University of Groningen, the University of Leicester and of course COSPAR.

The lecturers, who stayed for the full two weeks of the workshop and also acted as project advisors, were

Dr. Alaa Ibrahim (American University in Cairo, Egypt, Co-Director)

Prof Peter Willmore (University of Birmingham, England, Co-Director)

Dr Keith Arnaud (University of Maryland and Goddard Space Center, USA)

Dr Andrew Beardmore (University of Leicester, England)

Ms Beike Hiemstra (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Dr Carlos Gabriel (European Space Agency, Vilspa, Spain)

Dr Matteo Guinazzi (European Space Agency, Vilspa, Spain)

Dr Craig Markwardt (NASA, Goddard Space Center, USA)

Prof Mariano Mendez (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Dr Paul O'Brien (University of Leicester, England)

Dr Kim Page (University of Leicester, England)  
Dr Randall Smith (NASA, Goddard Space Center, USA)

These workshops are very hard work and we are grateful for the dedicated support which this team gave, without which the workshop would not have been possible.

The selection of the student participants was carried out by Prof Prahlad Agrawal (TIFR, India) and Prof Ali Alpar (Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey), Dr Ibrahim and Prof Willmore and we are also grateful for their help.

The Organising Committee consisted of the following:

Dr. Alaa Ibrahim (Cairo University; Co-Chair)  
Dr. Peter Willmore (COSPAR; Co-Chair)  
Dr. Karel v d Hucht (IAU)  
Dr. Hans Haubold (UN/OOSA)  
Dr. Robert Missoten (UNESCO)  
Dr. Nicholas White (NASA GSFC)  
Dr. Keterpali Sreenivisan (ICTP)  
Dr. Ismail Serageldin (Bibliotheca Alexandria)  
Dr. Hamdi Hassaanen (Cairo University)  
Dr. Medhat Haroun (AUC)  
Dr. Anas Osman (NRIAG)  
Dr. Moneer Hamdy (NRIAG)  
Dr. Hamed Al-Naimy (UAE)  
Dr. Ali Alpar (Turkey)  
Dr. Athem Alsabti (Iraq)  
Dr. Shawky Al-Dalal (Bahrain)  
Dr. Ali Al-Shukry (KSA)  
Dr. Hassan Basra (KSA)  
Dr. Hanna Sabat (Jordan)  
Dr. Emad Al Azab (Syria)

and the Local Organising Committee consisted of:

Dr. Tarek Hussein (Cairo University)  
Dr. Alaa Ibrahim (Cairo University)  
Dr. Omar Fikry (Bibliotheca Alexandria)  
Dr. Magdy Abdel-Wahab (Cairo University)  
Dr. Abdel-Aziz Bakry (Al-Azhar University)  
Dr. Amr Shaarawi (AUC)  
Dr. Rabab Helal (NRIAG)  
Dr. Hamed Ismail (NRIAG)

At the end of the workshop each student presented a poster and the final afternoon was mainly devoted to these. The results showed a high level of achievement and there is little doubt that all the participants will be able to continue work using the archives of these 3 spacecraft after to returning to their home institutes, which is of course the main objective of the workshop. The students clearly found the whole experience both stimulating and enjoyable and we feel that the basis for lasting friendships and future research collaboration was also laid down. On the last two days

we had coincidentally a visit from Diego Altamira, a veteran of the first COSPAR workshop held at INPE (Brazil) in 2001, who is now an established X-ray astronomer.

Finally we wish to thank all the people and organisations who have contributed in different ways to making this successful workshop possible.

Alaa Ibrahim,  
Peter Willmore