

Annual Report, 2007
Working Group on Astronomical Software

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The primary role of the AAS Working Group on Astronomical Software is to function as the body that serves the North American community in formulating, reviewing, and endorsing modifications to the FITS data format standard. The WGAS FITS Committee (WFC) serves as one of four regional FITS standards committees, operating under the IAU FITS Working Group. Dr. Arnold Rots (SAO/CXC) chairs the WFC. There has been substantial activity in this area in the past year.

There were no changes in membership this year. The committee has 16 voting members.

Last year's report concluded with the approval by the WFC and the IAU FWG of the HEALpix proposal. During the current reporting period there was no formal activity on proposals and, hence, no formal committee activity. However, there were a number of events and activities that are of interest to the business of the committee and in which several of its members participated.

The IAU FWG held its triennial meeting at the IAU General Assembly XXVI in Prague, Czech Republic, in August 2006. The chair of the WFC and several of its members attended. There were no changes in the composition and leadership of the IAU FWG. In October 2006, during the ADASS XVI conference in Tucson, AZ, the annual FITS BoF was held.

During the report year there has been discussion of a revision of the FITS standards document. W. Pence (NASA/GSFC, chair of the IAU FWG) constituted a technical panel that will review the FITS standards documents and make suggestions for improving clarity and resolving discrepancies. Members of the panel include L. Chiapetti, E. Stobie, C. Page, and R. Shaw.

The most important activity was the consideration of a number of formal FITS Conventions in the new Registry of Conventions:

- Column Limits Convention, submitted by W. Pence (NASA/GSFC), on behalf of HEASARC, in June 2006: registered
- Tiled Image Compression Convention, submitted by W. Pence (NASA/GSFC), on behalf of the authors, in November 2006: registered

- Foreign File Encapsulation Convention, submitted by R. Seaman (NOAO), on behalf of the IRAF group, in August 2006: on hold, awaiting updates to documentation
- FITS Header Inheritance Convention, submitted by N. Zarate (NOAO) and P. Greenfield (STScI) in March 2007: under discussion
- Hierarchical Grouping Convention, submitted by W. Pence in April 2007: under discussion

At the January 2006 AAS meeting, E. Greisen (NRAO), one of the original developers of FITS was honored with the George Van Biesbroeck prize for long-term extraordinary and unselfish service to astronomy. Also, last year we neglected to mention the retirement of D. Wells (NRAO), who was not only a co-author with Greisen on the original FITS papers, but also the previous chair of the WGAS, previous chair of the IAU FITS Working Group, and a career-long advocate of the FITS standard.