

Annual Report, 2008
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. 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.

The primary activity in the past year has been the complete review of the FITS standard by a panel chaired by William Pence (NASA/GSFC, chair of the IAU FITS Working Group) and including Lucio Chiapetti (CNR, Milan), Elizabeth Stobie (U. Arizona), Clive Page (U. Leicester), and Richard Shaw (NOAO). Although this was primarily an IAU-based activity, WGAS members were active in discussions. The panel's milestones were:

Jul 2007:	Version 3.0 FITS Standard released for public comment
Oct 2007:	Public comment period closed
Nov 2007:	Panel issued V3.0a revised draft in response to public comments
Dec 2007:	V3.0a was sent to the Regional FITS Committees (North American, Europe, Japan, Australia) for review
Feb 2008:	All Regional Committees voted to endorse the new draft; several additional suggestions were submitted
Mar 2008:	Panel issued V3.0b draft

The WGAS FITS Committee completed its review of the V3.0a draft on 23 January, with 14 "yes" votes and 2 committee members not voting.*

At this time the panel is preparing to submit V3.0b of the standard to the IAU FITS Working Group for final approval.

In addition to the work on the core FITS standard, a number of conventions have been reviewed and added to the FITS registry:

CONTINUE	Long string keyword convention
OIFITS	Optical interferometry data

CHECKSUM Keyword for validating integrity of a FITS file
MBFITS Multi-beam single disk radio astronomy format

Two other conventions have been discussed but have not yet been approved for addition to the registry:

HIERARCH Convention for grouping related keywords
EURO3D Format for 3D spectroscopic data

The chair would like to thank A. Rots for continued leadership of the WGAS FITS Committee, and W. Pence for overseeing the much-needed comprehensive review of the core standard and the associated usage conventions.

* The current members of the WGAS FITS Committee are:

Steve Allen (Lick)
Colin Aspin (U. Hawaii)
Daniel Durand (DAO)
Allen Farris (NRAO)
Eric Greisen (NRAO)
Arne Henden (AAVSO)
Jonathan McDowell (SAO)
Robert Narron (IPAC)
William Pence (HEASARC)
Arnold Rots, Chair (SAO)
Skip Schaller (MMT)
Rob Seaman (NOAO)
Peter Teuben (U. Maryland)
Randy Thompson (STScI)
Doug Tody (NRAO)
Steve Walton (California State U. – Northridge)