

Annual Report, 1998
Working Group on Astronomical Software

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April 29, 1999

The primary role of the AAS Working Group on Astronomical Software is to function as the body which formulates, reviews, and endorses modifications to the FITS data format standard. The WGAS FITS Committee, chaired by Dr. Peter Teuben (University of Maryland) has representatives from all major data providers and all major astronomical software systems. During 1998 the primary activity of the WGAS was to participate in the community wide review of revisions to the FITS standard proposed by NASA's FITS Technical Panel. The NASA FITS Technical Panel incorporated several revisions to the NASA version of the standard, most notably the binary tables extension and the revisions to date formats required to be Y2K compliant. These revisions were made available for public review and comment in spring of 1998. The Panel received 141 comments, many from AAS/WGAS constituents. In the fall of 1998 and winter of 1999 the NASA Technical Panel completed review of all comments and, following endorsement by NASA's FITS Accreditation Panel, released V100-2.0 of the FITS Standard. At this time (April 1999) the WGAS FITS Committee is formally reviewing the NASA standard. Assuming that the FITS Committee endorses the new version, the WGAS will forward this endorsement to the IAU FITS Committee. If similar endorsements are received from the European and Japanese FITS Committees, the IAU FITS Committee will likely endorse the new NASA standard as an IAU standard.

The new version of the NASA FITS standard is available at <http://fits.gsfc.nasa.gov/>.