

Science Center, Planetariums, Public Observatories and the OAO

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The IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAO) was established since 2012, one of its major goals is to build a huge network that could reach out to connect all astronomical organizations in the world and make a two-way communication channels.

1. What is OAO

The very successful International Year of Astronomy 2009 lead to the establishment of the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAO) at Mitaka, Tokyo since 2012, hosted by the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan. And it carries on the momentum of the International Year of Astronomy and tasked with a number of important missions.

Most of the work are highly related to the science center, planetariums and public observatories as they are the major target group for OAO. The tasks of OAO includes, but not limited to, implement special global projects, coordinate with national contacts, network with global stakeholders, maintain the database of organizations, distribute astronomy information and news, communicate astronomy with the public, answer public enquiries, manage social media and promote global activities. In short, the mission for OAO is about (1) networking, (2) communications, (3) global activities.

2. OAO Network

In order to achieve the global reach out, the OAO used two ways to network with the people. The first one is the top-down approach, through the National Outreach Contacts (NOCs). At this point, 67 NOCs were selected, and they work with the OAO on distributing news at national level and support different OAO's work. The other one is the bottom-up approach. The IAU Directory of World Astronomy website (<http://directory.iau.org>) was set up to gather the information of different astronomical organizations, and at the same time it would also mean that it could be used to connect with the international astronomical community. At Sep 28, 2015, there were 623 organizations from 73 countries have registered in the platform, where among them, 103 organizations belong to the science center/planetariums/public observatories category.

It is important that the OAO could connect to as much organizations as possible, in order to maintain and help the global network.

The OAO is publishing a bi-weekly newsletter featuring important outreach events and news, they are useful for the community as well.



Fig. 1 The data point shows the distribution of the 103 science center/planetariums/public observatories registered on the IAU Directory of World Astronomy by Sep 28, 2015.

3. OAO Projects

There are a number of projects that the OAO was coordinating/organizing, and the community may also be interested in:

- 1) The NameExoWorld contest (<http://nameexoworlds.iau.org>)
- 2) The International Year of Light Cosmic Light program (<http://www.iau.org/iyl>)
- 3) The Globe at night – Night Sky Brightness Monitoring Network (<http://globeatnight-network.org>)
- 4) The Total Solar Eclipse Volunteering Program (in March 2016)
- 5) The Translation platform (coming in 2016)
- 6) Communicating Astronomy with the Public Conference 2016.

There are a number of options that the community can work together with the OAO.