

July 2019

Dear members of SAG-SAS sections,

Dear friends of SAG-SAS,

the nights are going to be a little longer and it is time to report on current topics of the SAG-SAS.

1. Assembly of Delegates on 6 April in Schwanden

In cooperation with the observatory and the planetarium SIRIUS as well as the Astronomischen Vereinigung Berner Oberland, this year's delegates' assembly took place in Schwanden ob Sigriswil. The morning was dedicated to the formal assembly and in the afternoon, there were lectures and presentations at the planetarium. The Board was able to report on the successful development of the website (www.sag-sas.ch), which was extended by a forum and a pinboard for selling and searching astronomical equipment. Both are recommended for use by SAG-SAS members. The offer of short notices from SAG-SAS on social media was expanded and was able to reach an increasing number of readers. Another pleasing development are the increasing activities in the 9 special interest groups. These activities are very attractive and more and more colleagues are taking part in it.

The Board is concerned about the declining subscriptions of the ORION magazine by SAG-SAS members. In the coming months, the Board, in cooperation with the ORION editor, will take a closer look at this development and take countermeasures.

Beat Fischer of the Astronomical Association Basel could be elected to the board. He has taken over the previously vacant function of the actuary. After Max Hubmann has retired as a cash auditor, Thomas Iseli, AGUZ, was elected as the new auditor. Subsequently, the 46 delegates present unanimously approved the bill with a surplus of around CHF 3300.- and a budget with planned additional expenditures of CHF 2000.-

This year's assembly has led to a positive response all around, thanks in particular to the good work of the local organizers.



2. Mutations in membership

The Astronomical Society Schaffhausen (26 AGS) has disbanded towards 2019 (not to be confused with the operator of the observatory and planetarium Schaffhausen, the Naturforschende Gesellschaft Schaffhausen (13 NGSH), which is still very active).

The Alpine Astrovillage (47 AAV), which has found a new location in Luzein (GR), has been added as a new section. The new AAV site is scheduled to open in autumn 2019. We look forward to an exciting and fruitful cooperation with AAV.

3. Laser prohibition in Switzerland

On 16 June 2017, the Parliament adopted the Federal Act on The Protection against Exposure to Non-ionizing Radiation and Sound (NISSG). The related Implementing Ordinance (V-NISSG) was signed by the Federal Council on 27 February 2019 and the law and ordinance have been in force since 1 June 2019. Both documents are available in the official version at:

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/search/?lang=de&language%5B%5D=de&product%5B%5D=oc&text=NISSG&lang=de>

The law does not deal specifically with laser safety, but gives the Federal Council powers to protect people's health (excerpt):

Article 4 NISSG. Measures for exposures that are hazardous to health

1 The Federal Council may adopt provisions on measures to reduce the risks of exposures to non-ionizing radiation and sound that are harmful to health, as well as to prevent damage.

2 In particular the Federal Council may: a. determine load values and regulate their monitoring; b. provide for an obligation to provide information; c. provide for protective measures; d. provide for a reporting obligation for events.

Article 5 NISSG. Prohibitions: If no other measure can adequately protect human health, the Federal Council may prohibit the import, transit, supply or possession of products with a significant risk potential.

The regulation states with regard to laser pointers (excerpt):

Article 22 V-NISSG. Term: For the purposes of this section, a laser pointer is a laser device which, due to its size and weight, can be held in the hand and guided by the hand and which laser radiation is used for pointing, pleasure, and defense.

Article 23 V-NISSG. Prohibitions: Prohibited are the import and transit, the offering and the supply as well as the possession of:

a. Laser pointers of classes 1M, 2, 2M, 3R, 3B and 4;

b. Laser pointers which are not or incorrectly classified or which are not correctly marked with a laser class in accordance with the SN EN 60825-1:2014 "Safety of Laser Equipment - Part 1: Classification of Plants and Requirements";

c. Accessories, provided that it is suitable to bundle the laser radiation of laser pointers.

In addition, under the transitional provisions of the V-NISSG (excerpt):

Article 29 V-NISSG.

Laser pointers of classes 1M, 2M, 3R, 3B and 4 must be disposed of professionally no later than one year after the entry into force of this Regulation. Until then, their possession is permitted, but any use is prohibited.

Class 2 laser pointers must be disposed of professionally no later than two years after the entry into force of this Regulation. Until then, their possession and use is permitted exclusively indoors and only for pointing purposes.

***In short**, since June 1, 2019, any use of laser pointers to explain the night sky has been prohibited for astronomical demonstrations!*

The SAG-SAS had requested an exemption for astronomical demonstrations with detailed justifications. However, the Federal Office of Public Health, which is responsible for this matter, did not take this into account and enforced the total ban on laser pointers in the regulation.

The V-NISSG also defines laser events (excerpt):

Article 10 V-NISSG. Terms: For the purposes of this section, events with laser radiation are considered: laser show, holographic projection, astronomical demonstration;

Under the same conditions and rules as for commercial laser shows, "astronomical shows" can be carried out in the future. Prerequisites for this are structural measures (fixation of the laser module), training of the operator of the system and prior notification of operating time. The corresponding regulations are very extensive, so reference is made to the original text of the V-NISSG.

What next for astronomical demonstrations?

The SAG-SAS is working on replacement solutions for the laser pointers, which were previously popular with astronomical demonstrations. No equivalent replacement is yet known, but light-intensive and highly focused LED lamps are already approaching the requirements. In contact with manufacturers, an attempt is made to bring new and more suitable products to the market. A report on a current suitability test of 5 commercially available LED lamps is available on the SAG website (www.sag-sas.ch) under SAG notifications. The development in this field is very rapid, it can be assumed that more and more LED lamps suitable as pointing instruments are coming onto the market.

4. Presentation of ORIONmedien GmbH and SAG-SAS on 29 June in Bern

On 29 June, several events were held in Bern to celebrate 50 years of the moon landing. The focus was on the memory of the experiment with the famous solar wind panel, conceived by the University of Bern. In front of the main building of the university there were booths of local astronomical societies located. The Planetarium and Observatory SIRIUS was represented together with the Astronomical Society Berner Oberland (AVBeO), the Schwarzenburg School Observatory and the Astronomical Youth Group Bern (AJB). Unfortunately, the booth provided for the Astronomical Society of Bern (AGB) was unoccupied all day. In exchange, the Gantrisch Nature Park was competently represented and the new

observatory project Obermuhlern was presented. From the Swiss Space Museum there was an exhibit to visit. ORIONmedien GmbH, together with SAG-SAS, offered and sold the magazine ORION and all other products such as star maps and booklets at its booth. Thanks to the lively participation of many Bernese in the short lectures held continuously in a lecture hall of the university, the public traffic at all stands was quite high and the interest in the products was considerable. After dusk, the present astronomical societies with about 10 different telescopes showed the interested public Jupiter and Saturn. Other celestial objects could not be shown above the heavily light polluted Bernese sky, but nevertheless long queues formed behind the telescopes. Overall, it was an exciting day, on which many visitors were able to arouse interest in astronomy.



5. History and future of the magazine ORION

Last year we were able to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the ORION and after that the idea arose to make all previous ORION issues accessible in digital form. The abundance and versatility of the contributions printed in ORION during this long period of time is overwhelming and easier accessibility of the texts is very desirable. Discussions are currently underway with the DigiCenter of the ETH library, where journals are professionally digitized and digitally archived. We hope to be able to realize the project together with this department within one year.



Complete collection of all ORION issues, ready for digitization
(gift from Ernst Maeder)

As mentioned in the report on the assembly, we are also working intensively on the future of ORION. Problems with print media are generally increasing and the interests of subscribers have changed considerably. We will have to think deeply about the objectives of the future ORION. On the SAG website we have set up a forum to gather opinions on ORION. As we have seen in discussions, there are many proposals for this, but few people keep them in writing. We would be very pleased to have further contributions about this matter in the forum. Entry is possible anonymous and without registration (<https://forum.sag-sas.ch/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=119>). Each proposal helps to continue the decades-long success story of ORION even under today's conditions. We also want to address this issue at the SAG-SAS Presidential Conference on 9 November 2019.

6. Estate of Fritz Egger

Fritz Egger is certainly known to all older SAG-SAS members. His life's work encompasses many aspects of astronomy and he has held many crucial roles in the SAG-SAS for decades. The daughter of Fritz Egger has offered to hand over the estate stored by her to SAG-SAS. The range of items collected is very large and includes virtually everything amateur astronomers possess, from personal letters to mirror grinding materials. Telescopes are not in the estate, however, these are in use in different places. The Board will take over the estate and make it available in an appropriate manner. If someone has certain interests in individual property of Fritz Egger, please send a message to info@sag-sas.ch.



7. Preparation of the Assembly of Delegates 2020

On 4 April 2020 we will hold the next delegates' meeting at the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland in Brugg. After several years of interruption, an astronomy conference for all SAG-SAS members is planned for the first time. Most of the day will be dedicated to events for all members and the companies operating in Switzerland in the field of amateur astronomy were invited to show and offer their products at a booth at this conference. The details of the daily routine have not yet been determined and ideas and suggestions are welcome on info@sag-sas.ch. The purely formal part of the assembly for the delegates only should take place in a compact form later in the afternoon. We are looking forward to finding out if this form of assembly is attracting interest.

With warm greetings and best wishes,

Christian Wernli

SAG-SAS President

christian.wernli@sag-sas.ch