

IYA2009 in Chile

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Abstract

The organisational structure of the Chilean node for IYA2009 is introduced and ideas for activities in 2009 are described.

Background

The clear and dry skies of the northern desert have made Chile a favourite place for the construction of state-of-the-art observatories for professional astronomical research. During the last 10 years many universities have created several new faculty positions in the field, greatly increasing the number of students pursuing graduate studies in astronomy. Nonetheless, the awareness of the general population regarding the impressive natural resource of Chilean skies and their knowledge of current astronomical discoveries remains relatively low. The International Year of Astronomy 2009, or Año Internacional de la Astronomía 2009, (IYA2009), is therefore an excellent opportunity to improve the astronomy awareness of all, youngsters and adults throughout Chile.

Participation and organisation

Contacts from the main Chilean astronomical institutions are responsible for organising IYA2009 in Chile. Currently the group consists of 24 volunteers, including representatives of seven universities (U. de Chile, U. Valparaíso, U. Concepción, U. Católica, U. Santiago, U. La Serena, and U. Católica del Norte), four professional observatories (ESO, NOAO, Gemini, and ALMA), professional and amateur societies (SOCHIAS and ACHAYA), and other organisations related to astronomy (PROED, CADIAS, OPCC). The Chilean node is organised into three working groups: one administrative, and the other two preparing activities that focus on either society or education. The Chilean IYA2009 web page¹ is currently under construction, but has not yet been enabled for public view. Internally, the node has a private wiki to help with the coordination.

Activities

Plans are being made to join global activities such as UNAWWE, the Globe at Night and Sidewalk Astronomy events. In addition following national activities are currently under consideration by the education and social working groups.

¹ <http://astronomia2009.cl>

Education Working Group

- Astronomical Conferences
 - Establish a national conference for middle- and high-school students. The idea is to try to build the infrastructure necessary for an annual national conference from 2008 with scientific presentations (not bibliographical) selected from pre-submitted applications.
 - Develop a seal of approval from IYA2009 Chile with clear and explicit guidelines to give the seal to individuals (project quality requirements) or regional conferences (logistic requirements) with access to IYA2009 if possible.
 - Amateur Conference: Latin-America wide.
 - Professional Conference: (Regional) History of Astronomy.
- Activities package to be distributed to:
 - Scout camps;
 - Star Parties;
 - School teachers.
- Public Talks and Workshops
- Study the possibility of making a proposal for the school-curriculum: astronomy is in the current curriculum, but is not always taught properly (or at all).

Society Working Group

- Open Space Projects
 - Exhibition of images prepared by the Universe from Earth working group.
 - Sculptures and paintings to be requested from local artists and displayed in public places.
 - Astro Day Chile: A coordinated publicity event showcasing science and engineering from professional observatories in public places.
- Itinerant exhibitions
 - Bus with astronomy posters and images.
 - Inflatable planetariums (3 in Chile).
- Open competitions with specific goals and prizes for different age ranges.
 - For youngsters: photographs, paintings or essays.
 - For university students: more specialised projects.
- Collectible albums of cards with astronomical images and associated information in an album for children.
- Libraries
 - Compile a list of recommended books.
 - Buy telescopes for libraries, and provide basic training on how to use them. Libraries will then loan the telescopes to schools.
- Open doors
 - Coordination between amateur, institutional, and professional observatories and planetariums for events on specific days, with dark sky events organised in co-operation with local communities.
- Media
 - Radio and TV recordings distributed freely on other broadcasting stations.
 - Production of original TV series.