The Southeast Asian Young Astronomers Collaboration (SEAYAC): Uniting the Region’s Future Astronomers Through Research and Public Outreach

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ASTRONOMY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In Southeast Asia (SEA), astronomy is a relatively new field;

Not as well established compared to other parts of Asia and the world;

Very few senior and junior astronomers;

Not a priority field of science in some ASEAN countries;

The well-established astronomers in the SEA region are aware that the only realistic way to improve astronomy in the region is through Collaboration and Cooperation (2 C’s).
What is SEAYAC?

SEAYAC stands for Southeast Asian Young Astronomers Collaboration.

It is a network of junior astronomers currently based or coming from any Southeast Asian country.
ADVANTAGES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Geographical Similarity and Proximity
   - all 10 SEA countries are within 3 hours flight time;

Economic Situation
   - except for Singapore, most SEA countries have more or less similar economic status.

Cultural Similarity
   - countries have similar cultural heritage and sometimes even languages;

Ease of Travel
   - prevalence of low-cost airfares and visa-free travel among Southeast Asian Nations
Objectives of SEAYAC

To encourage interaction and collaborations between young astronomers from all Southeast Asian nations;

To provide an environment for interaction, not just in astronomy, but also in the social, cultural and interpersonal level;

To conduct regular meetings/conferences and other activities so that members would have exposure in attending and organizing international conferences;

To encourage future generations to take up a career in astronomy;

To promote interaction between young astronomers in SEA and other young astronomers worldwide;
The idea of forming a network of young astronomers first arose during the International School for Young Astronomers (ISYA) 2007 in Langkawi, Malaysia. There were more than 30 students from Asia-Pacific, (Malaysia 9, Indonesia 7, Philippines 4, Thailand 3, & Vietnam 2, and other countries from Asia-Pacific region).
THE START OF AN IDEA: APRIM 2008

The very first informal meeting to discuss the formation of SEAYAC was during the 11th APRIM held on August 2008 in Kunming, China.
After APRIM 2008, the participants remained in communication through a mailing list of young astronomers, informally dubbed as young-seaan;

The 2008 GUAS-NAOJ Subaru School was held from December 1-5, 2008 in Tokyo, Japan.

Included 6 participants from SEA (3 from Indonesia, 2 from Malaysia, 1 from Philippines).
THE BIRTH OF SEAYAC @GAO

The group was hosted for three days by the Gunma Astronomical Observatory (GAO) in Gunma Prefecture.

It was here that the group decided on the name, objectives, goals and future plans of the organization. Thus the Southeast Asian Young Astronomers Collaboration (SEAYAC) was born.

Although there were only 6 members, it wasn’t important who represented which countries. Instead the group focused on “What will & can the young astronomers do for themselves and for the progress of astronomy in the SEA?”.
THE BIRTH OF SEAYAC @GAO

The Gunma Away Team
The SEAAN Meeting 2010 in Manila, Philippines was the chance to gather more young astronomers to join the group. Hence, a Charter was drafted by the original proponents months before the meeting;

However, due to extenuating circumstances, the Charter was not ratified at this time;

After the meeting, the original members of SEAYAC, in consultation with SEAAN, decided to modify the Charter.
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<th>Country</th>
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<tr>
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**SEAYAC Charter was finally ratified in July 2011!!!**
SEAYAC Membership

Membership for SEAYAC is open to all undergraduate and graduate students of astronomy and related fields as well early post-docs coming from or currently working in SEA countries who are actively conducting research in astronomy and/or astrophysics.

In addition, individuals who are involved in astronomy education and possess a degree and/or have conducted astronomy research in the past are also eligible for membership.

Membership is limited to individuals up to thirty-five (35) years of age.
SEAYAC Structure

Governed by a Board composed of a Chairman, a National Point of Contact (NPC) for each Southeast Asian country and two (2) ex-officio members from SEAAN.

The NPC will be responsible for communicating announcements from the Board to SEAYAC members, coordinating activities and updating member information within his/her country.

The SEAYAC will work under the guidance of senior astronomers through SEAAN. The SEAYAC will support the SEAAN in all its current and future activities such as SEAAN Working Groups and Meetings.
SEAYAC ORGANIZATION

Chairman: Rogel Mari Sese

National Points of Contact:

Thailand    -  Siramas Komonjinda
Indonesia   -  Puji Irawati
Philippines -  Erika Valdueza
Malaysia    -  Siti Mohamad Yob

SEAAN Ex-Officio - Dr. Hakim Malasan
                  Prof. Boonrucksar Soonthurntham
Utilizing Social Media

We have created our own Facebook page, the most accessible social media outlet in Southeast Asia.

There are 102 members but not everyone is from Southeast Asia.

http://www.facebook.com/groups/seayac/

We have also created a database of members and a mailing list managed by the SEAYAC Board. Currently there are 32 registered members in the span of 2 and ½ months!
1st SEAYAC MEETING

We are currently discussing the possibility of having the 1st SEAYAC Meeting in the latter part of 2012.

The SEAAN will also have their meeting around this time in Bandung, Indonesia, so it might be done days before or after.

The target is to initially have around 30 participants from SEA whose registration accommodation and possibly airfare would be covered by SEAYAC.

This is to provide a venue for members to meet personally and professionally in their own terms. Lectures from senior astronomers and research presentations from members will be conducted during the meeting.
1st SEAYAC MEETING

We are also considering the possibility of having a separate meeting so that members can gain experience on organizing international meetings (e.g. Philippines).

This would require quite a sum of money. However, due to the prevalence of low-cost carriers and low cost of living in SEA, this would not be as expensive as it seems.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:

IAU, ICTP, National astronomy agencies, private sector.
FUTURE SEAYAC ACTIVITIES

1st SEAYAC Meeting (probably in Philippines, Nov. 2012)

Create a database of young astronomers

Joint Observation for Venus Transit in 2012

Astronomy Outreach Activities

Increase SEAYAC and SEAAN Online Presence

Interaction/Collaboration with other Young Astronomers Worldwide

Participation in SEAAN and IAU Activities

Future Areas for Development (Long Term Plan)
FUTURE CHALLENGES

Reaching out to other SEA countries
  - getting other countries to participate;

Encouraging future generations
  - constant public and school outreach;

Funding support for activities and meetings
  - need to have a source of funds for meetings and outreach activities;

Sustaining astronomy research in the region
  - make sure that astronomy progresses in SEA, even though it takes time;
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SEAAN

APRIM 2008 LOC and SOC

APRIM 2011 LOC and SOC

Gunma Astronomical Observatory