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Observatory Operations: Strategies, Processes, and Systems VI

**Alison B. Peck
Robert L. Seaman
Chris R. Benn**
Editors

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Contents

ix	<i>Authors</i>
xv	<i>Conference Committee</i>
xvii	<i>Introduction</i>

Part One

SESSION 1	OPERATIONS BENCHMARKING AND METRICS
9910 02	Operational metrics for the ESO Very Large Telescope: lessons learned and future steps [9910-1]
9910 03	The impact of science operations on science return at the Very Large Telescope [9910-2]
9910 04	Improving SALT productivity by using the theory of constraints [9910-3]
9910 05	A bibliometric analysis of observatory publications for the period 2010-2014 [9910-4]
9910 06	Observatory bibliographies: a vital resource in operating an observatory [9910-5]
SESSION 2	ARCHIVE OPERATIONS, SURVEYS AND LEGACY DATASETS
9910 07	Data products of the ALMA and NRAO archives [9910-6]
9910 08	Validation of ESO Phase 3 data submissions [9910-7]
9910 09	Publication of science data products through the ESO archive: lessons learned and future evolution [9910-8]
SESSION 3	VIRTUAL OBSERVATORY
9910 0A	Providing comprehensive and consistent access to astronomical observatory archive data: the NASA archive model [9910-10]
SESSION 4	DATA FLOW AND DATA MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS
9910 0B	Public surveys at ESO [9910-11]
9910 0C	Not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good: steps toward science-ready ALMA images [9910-12]

9910 0D **Science data management for ESO's La Silla Paranal Observatory** [9910-13]

SESSION 5 TIME DOMAIN AND TRANSIENT SURVEYS

9910 0E **CARMENES: data flow** [9910-98]

9910 0F **ANTARES: progress towards building a 'broker' of time-domain alerts** [9910-14]

9910 0G **DDOTI: the deca-degree optical transient imager** [9910-16]

SESSION 6 SITE AND FACILITY OPERATIONS I

9910 0H **Operations concept for the Square Kilometre Array** [9910-17]

9910 0I **The Australian SKA Pathfinder: operations management and user engagement** [9910-28]

9910 0J **Power monitoring and control for large scale projects: SKA, a case study** [9910-25]

9910 0L **A preliminary operations concept for the ngVLA** [9910-18]

9910 0M **Centralized operations and maintenance planning at the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA)** [9910-23]

9910 0N **STELLA: 10 years of robotic observations on Tenerife** [9910-125]

SESSION 7 SITE AND FACILITY OPERATIONS II

9910 0O **The JCMT as operated by the East Asian Observatory: a brief (but thrilling) history** [9910-29]

9910 0P **Precipitable Water Vapour at the Canarian Observatories (Teide and Roque de los Muchachos) from routine GPS** [9910-33]

9910 0Q **CARMENES-NIR channel spectrograph: how to achieve the full AIV at system level of a cryo-instrument in nine months** [9910-32]

9910 0R **Response to major earthquakes affecting Gemini twins** [9910-22]

9910 0T **Worth its SALT: four years of full science operations with the Southern African Large Telescope** [9910-26]

9910 0V **A collimated beam projector for precise telescopes calibration** [9910-27]

9910 0W **SOAR telescope operation in the LSST era: real-time follow-up on large scales** [9910-30]

9910 0X **Organizational transformation to improve operational efficiency at Gemini South** [9910-31]

SESSION 8	PROGRAM AND OBSERVATION SCHEDULING I
9910 0Y	Sharing the skies: the Gemini Observatory international time allocation process [9910-109]
9910 0Z	Getting NuSTAR on target: predicting mast motion [9910-35]
9910 11	Feature-based telescope scheduler [9910-37]
9910 12	Ongoing evolution of proposal reviews in the Spitzer warm mission [9910-38]
SESSION 9	PROGRAM AND OBSERVATION SCHEDULING II
9910 13	The LSST Scheduler from design to construction [9910-39]
9910 14	Survey strategy optimization for the Atacama Cosmology Telescope [9910-41]
9910 15	SNR-based queue observations at CFHT [9910-42]
9910 16	Pandeia: a multi-mission exposure time calculator for JWST and WFIRST [9910-44]
9910 18	Hinode/EIS science planning and operations tools [9910-46]
9910 1A	An optical to IR sky brightness model for the LSST [9910-48]
9910 1B	Measurements of airglow on Maunakea at Gemini Observatory [9910-49]
SESSION 10	OPERATIONS AND DATA QUALITY CONTROL
9910 1C	Two years of LCOGT operations: the challenges of a global observatory [9910-50]
9910 1D	The dark energy survey and operations: years 1 to 3 [9910-51]
9910 1E	Lessons from and methods for surveying large areas with the Hubble Space Telescope [9910-52]
9910 1F	Spectral calibration for the Maunakea Spectroscopic Explorer: challenges and solutions [9910-54]
9910 1G	Calibration development strategies for the Daniel K. Inouye Solar Telescope (DKIST) data center [9910-55]
9910 1H	ALMA quality assurance: concepts, procedures, and tools [9910-56]
9910 1I	Data mining spacecraft telemetry: towards generic solutions to automatic health monitoring and status characterisation [9910-58]

Part Two

SESSION 11	SCIENCE OPERATIONS PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS I
9910 1J	The evolution of observing modes at ESO telescopes [9910-59]
9910 1K	New facilities, new challenges: the telescope and instrument operators evolution at ESO [9910-60]
SESSION 12	SCIENCE OPERATIONS PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS II
9910 1M	Science operations at Gemini Observatory [9910-62]
9910 1O	Planning JWST NIRSpec MSA spectroscopy using NIRCам pre-images [9910-64]
9910 1P	Moving toward queue operations at the Large Binocular Telescope Observatory [9910-65]
9910 1Q	The 4MOST Operations System [9910-63]
9910 1S	Through thick and thin: quantitative classification of photometric observing conditions on Paranal [9910-68]
9910 1T	A daily task manager for Paranal Science Operations [9910-69]
9910 1U	Delivering data reduction pipelines to science users [9910-71]
	POSTER SESSION
9910 1V	ASTRI SST-2M archive system: a prototype for the Cherenkov Telescope Array [9910-72]
9910 1W	Usefulness and dangers of relying on grant acknowledgments in an observatory bibliography [9910-73]
9910 1X	Gemini base facility operations environmental monitoring: key systems and tools for the remote operator [9910-74]
9910 1Y	Approximations of the synoptic spectra of atmospheric turbulence by sums of spectra of coherent structures [9910-75]
9910 1Z	ALMA Array Operations Group process overview [9910-76]
9910 20	System-dependent earthquake inspection procedures at Paranal Observatory [9910-77]
9910 21	SystMon: a data visualization tool for the analysis of telemetry data [9910-78]
9910 22	Obsolescence of electronics at the VLT [9910-80]
9910 23	Operation of AST3 telescope and site testing at Dome A, Antarctica [9910-81]
9910 24	Operations of the laser traffic control system in Paranal [9910-82]

9910 25	Planning your JWST/NIRSpec observation: pre-imaging and source catalogue [9910-83]
9910 26	Sun avoidance strategies at the Large Millimeter Telescope [9910-84]
9910 27	Observing with FIFI-LS on SOFIA: time estimates and strategies to use a field imaging spectrometer on an airborne observatory [9910-85]
9910 28	High precision tracking method for solar telescopes [9910-86]
9910 29	ESO Phase 3 automatic data validation: groovy-based tool to assure the compliance of the reduced data with the Science Data Product Standard [9910-87]
9910 2A	Automated scheduler improvements and generalizations for the Automated Planet Finder [9910-88]
9910 2B	Trends and developments in VLT data papers as seen through telbib [9910-89]
9910 2E	Data reduction pipelines for the Keck Observatory Archive [9910-93]
9910 2F	E-ELT HIRES the high resolution spectrograph for the E-ELT: integrated data flow system [9910-94]
9910 2G	Aircraft avoidance for laser propagation at the Large Binocular Telescope Observatory: life under a busy airspace [9910-95]
9910 2H	Genetically optimizing weather predictions [9910-96]
9910 2I	Detailed design of a deployable tertiary mirror for the Keck I telescope [9910-97]
9910 2J	DAG telescope site studies and infrastructure for possible international co-operations [9910-99]
9910 2L	Education and public engagement in observatory operations [9910-101]
9910 2M	Monitoring the performance of the Southern African Large Telescope [9910-102]
9910 2O	Quality control and data flow operations of SPHERE [9910-104]
9910 2P	Development of an automated data acquisition and processing pipeline using multiple telescopes for observing transient phenomena [9910-106]
9910 2S	Model-based fault detection and diagnosis in ALMA subsystems [9910-110]
9910 2T	Investigating the effect of atmospheric turbulence on mid-IR data quality with VISIR [9910-111]
9910 2U	DAG: a new observatory and a prospective observing site for other potential telescopes [9910-113]
9910 2W	The MIRI Medium Resolution Spectrometer calibration pipeline [9910-117]

- 9910 2X **Linear and Angular Moment of a general spherical TEM and DEM beam radio wave detection with a quadratic order system processor in state of art technology implementation: a three axis sensors array quadratic order correlator for the 21cm radiation radio detection coming from Early Universe [9910-118]**
- 9910 2Y **Evolution of operations for the Survey Telescope at Paranal [9910-119]**
- 9910 2Z **PHOENIX: the production line for science data products at ESO [9910-120]**
- 9910 30 **ESO science data product standard for 1D spectral products [9910-121]**
- 9910 31 **Building a pipeline of talent for operating radio observatories [9910-122]**
- 9910 32 **Training telescope operators and support astronomers at Paranal [9910-123]**
- 9910 33 **SPOT: an optimization software for dynamic observation programming [9910-126]**

Authors

Numbers in the index correspond to the last two digits of the six-digit citation identifier (CID) article numbering system used in Proceedings of SPIE. The first four digits reflect the volume number. Base 36 numbering is employed for the last two digits and indicates the order of articles within the volume. Numbers start with 00, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 0A, 0B...0Z, followed by 10-1Z, 20-2Z, etc.

Abbott, T. M. C., 0V, 1D	Bierwirth, T., 24
Abril, M., 0Q	Birrer, S., 1D
Accomazzi, Alberto, 0A	Blair, William P., 1O
Adamson, Andy, 1M	Blanc, Pierre-Eric, 0G
Adkins, Sean, 2I	Bock, Douglas C.-J., 0H
Akiyama, E., 1H	Boër, Michel, 0G
Alarcon, Hector, 1Z	Boffin, Henri M. J., 32
Aleksić, J., 1D	Boller, Thomas, 1Q
Alis, Sinan, 2J	Bolte, Michael, 2I
Allam, S., 1D	Bond, J. R., 14
Aloisi, Alessandra, 0A	Bonnett, C., 1D
Alonso, D., 14	Bordelon, Dominic, 2B
Alonso-Floriano, F. J., 0E	Boroson, Todd, 1C
Amado, P. J., 0E, 0Q	Brannon, Kaim, 0V
Amico, P., 24	Brauner-Vettier, Nadia, 33
Anderson, Joe, 32	Briceño, Cesar, 0W
Ángeles, Fernando, 0G	Brillant, Stéphane, 1K, 1T, 2Y
Angeli, George Z., 1A	Brink, Janus, 0T, 2M
Annis, J., 1D	Brogan, Crystal, 0C
Antonelli, Lucio Angelo, 1V	Brout, D., 1D
Armus, Lee, 12	Browne, Keith, 2M
Arnaboldi, Magda, 08, 09, 0B, 29, 30	Bruderer, C., 1D
Arriagada, Gustavo, 1X	Bryant, Aaron, 27
Arsenault, R., 24	Buckley, David A. H., 0T
Ashley, Michael C. B., 23	Buckley-Geer, E. J., 1D
Asmus, Daniel, 2T	Burdullis, Todd, 15
Astier, Joseph, 1P	Burt, Jennifer A., 2A
Axelrod, Tim, 0F	Butler, Nathaniel R., 0G
Azzollini, R., 2W	Cabak, Jerry, 2I
Bailey, J., 2W	Caballero, J. A., 0E, 0Q
Balbinot, E., 1D	Calabrese, E., 14
Ball, Jesse, 1X	Calderone, Giorgio, 2F
Barbosa, Domingos, 0J	Cambazard, Hadrien, 33
Barker, Elizabeth A., 16	Capozzi, D., 1D
Barraca, João Paulo, 0J	Cárdenas, C., 0Q
Barrios, Emilio, 1Z	Cardwell, Andrew, 1P
Basa, Stéphane, 0G	Carnero Rosell, A., 1D
Baude, Laurence, 33	Carosi, Alessandro, 1V
Baumer, M., 1D	Carrasco, Rodrigo A., 2S
Beard, S., 2W	Carvalho, Bruno, 0J
Beaufore, L., 1D	Castander, F. J., 1D
Becerril, S., 0Q	Castro-Almazán, Julio A., 0P
Bechtol, K., 1D	Catusse, Nicolas, 33
Beck, Tracy L., 1O, 25	Cawthon, R., 1D
Beckmann, Siman, 27	Cerda, Susana, 1K, 2Y
Bell, Graham S., 0O	Chandler, Claire, 0L
Bernstein, G., 1D	Chang, C., 1D
Berriman, Graham B., 0A, 2E	Chavan, A. M., 1H
Berukoff, Steven J., 1G	Chen, Ming-Tang, 0O

Chiappini, Cristina, 1Q
 Choi, S. K., 14
 Christou, Julian C., 2G
 Chrysostomou, Antonio, 0H
 Cimmino, Rosario F., 2X
 Claver, Charles F., 0V, 1A
 Clerc, Nicolas, 1Q
 Clerkin, L., 1D
 Coccato, Lodovico, 2Z
 Coetzee, Johannes C., 04, 0T, 2M
 Cohen, R., 2E
 Colditz, Sebastian, 27
 Collins, Paul, 1X
 Colomé, J., 0E
 Colson, A., 2E
 Connolly, Andrew J., 1A
 Cook, Kem, 1A
 Cordova, Martin, 1X
 Cortés-Contreras, M., 0E
 Costa, Alessandro, 1V
 Coughlin, Michael, 0V, 1A
 Covarrubias, R., 1D
 Cowley, David, 2I
 Crabtree, Dennis R., 05
 Craig, William W., 0Z
 Crane, Megan, 12
 Crawford, Steven M., 04, 0T, 2M
 Cristiani, Stefano, 2F
 Crowley, K. T., 14
 Cuhna, C., 1D
 Cuillandre, Jean-Charles, 15
 Cupani, Guido, 2F
 da Costa, L., 1D
 Dahler, Mike, 2I
 D'Andrea, C., 1D
 Daniel, Scott, 1A
 Das, R., 1D
 Davis, C., 1D
 Davis, Gary R., 0H
 De Bernardis, F., 14
 De Bruyn, David, 2M
 de Diego, Jose A., 0G
 de Guindos, E., 0E
 de Jong, Roelof S., 1Q
 de Juan, E., 0E
 De Meester, W., 1I
 De Ridder, J., 1I
 de Wit, Willem-Jan, 32
 Deich, William T. S., 2A, 2I
 Delgado, Francisco, 13
 Delmotte, Nausicaa A. R., 08, 09, 0B, 29, 30
 Dempsey, Jessica T., 0O
 Depagne, Éric, 04, 0T
 Desai, Vandana R., 0A
 Devlin, M., 14
 Devost, Daniel, 15
 Di Marcantonio, Paolo, 2F
 Dicken, D., 2W
 Diehl, H. T., 1D
 Dietrich, J., 1D
 Dodd, Suzanne R., 12
 D'Odorico, Valentina, 2F
 Doherty, Peter, 0V
 Donaldson, Thomas, 0A
 Donovan Meyer, Jennifer, 0C
 Dower, Theresa, 0A
 Drlica-Wagner, A., 1D
 Duhoux, P., 24
 Dunkley, J., 14
 Dwelly, Tom, 1Q
 Earl, Nicholas M., 16
 Ebert, Rick, 0A
 Edwards, Michelle L., 1P
 Eifler, T. F., 1D
 Elias, Jonathan H., 0W
 Elliott, A., 1D
 Etherington, J., 1D
 Evans, D. J., 1I
 Fabbiano, Giuseppina, 0A
 Farah, Alejandro S., 0G
 Fausti Neto, A., 1D
 Feng, Song, 28
 Fernández, M. G., 1D
 Ferro, I., 0Q
 Figueroa, Liliana, 0G
 Fischer, Christian, 27
 Fisher-Levine, Merlin, 0V
 Flagey, Nicolas, 1F
 Flaughner, B. L., 1D
 Forchi, V., 29
 Forster, Karl, 0Z
 Freudling, Wolfram, 1U
 Friberg, Per, 0O
 Frieman, J., 1D
 Fuentes, Javier, 1X
 Fumi, Fabio, 27
 Furlanetto, C., 1D
 Gabor, Pavel, 2L
 Gadotti, Dimitri A., 32
 Gairing, Stefan, 0M
 Gallardo, P. A., 14
 Gallozzi, Stefano, 1V
 Gangkofner, D., 1D
 García-Lorenzo, Begoña, 0P
 García-Marín, M., 2W
 García-Piquer, Á., 0E
 Geers, V., 2W
 Gehrels, Neil A., 0G
 Geis, Norbert, 27
 Gelino, C. R., 2E
 Gerdes, D. W., 1D
 Gesa, L., 0E
 Gilbert, Karoline, 16, 1O
 Girard, Julien H. V., 2O, 32
 Glasse, A., 2W
 Glauser, A., 2W
 Goldstein, D. A., 1D
 Gómez Maqueo Chew, Yilen, 0G
 Gordon, K., 2W
 Grabowski, K., 1D

Granzer, Thomas, 0N
 Grefenstette, Brian W., 0Z
 Groom, Steve L., 0A
 Grothkopf, Uta, 03, 2B
 Gruendl, R., 1D
 Guàrdia, J., 0E
 Güçsav, B. Bülent, 2U
 Gueguen, Alain, 1Q
 Guerra, Juan Carlos, 21
 Guniat, Serge, 0M
 Guo, Jingjing, 28
 Gupta, R. R., 1D
 Haddad, Juan-Pablo, 22
 Hagen, H.-J., 0E
 Hainaut, O., 1J
 Hamilton, S., 1D
 Hanley, Christopher, 16
 Hanuschik, Reinhard, 1S, 2Z
 Harrison, Fiona A., 0Z
 Harvey-Smith, Lisa, 0I
 Hasselfield, M., 14
 Hau, G., 1J
 Hays, Tony, 1G
 Head, H., 1D
 Helmling, J., 0E
 Helsby, J., 1D
 Henderson, S. W., 14
 Henning, Thomas, 27
 Hernández Castaño, L., 0E
 Hernandez, Octavio, 0M
 Hettlage, Christian, 04, 2M
 Hibbard, John, 0C, 0L
 Hilker, Michael, 02, 0B
 Hilton, M., 14
 Hlozek, R., 14
 Ho, Paul T. P., 0O
 Ho, S. P., 14
 Holden, Bradford P., 2A
 Hollowood, D., 1D
 Hönle, Rainer, 27
 Honscheid, K., 1D
 Hu, Keliang, 23
 Hu, Yi, 23
 Hüddepohl, Gerhard, 22
 Huppenberger, K., 14
 Hulme, Stephen, 2M
 Hummel, Christian, 2T
 Hummel, Wolfgang, 2O
 Hussain, Gaitee, 0B
 Huygen, R., 1I
 Imel, David, 0A
 Indebetouw, Remy, 0C
 Ingraham, Patrick, 0V
 Iserlohe, Christof, 27
 Ivezić, Željko, 1A
 Ivison, Rob, 0B
 James, D., 1D
 Jenness, Tim, 0F
 Ji, Kanfan, 28
 Johnson, M. W. G., 1D
 Johnson, M., 1D
 Jones, R. Lynne, 1A
 Jouvel, S., 1D
 Justtanont, K., 2W
 Kacprzac, T., 1D
 Karakla, Diane M., 16, 1O
 Kassin, Susan A., 1O
 Kaufer, A., 02, 03
 Käufl, Hans-Ulrich, 2T
 Kececioğlu, John, 0F
 Kent, S., 1D
 Kepley, Amanda A., 0C
 Kerber, Florian, 1S, 2T
 Kern, Jeff, 0L
 Keskin, Onur, 2J, 2U
 Kessler, R., 1D
 Keyes, Charles D., 1O
 Kim, A., 1D
 Klaassen, P., 2W
 Klein, Randolph, 27
 Klotz, Alain, 0G
 Kniazev, Alexei, 04, 0T
 Koen, Thea, 0T
 Kong, M., 2E
 Koopman, B. J., 14
 Korte-Stapff, M., 1I
 Kosowsky, A., 14
 Kotze, Paul, 04, 0T, 2M
 Krabbe, Alfred, 27
 Krause, E., 1D
 Krawiec, C. I., 1D
 Kremin, A., 1D
 Kron, R., 1D
 Kuhlmann, S., 1D
 Kuntschner, H., 24
 Kuropatkin, N., 1D
 Kurowski, R., 1H
 Kürster, M., 0E
 Kutyrev, Alexander S., 0G
 La Fuente, Carlos, 2Y
 Labiano, A., 2W
 Lacy, Mark, 07
 Lagrange, Anne-Marie, 33
 Lahav, O., 1D
 Lahuis, F., 2W
 Laidler, Victoria G., 16
 Laine, Seppo, 12
 Laity, A. C., 2E
 Landry, Walter, 0A
 Lasker, J., 1D
 Law, D., 2W
 Le Roux, Gerhard, 0J
 Lee, William H., 0G
 Lefebvre, Michael, 2G
 Leggett, Sandy, 1M
 Leibundgut, Bruno, 03, 0B
 Lemaire, Pierre, 33
 Lewis, Hilton, 2I
 Li, T. S., 1D
 Lin, Jiaben, 28

Lombardi, Saverio, 1V
 Looney, Leslie W., 27
 López del Fresno, M., 0E
 Lopez, Bernhard, 0M
 López-Santiago, J., 0E
 Louis, T., 14
 Lucarelli, Fabrizio, 1V
 Lucuix, Christian, 22
 Lukin, Vladimir P., 1Y
 Lundin, Lars, 2O
 Lupton, Robert, 0V
 Luque, E., 1D
 Ma, Bin, 23
 Maartens, Deneys, 2M
 Maccrann, N., 1D
 MacKenty, John W., 1E
 Madec, P.-Y., 24
 Mader, J. A., 2E
 Madhavacheril, M. S., 14
 Madonna, Alberto, 1V
 Madsen, Kristin K., 0Z
 Mahoney, Billy, 15
 Maia, Dalmiro, 0J
 Mainieri, V., 02
 Maltes, Diego, 0X
 Manset, Nadine, 15
 Marang, Fred, 0T
 March, M., 1D
 Marconi, Alessandro, 2F
 Margheim, Steven J., 0Y
 Markwardt, Craig B., 0Z
 Marshall, J., 1D
 Marteau, S., 02, 1J
 Martinez, J., 1I
 Mascetti, Laura, 08, 09, 0B, 29, 30
 Mason, Brian, 0C
 Mastropietro, Michele, 1V
 Masuda, Neal, 1X
 Matheson, Thomas, 0F
 Mayo, Louis, 2L
 Mazzerella, Joseph M., 0A
 McConnachie, Alan, 1F
 McGlynn, Thomas, 0A
 McKinnon, Mark, 0L
 McMahon, J., 14
 Meakins, Silvia, 2B
 Melchior, P., 1D
 Menanteau, F., 1D
 Mérand, Antoine, 1K
 Merloni, Andrea, 1Q
 Meza, Francisco, 1X
 Micol, Alberto, 08, 09, 0B, 29, 30
 Mieske, Steffen, 02, 03, 0B, 1J, 1K, 1T, 2Y
 Mignot, Shan, 1F
 Milli, Julien, 2O
 Mirabet, E., 0Q
 Misalski, Brent, 04, 0T
 Miyasaka, Hiromasa, 0Z
 Momcheva, Ivelina, 1E
 Mondrik, N. P., 1D
 Mondrik, Nicholas, 0V
 Montes, D., 0E
 Montes, Vanessa, 0R
 Morales Muñoz, R., 0E, 0Q
 Moreno, Cristian, 0R
 Morganson, E. P., 1D
 Morrison, J., 2W
 Moullet, Arielle, 0C
 Moutou, Claire, 15
 Mudd, D., 1D
 Müller, M., 2W
 Muñoz-Tuñón, Casiana, 0P
 Murowinski, Rick, 1F
 Mysore, S., 02
 Nadolski, A., 1D
 Næss, S., 14
 Nagasawa, D. Q., 1D
 Naghib, Elaheasadat, 1I
 Narayan, Gautham, 0F
 Natarajan, Swaminathan, 0J
 Natf, F., 14
 Neilsen, E., 1D
 Nelson, Jerry, 2I
 Neureiter, Bianca, 1S
 Newburgh, L., 14
 Niemack, M. D., 14
 Nord, B., 1D
 Noriega-Crespo, Alberto, 16
 Nosov, Eugene V., 1Y
 Nosov, Viktor V., 1Y
 Nugent, P., 1D
 O'Donoghue, Darragh E., 04
 Ogando, R., 1D
 Old, L., 1D
 Ortiz, José, 2S
 Osorio, Juan, 20, 21
 Page, L. A., 14
 Palmese, A., 1D
 Park, Sam, 2I
 Parsons, Harriet, 0O
 Patat, F., 02, 03, 1J
 Pavlov, A., 0E
 Peck, Michael, 2I
 Pena, Eduardo, 2I
 Peña-Guerrero, Maria A., 1O
 Pérez, D., 0Q
 Perez, Gabriel, 0R
 Pérez-Jordán, Gabriel, 0P
 Perley, Margaret, 0L
 Petravick, D., 1D
 Petr-Gotzens, Monika, 0B
 Petry, Catherine, 1A
 Pevunova, Olga, 0A
 Phillips, Drew, 2I
 Pickering, Timothy E., 16
 Pino Pavez, Andres, 1K, 1T, 2Y, 32
 Plazas, A. A., 1D
 Poglitsch, Albrecht, 27
 Pollard, Mike, 2I
 Pomante, Emanuele, 2F

Pontoppidan, Klaus M., 16
 Potter, S. B., 2H
 Power, Jennifer, 1P
 Primas, F., 02
 Prochaska, J. Xavier, 2I
 Pruemmm, M., 24
 Pueyo, Laurent, 16
 Pujol, A., 1D
 Queiroz, A. B. A., 1D
 Querel, Richard R., 1S
 Quirós, Fernando, 0G
 Quirrenbach, A., 0E, 0Q
 Raab, Walfried, 27
 Rabe, Paul, 04, 2M
 Racine, René, 15
 Rahmer, Gustavo, 2G
 Rainnie, Jonn A., 18
 Ramirez, A., 20
 Ramón, A., 0Q
 Rana, Vikram R., 0Z
 Randall, S., 1H
 Randolph, Bill, 2I
 Ratliff, Chris, 2I
 Ravindranath, Swara, 16
 Reardon, Kevin, 1G
 Rebell, Felix, 27
 Rebull, L. M., 12
 Regibo, S., 1I
 Reid, I. N., 1O
 Reil, K., 1D
 Reiners, A., 0E, 0Q
 Rejkuba, Marina, 02, 03, 0B, 1J, 24
 Retzlaff, Joerg, 08, 09, 0B, 29, 30
 Reuter, Michael A., 13, 1A
 Reyes, Claudia, 2Y
 Reyes-Ruiz, Mauricio, 0G
 Ribas, I., 0E, 0Q
 Ridgway, Stephen, 0F
 Rieke, G., 2W
 Rippa, Mathew, 0R
 Rivas, Leonel, 1T
 Robberto, Massimo, 16
 Rodrigues, Myriam, 1T
 Rogers, Rolando, 0R, 0X
 Romaniello, Martino, 03, 0B, 0D, 1U
 Romano, Francesco, 2X
 Román-Zúñiga, Carlos G., 0G
 Romer, A. K., 1D
 Romero, Cristian Marcelo, 1K, 1T, 2Y
 Romero, Ignacio, 0P
 Romero-Colmenero, Encarni, 04, 0T, 2H, 2M
 Roodman, A., 1D
 Rooney, P., 1D
 Rosenfeld, R., 1D
 Roth, Katherine C., 1B
 Rots, Arnold, 06, 1W
 Royer, P., 1I
 Rubini, Pascal, 33
 Ruiz-Díaz-Soto, Jaime, 0G
 Ruffen, René, 1M
 Saha, Abhijit, 0F
 Sako, M., 1D
 Salatino, M., 14
 Salvador, A. I., 1D
 Sánchez Álvaro, E., 1D
 Sánchez, C., 1D
 Sánchez-Carrasco, M. A., 0Q
 Sandford, Dale, 2I
 Santiago, B. X., 1D
 Santos, P., 24
 Savant, Vaibhav, 2P
 Saviane, I., 1J
 Scheidegger, Carlos, 0F
 Schillaci, A., 14
 Schloerb, F. Peter, 26
 Schmitt, B. L., 14
 Schooneveld, A., 1D
 Schroeder, Anja, 0T
 Schubnell, M., 1D
 Seaman, Robert, 0F
 Seca, Luis, 0J
 Sehgal, N., 14
 Seifert, W., 0E, 0Q
 Serio, Andrew, 1X
 Shang, Zhaohui, 23
 Sheldon, E., 1D
 Sienkiewicz, Mark J., 16
 Sievers, J. L., 14
 Silbermann, Nancy A., 12
 Simon, S. M., 14
 Slocum, Christine, 16
 Smale, Alan, 0A
 Smette, Alain, 1K, 2T
 Smirnova, Olesja, 1B
 Smith, A., 1D
 Smith, Adam, 1B
 Smith, David R., 26
 Smith, Niall, 2P
 Smith, R. C., 1D
 Snodgrass, Richard, 0F
 Soares-Santos, M., 1D
 Sobreira, F., 1D
 Soderblom, D. R., 1O
 Solano, E., 0E
 Sontag, Christopher D., 16
 Souccar, Kamal, 26
 Soumagnac, M., 1D
 Speiss, Daniel J., 1G
 Spengel, D. N., 14
 Spinka, H., 1D
 Staats, Kai, 2H
 Staggs, S. T., 14
 Stauffer, John, 12
 Stephan, Christian, 2I
 Stephens, Andrew, 1B
 Sterzik, Michael, 02, 03, 2B
 Stevens, J. R., 14
 Storrie-Lombardi, Lisa J., 12
 Strassmeier, Klaus G., 0N
 Strydom, Ockert, 0T, 2M

Stubbs, Christopher, 0V, 11, 1A
 Suarez Sola, Igor, 1P
 Summers, Doug, 1P, 24
 Swain, M., 2E
 Swart, Paul, 0J
 Swett, Hector, 1X
 Szeifert, Thomas, 0B
 Szeto, Kei, 1F
 Tacconi-Garman, L. E., 02, 03, 1J
 Taljaard, Cornelius, 0H
 Tanne, S. L., 1H
 Taylor, Clark, 0F
 Taylor, Julian, 2T
 Teplitz, Harry I., 0A
 Thierry, Pierre, 0G
 Tie, S. S., 1D
 Tinoco, Silvio, 0G
 Toeniskoetter, Jackson, 0F
 Torgaev, Andrey V., 1Y
 Tran, H. D., 2E
 Trifiletti, Alessandro, 2X
 Trinh, Christopher, 27
 Tripsas, Alex, 2I
 Tristram, Konrad, 2T
 Troja, Eleonora, 0G
 Tucker, D., 1D
 Úbeda, Leonardo, 1O, 25
 Väisänen, Petri, 04, 0T, 2M
 Valenzuela, Javier, 2I
 van Ardenne, Arnold, 0J
 van den Ancker, Mario E., 2T
 van der Hoeven, Michiel, 0R, 0X
 van Engelen, A., 14
 Van Wyk, Veronica, 0T
 Vandenbussche, B., 1I, 2W
 Vanderbei, Robert J., 11
 Varela, Antonia, 0P
 Vavagiakis, E. M., 14
 Veillet, Christian, 1P
 Vieira, Jorge, 0J
 Vigan, Arthur, 2O
 Vikram, V., 1D
 Vila Vilaro, B., 1H
 Villard, E., 1H
 Vinther, Jakob, 2T
 Vivas, K., 1D
 Volgenau, Nikolaus, 1C
 Wahhaj, Zahed, 2O
 Walcher, Jakob C., 1Q
 Walker, A. R., 1D
 Wallace, Gary, 26
 Walsh, Shane, 1P
 Walther, Craig, 0O
 Wang, Bingxiang, 28
 Wang, Lifan, 23
 Wang, Zhe, 0F
 Ward, Jim, 2I
 Watson, Alan M., 0G
 Watson, Fraser T., 1G
 Weber, Michael, 0N
 Welch, Eric, 0F
 Wester, W., 1D
 White, Richard L., 0A
 Whyborn, Nicholas D., 0M
 Wiant, Scott, 1G
 Wiesner, M., 1D
 Wilcox, H., 1D
 Williams, P., 1D
 Williams, Theodore B., 0T
 Wingate, Lory M., 3I
 Winkelman, Sherry, 06, 1W
 Wold, Truman, 2I
 Wolff, Burkhard, 2T
 Wollack, E. J., 14
 Wright, G., 2W
 Xin, Bo, 1A
 Yang, Shuo, 0F
 Yang, Yunfei, 28
 Yanny, B., 1D
 Yerli, Sinan K., 2J, 2U
 Yeşilyaprak, Cahit, 2J, 2U
 Yoachim, Peter, 1A
 Yuan, Xiangyan, 23
 Zaidi, Tayeb, 0F
 Zampieri, S., 29
 Zaritsky, Dennis, 2L
 Zechmeister, M., 0E
 Zeng, Zhen, 28
 Zenteno, A., 1D
 Zhang, Y., 1D
 Zhang, Z., 1D

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- 5 Time Domain and Transient Surveys
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- 6 Site and Facility Operations I
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- 7 Site and Facility Operations II
Dennis R. Crabtree, NRC - Herzberg Astronomy & Astrophysics
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- 9 Program and Observation Scheduling II
Todd Boroson, Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network
(United States)
Alison B. Peck, National Radio Astronomy Observatory (United States)
- 10 Operations and Data Quality Control
Andreas Kaufer, European Southern Observatory (Chile)
- 11 Science Operations Processes and Workflows I
Chris R. Benn, Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes (Spain)
- 12 Science Operations Processes and Workflows II
Christian Veillet, Large Binocular Telescope Observatory
(United States)
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Introduction

This conference provided a forum for discussion of a broad range of issues relevant to the operation of ground-based and space observatories, including observing/support models, calibration, data-reduction/archiving, quality control, engineering and infrastructure, fault-handling, productivity, and staffing.

While every ground and space observatory has its own individual and unique characteristics, each shares with the others a common need to execute technical and science operations in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible. This need is driven by the upward pressure from users for more services and capabilities in opposition to the downward pressure by funding agencies to contain or reduce costs. Tension at the interface between users and funders is particularly acute in this time of global economic turmoil. At the same time the technical and logistical challenges are growing with the systems and network complexity of new observing modes, coordinated multi-facility and multi-messenger observing campaigns, fully or partially robotic facilities, integrated instrument pipelines and science archives, and the need to integrate more complex cyber-infrastructure such as the Grid and the Virtual Observatory. The subtle intricacies and mega-scales of new instrumentation demand correspondingly creative operations modalities.

Building on previous successful conferences, we gathered to continue discussions of lessons learned, progress made and future initiatives. As before, we were particularly interested in discussions of what works versus what does not work, as well as what was planned versus what actually happened. Discussion of the interplay of science operations, technical operations, data management operations, and observatory development is particularly encouraged—especially as it impacts the maximization of science value return. The relationships amongst available funding, delivered capabilities/services, and user expectation management and how that informs observatory operations models were other important discussion topics. Demand for support of time-domain observations is steadily increasing as well, driven by the desire to study rare, random events as well as long-term, synoptic phenomena. Such studies are particularly challenging when they require coordination, often unpredictable, between multiple space and ground-based observatories. While this trend has recently been driven by space-based detections of gamma ray bursts, the startup of ground-based time-domain survey facilities (ramping up to the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope in the second half of this decade) will quickly take this challenge to a new level. Progress reports from new facilities coming online and existing facilities facing major new operational challenges were particularly solicited.

This volume contains the contributions, both oral and poster, to this conference from the international community.

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