

Message of the President

After two quite busy years, due to our anniversary activities and the construction work at Gornergrat, we now look back on a „normal“ business year. And yet as one reads the director's report, one realizes that this past year was far from quiet. It is no surprise that stations at such high altitudes need more attention than a suburban home in Bern. Two facts especially aggravate the situation: The age of the research station at Jungfraujoch makes substantial investments in the building unavoidable, and the climate warming leads to problems, in particular falling rock. It is good to know that our director, in collaboration with the custodians and the technicians of the Jungfraubahn, is observing these developments closely and has worked out a plan for the necessary measures during the next decade. The board meeting in 2009 will have to thoroughly discuss this matter.

The last board meeting was held in Zermatt with the kind support of the Burgergemeinde and the Gornergratbahn. There was, of course, the opportunity on the day following the meeting to visit the newly renovated Kulmhotel on Gornergrat. Prof. J. Stutzki of the Universität zu Köln introduced us to his fascinating submm astronomy projects in the South tower, and a visit to the North tower gave an impression of how this observatory could be used to serve a broad public (including tourists) as well as the Swiss amateur astronomers. Unfortunately the project as worked out by the amateur astronomers for long-term use is still waiting for a sponsor.

Talking about money leads me to mention that at the time this report went to press, our director submitted a request for financial support to the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) for the next budget period. Fortunately his request could be based on the very substantial activity reports that were provided by the user community, documenting how scientifically successful the activities in our two stations are. Of course the SNF contribution remains the backbone of our existence, and we must rely on our “customers” to keep up their high scientific standing. In this context I would like to mention a sponsor in kind whose contributions go back over many decades: The University of Bern with its Physikalisches Institut has hosted the director and the administration since 1969, and in the age of fast communication the computer specialists of the University have played an ever increasing supportive technical role in addition. We acknowledge this generous support and would like to report at the same time that we are in the process of putting this collaboration – for the mid-term future – on a more formal basis.

I would like to finish my acknowledgements firstly with my thanks to our foreign and national members and last but not least to the whole staff of the Foundation HFSJG.

Bern, March 14, 2008

Hans Balsiger



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