

IAGA/URSI Joint Working Group on VERSIM (VLF/ELF Remote Sensing of the Ionosphere and Magnetosphere)

Business meeting – Tuesday, 16 August 2011 from 12:00

There was a meeting of the VERSIM working group during the XXX General Assembly and Scientific Symposium of the International Union of Radio Science, held in Istanbul, Turkey, at 12:00 on Tuesday 11 August 2011.

Present: János Lichtenberger (Hungary) the URSI co-chair and Craig J. Rodger (New Zealand) the IAGA co-chair. M. Rycroft (UK), C. Price (Israel), A. Collier (South Africa), A. Demekhov (Russia), D. Nunn (UK), E.D. Schmitter (Germany), B. Delpont (South Africa), Marlie van Zyl (South Africa), I. Kolmasova (Czech Republic), R. Gamble (New Zealand), O. Santolik (Czech Republic), M. Parrot (France), A. Hamza (Canada), D. Shklyar (Russia), J-P. Raulin (Brasil), D. Carpenter (USA), G. James (Canada), B. Fraser (Australia).

Chairman's Report

János Lichtenberger (Hungary), the URSI co-chair, outlined activities of the working group since the previous URSI GASS held in Chicago (USA):

1. VERSIM Workshops (Tihany in 2008, Prague in 2010)
2. VERSIM related session at IAGA (Hungary in 2009) and IUGG (Melbourne in 2011)
3. VERSIM Newsletter produced at the end of each year
4. Business meetings (last one was in Melbourne in July 2011)

The chairman thanked the members of the VERSIM community who attended this business meeting. Except for the very last meeting (in Melbourne), our business meetings at IAGA and URSI have been during lunchtimes, similar to this one, but food was provided for our participants. That would probably have worked better. Unfortunately, while we requested lunch should be provided this was only available at a large cost. Minutes of these previous meetings are available from the VERSIM website.

As well as meeting through the VERSIM workshops, the community issues a yearly newsletter in which groups summarize their activities. The 2010 report included reports from 17 different research institutes from 16 countries.

Report on the last VERSIM workshop (4th VERSIM Workshop)

The 4th VERSIM Workshop took place in September 2010 in Prague, Czech Republic. The workshop was organized by the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, Prague, Czech Republic and by Charles University, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Prague, Czech Republic. The scientific sponsorship and financial support for this workshop has been provided by the International Association of Geomagnetism and Aeronomy (IAGA) and by the Union Radio-Scientifique Internationale (URSI). More details can be found on the workshop website (<http://www.ufa.cas.cz/versim10/>). The workshop attracted 40 participants from 15 countries, ranging from New Zealand to Russia (ordered by latitude) including 9 students and young scientists under 35 from 5 countries.

Next VERSIM Workshop (5th Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil (tentatively 1st week of September 2012)

Jean-Pierre Raulin, member of LOC of the 5th VERSIM workshop, briefly described the present plans: the 2012 workshop is being organized by the Center for Radio Astronomy and Astrophysics Mackenzie (CRAAM), Mackenzie Presbyterian University, São Paulo, Brazil. The suggested dates up to now have been 30 September- 5 October 2012, although it has not been totally clear these dates are yet completely firm. There was a short discussion as to the dates of VERSIM2012 suggesting to avoid coincidence with other meetings such as HEPPA or ESA Space Weather Week. The first week of September might be a better choice in this case. On the basis of discussions at the URSI General Assembly the first week of September is now thought to better suit US and European University dates. The workshop currently has sponsorship from Mackenzie Presbyterian University Foundation (MackPesquisa), National Institute for Space Research (INPE), University of São Paulo (USP), Fundação de Amparo a Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). In addition, we hope that IAGA and URSI will provide sponsorship. The LOC have submitted an application for support people travel and accommodation to São Paulo, but other application is also planned for further local support.

In addition, we have been contacted by François Lefeuvre, the President of URSI, to suggest an additional aspect to the 5th VERSIM workshop. An ICSU grant has been allocated to an URSI-SCOSTEP proposal entitled "Geophysical Approach to Assess Natural Disasters and Space Weather impacts on Earth", and is lead by Prof. Jean Pierre Raulin, one of the chairs of the 5th VERSIM workshop local organizing committee. The URSI-SCOSTEP project includes participation from research groups in Brazil, Argentina, Peru (with possible extensions to Chile and Paraguay). François Lefeuvre noted that the final report to ICSU is due by 1 June 2012, and thus a meeting in September would be ideal to draw first conclusions.

There was quite a lot of discussion about URSI-SCOSTEP project description, much of which centred around the "Natural Disaster" part of the project. The meeting felt there was little science crossover with that part of project, but more crossovers with the Space Weather aspects. The idea of exploring these crossovers was viewed as positive. The meeting suggested that there could be a ~1-day joint session between the project activity and the main VERSIM workshop, timed to be at the end of the VERSIM workshop. It was suggested that the URSI-SCOSTEP project team might want to have their own separate/parallel sessions to talk about science which is not linked to VERSIM, examples being seismo-electromagnetics and maybe some of the more F-region space weather and earthquake prediction areas. In addition, it was suggested that the additional science topic for the 5th VERSIM workshop could be described by "*radio methods to assess natural hazards and space weather effects*". There was a discussion about this proposal on Thursday, 18 August 2011 involving VERSIM, SCOSTEP and URSI representatives. The plan agreed at the VERSIM Business Meetings was welcomed.

Symposia at future URSI Assemblies

This URSI meeting has multiple VERSIM- relevant sessions, including the waves and radiation belt particle interactions session which suggested to URSI through the VERSIM Business Meeting at Chicago (this ended up with session chairs Jacob Bortnik, Richard Horne, Craig Rodger and Bruce Tsurutani).

The participants at the current VERSIM business meeting suggested to continue with that "radiation belt" session, and requested that the Commission H chair proposed this session for the forthcoming GASS at the next Commission H business meeting. This was successful (with Jacob Bornik as lead convenor supported by Craig Rodger and Richard Horne). In addition to this, A. Collier suggested to have a plasmasphere-related session too. O. Santolik indicated this might be considered as a joint session with Commission G, which would be discussed at the joint Commission G and H business meeting. In the end this was taken to the Commission H meeting as a "H-only" session with Andrew Collier and Janos Lichtenberger as convenors. However, a different proposal for a "precipitation and ionospheric effects" HG session was agreed at the joint Commission G and H business meeting.

IAGA resolution on open-access scientific software

As the VERSIM community is aware, a VERSIM-supported resolution on open access scientific software was put forward to IAGA at the Sopron meeting. This was supported by IAGA's Council. To prepare for this, L.R.O. Storey has been working on a website which would serve repository for VERSIM-related software. We are very grateful for Owen's efforts!

Future of the working group (vote for continuation)

It is a requirement from our parent bodies (both IAGA and URSI) that the question of "whether our working group should continue" is put to each VERSIM business meeting, and reported back. This does not reflect a feeling that our particular working group should necessarily be wound up, it simply reflects the normal process of IAGA and URSI - there are some moribund working groups out there, and if they become too moribund it is hard to fund people who will even "wind it up". The participants voted for continuation.

URSI Chair of the Working group (election)

We re-elect the URSI co-chair every 3 years at the URSI GASS. János Lichtenberger was elected to be the URSI co-chair in 2005 at the URSI GASS in New Delhi. János indicated that he would be willing to continue in the role. There were no other nominations, and János was unanimously re-elected.

Other business

1. The business meeting indicated they were troubled by the high cost of the registration for this (and many other recent) conference. While the conference centre itself is very nice, it is unclear where the large costs have gone. For example, we have paid 500EUR registration fee, but no free wireless Internet access is provided (5 EUR/day is the fee), nor is lunch provided. In addition the few free Internet PCs are configured badly, making Internet usage very restricted.
2. Participants also requested reduced registration fee opportunities for our community. In particular, for formally retired, but still active scientists, who have no institutional support for conference travel. Many other international conferences offer student-level registration for retired scientists (one example is AGU), but URSI does not.