

Successful applicants are likely to be required to make their results, calibrated and documented, available for general use after a prescribed period.

In a shifting pattern of one to four year

key programmes it will be prudent to start with relatively few of the four year variety, in order to commit the time available gradually, to the most ambitious programmes of the best prepared

teams. In addition to your formal response through the Visiting Astronomers Section, general comments concerning this intention, addressed to me, are welcome.

Some Statistics about Observing Time Distribution on ESO Telescopes

J. BREYSACHER, ESO

The aim of this note, which is to be regarded as an appendix to the article written by Professor van der Laan, is to give some statistical information about the observing time scheduled at ESO over the past four years. Only the five largest telescopes installed at La Silla will be considered here, namely the 3.6-m, 2.2-m, 1.5-m, 1.5-m Danish and 1.4-m CAT.

Needless to say, at ESO as in any other major ground-based observatory, given the heavy oversubscription of telescope time, the selection of the observing proposals is rather strict. Figure 1, which is taken from the 1987 ESO Annual Report, allows a comparison between the total numbers of applications received and finally accepted each year, for almost a decade.

Let us now turn to the successful proposals. The histograms presented in Figure 2 indicate how the 1,350 programmes accepted during the past four years for the use of the five telescopes mentioned above, were distributed with regard to the number of nights allocated to them.

If one considers only the 705 programmes scheduled at the 3.6-m and 2.2-m telescopes, there were 243 (34%) observing runs of two nights and 269 (38%) runs of three nights. The percentage of programmes which were allotted four nights was exactly the same on these two telescopes: 14%. It must be noted that amongst the remaining programmes, most of those getting five or more nights were not sensitive to moonlight and consequently could be scheduled during bright time.

On the two 1.5-m telescopes, 42% of the programmes were allotted four or five nights. At the 1.4-m CAT, a similar percentage (40%) is obtained for the observing runs lasting six to seven nights. On these three telescopes the very short runs almost always correspond to programmes for which observations on two or more telescopes were combined.

With regard to the amount of programmes which, after the evaluation by

the ESO Observing Programmes Committee and/or during the final scheduling phase, had to suffer from a reduction of

the number of requested nights, the mean percentages obtained for the past four years are as follows. At the 3.6-m,

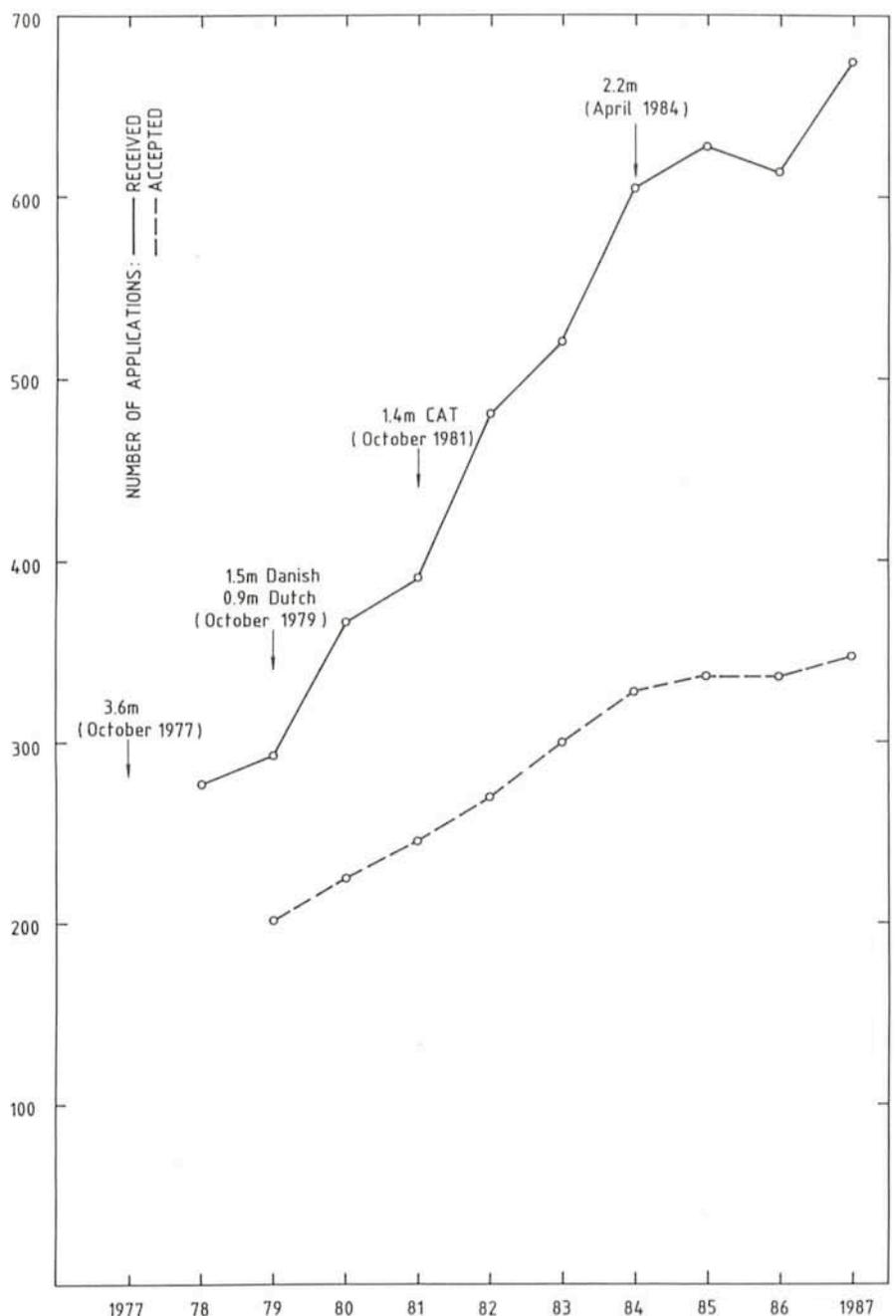


Figure 1: The numbers of observing proposals respectively received and accepted by ESO during the past nine years. Arrows indicate when new telescopes became available.

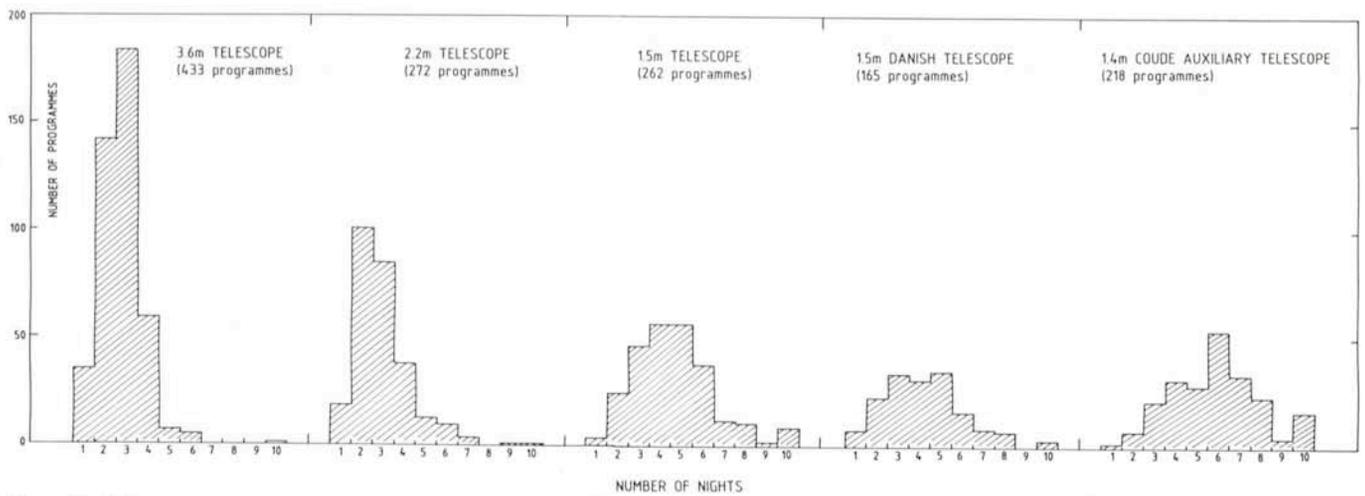


Figure 2: Histograms showing the distribution of the numbers of observing runs as a function of the number of allocated nights. For each telescope the total number of programmes is given within brackets. It is recalled that the ESO shares of observing time at the 2.2-m telescope of the Max Planck Institute and at the 1.5-m Danish telescope are respectively 75% and 50%.

2.2-m, 1.5-m Danish and 1.4-m CAT telescopes, about 60% of the programmes receiving time were affected. At the 1.5-m telescope, the fraction of pro-

grammes concerned was somewhat smaller with a mean value of 45% only.

Finally, and again during these past four years, the fraction of continuing

programmes which were regularly re-submitted by the same applicant(s) and awarded observing time, has been of the order of 15%.

Wide-field Photography at the 3.6-m Telescope?

This note serves to gauge the interest of the astronomical community in wide-field photography with the triplet facility at the 3.6-m telescope.

As photographic users will remember, the 3.6-m prime focus is equipped with two Gascoigne correctors (blue and red, field diameter ~ 16 arcminutes, 6 x 6 cm plates). Two grisms can be used with these correctors. There are also two triplet correctors of Wynne type with a field diameter of 1 degree; behind these an automatic plate changer loads

up to eight 24 x 24 cm photographic plates. This instrument is rather complicated and after a period of declining use, it was decided no longer to offer it to visitors. Consequently, the 1-m Schmidt is now the only deep, wide-field instrument in regular use at La Silla.

In the past, good triplet plates had a limiting magnitude beyond 24^m. With the advent of the new T-grain emulsions and grid processing, and together with modern reduction techniques, even fainter limits may be reached in the future.

Astronomers in the ESO community who would like to use the 3.6-m triplet, are herewith invited to write to the undersigned. If you feel that the triplet facility should be reactivated, please provide a brief and succinct summary of the type of research you would like to do, the number and type of plates needed and also the total amount of observing time. Kindly note that this invitation does not imply any commitment by ESO.

R.M. West, ESO

Opportunities at the ESO Schmidt Telescope

About 90% of the red plates for the ESO/SRC Survey of the Southern Sky have now been taken. Although the Schmidt telescope is presently engaged in the continuation of the earlier Quick Blue Survey in the declination zone

-20° to 0°, it shall be possible to perform more observations for "visitors", starting with period 42 (from October 1988).

As before, the red and blue atlas plates will have priority. It should also be

noted that the prism can only be mounted during a modest part of the available time.

Please remember that applications for period 42 must be received by ESO not later than April 15, 1988.

VLT NEWS

After the approval of the project on December 8, the project management structure is progressively being set up.

The final project schedule will be established soon after a decision on the mirror blank procurement is taken. For the time being two technologies, Zerodur from Schott and fused silica from Corning, are in competition. The

decision will be taken when the final proposals from the two firms have been received. The mirror thickness has been fixed to 175 mm for both cases. This seems to be an acceptable compromise between cost and stiffness. As an alter-