

Some Final Remarks

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I Always Wonder If I Should Come to This Meeting...

When Iosif Romanyuk wrote to me to let me know that the “Magnetic Stars — 2010” meeting was being organised at the Special Astrophysical Observatory, I wondered — as I always do — whether I should go to the meeting. Obtaining a Russian visa requires a lot of advance planning, and I always seem to have to send my passport off for the actual visa just when I need the passport for another trip. Furthermore, the actual trip to SAO is really long and strenuous. There is about 18 or 20 hours of travel from Ontario to Moscow, through my very least favourite airport (Frankfurt), a short overnight stay in Moscow (with long trips to and from the airports), and then the flight to Mineralnye Vody and the bus trip to the Observatory the next day. The two-day return trip, typically requiring a flight that leaves one of the Moscow airports before 6 a. m., can be even more tiring.

But, as I always have since I first came to a “Magnetic Stars” meeting at SAO in 1999, I decided that *of course* I would attend. These meetings are simply too valuable (and too enjoyable) to miss.

Why do I always decide to come?

The size of the meeting, roughly 50 participants, is ideal for intense interaction. It makes possible a relaxed workshop environment, with enough time for each lecture for the speaker to explain his or her work in some detail. And there is time to discuss the talks with the speakers and look at the posters.

Even more importantly, the talks present a lot of really interesting new science and important results. In my field, this is certainly one of the most important occasions to meet with other people who share a lot of interests and discuss new work.

This meeting is an excellent occasion to get to know Russian, Ukrainian, and Eastern European colleagues better. When we meet at larger meetings such as the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union, there are usually so many people present that there is little time to spend with any one in person. In contrast, at a small meeting like this one, there is plenty of opportunity to talk with colleagues I don’t yet know well, and to discuss ongoing projects with collaborators such as Tanya Ryabchikova.

One aspect of the meeting that I appreciate very much is the large number of very fine talks presented by young astronomers. It is really encouraging to see bright young people moving into the fields covered by the SAO “Magnetic Stars” meetings, and to hear about their ideas and projects.

And of course one of the most important reasons for coming is the opportunity to spend time talking with the members of the SAO “Magnetic Mafia”, founded by Yurii Glagolevskij and now ably led by Iosif Romanyuk with assistance from Dmitry Kudryavtsev.

Evolution of Meetings Since 1999

This is the fourth SAO “Magnetic Stars” meeting that I have attended. I have noticed some clear evolution in this time.

The local organisation of the meeting has always been excellent, even in the era when the Observatory was extremely short of funds. The physical facilities of the Observatory meeting hall, seminar room, hotel and dining room, the scheduling of events both scientific and otherwise, and the hospitality of individual local astronomers and their families all insure that the meeting flows smoothly and the participants have many opportunities to hear about and discuss science, to build collaborations, and to get to know one another. The traditional picnic is a fine ending to the event.

I notice that unlike the earliest meetings, all the talks are in English now. The standard of presentation, in what is certainly a difficult foreign language for speakers of Slavic languages, has been rising steadily. Many of the young people, who years ago were often reluctant to use English or to speak to Westerners, now seem to be quite comfortable with the language, and certainly understand the importance of mastering English for international scientific communication. It is also clear that more mature scientists, most of whom did not have much opportunity to learn foreign languages as young people, are also more and more successful and clear presenting material in English.

The technical standard of presentation is also rising steadily. Almost every talk at the meeting was accompanied by clear and well organised slides and sometimes even movies. The talks are more and more likely to make explicit connections to other nearby domains of astronomy.

The number of nationalities represented is quite satisfying. This meeting included astronomers from Azerbaijan, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, India, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine. However, the number of participants from Western Europe and North America was disappointingly low. I know of several people who would have come if they had not had conflicts (my collaborator Stefano Bagnulo wanted to come, but had an observing run at the same time as the meeting, for example), but both the meeting organisers and regular Western participants such as Gregg Wade and myself need to encourage a larger attendance by other astronomers from our own communities.

And Some Final Thanks

Finally, I want to offer personal thanks to all the participants in the meeting, and especially Iosif Romanyuk, Nina Polosukhina and Vadim Tsymbal, Tanya Ryabchikova, and Yuri Gnedin for the very nice ceremony that they arranged at the beginning of the meeting to celebrate my seventieth birthday.