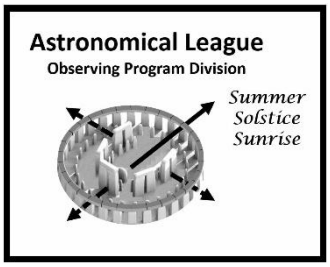
Astronomical League

Observing Program Division

Internal White Paper



Observing Program Coordinator Job Description

Specific details may have changed since the writing of this job description. To get the latest information, contact one of the National Observing Program Directors (NOPD) as identified on the Astronomical League (AL) website:

http://www.astroleague.org/al/general/contact.html

We hope you will keep this document handy. It will help you when you have questions or when it is time to submit information to the AL.

Purpose of this document:

The purpose of this document is to provide you with the information you need to understand your responsibilities as a Coordinator, and the details to do that job. If you have any questions or need help at any time, contact one of the NOPDs. That is part of their job description.

Duration of Your Assignment:

There is no set duration. We hope you will be part of our team for a very long time, but we know that life progresses in unexpected ways. If for any reason (temporary or permanent) you need to pass the torch, we hope you will feel comfortable in doing it. Ideally, this would be to your back-up Coordinator, but it could also be to one of the NOPDs. If you know with enough time, then we will try to find a replacement in our annual search (usually in January). But we can also deal with sudden needs as well. An NOPD can help you out.

Some of the reasons that Coordinators have passed the torch in the past are:

- Health reasons perhaps for a surgery (temporary) or general (permanent).
- Other commitments.
- Changes in personal interests.
- Just time for a change.
- Anything else…

To transition the program to an NOPD or a new Coordinator is relatively simple.

- Let Cliff Mygatt know and we will update the AL website.
- Package the materials and your records, and send them to the appropriate person.

Creating New Observing Programs:

If you are proposing a new observing program to the Astronomical League (AL), then please follow the process as outlined on the AL website:

http://www.astroleague.org/content/new-observing-program-proposal

Please contact one of the Observing Program Directors (NOPD) if you have questions or would like more help.

The AL reviews proposals once a year at the AL Council meeting at the AL-Con during the summer. Proposals must be complete and must be reviewed by the NOPDs before the Council meets to consider them.

Special Note: All Observing Programs must have a back-up Coordinator. If for any reason the primary Coordinator is unable to meet the needs of the Observing Program the backup Coordinator should assume responsibilities and contact an NOPD to discuss the situation.

Once the Observing Program has been Adopted by the AL Council:

1. Order pins for the Observing Program. All pins, new or repeat orders, are to be done through the AL office. Please contact Mitch at rosters@astroleague.org to work out the details. You should not change the design from what was approved by the AL Council. If you need to modify it, please work with an NOPD. This cost should already be in your budget approved by the AL Council for the current year.

2. Set up the Webpages. Work with an NOPD to implement the Observing Program's using the AL Web Team. You should be using the content approved by the AL Council. Minor changes should be made working with an NOPD. Changes to the observation list or the requirements must be approved by an NOPD.
3. Buy materials as needed. Your initial order of pins will usually be 100 to 200. This means you will need materials to ship the awards. It is usually less expensive to buy these materials by the box or ream.

   Materials required:

   a. Certificates: We are trying to print all certificates on cardstock. This is heavier than normal paper and makes a better certificate. Either buy blank stock and develop a certificate on your computer (preferred) or buy blank certificate stock and develop the "fill" text on your computer. Either way, you will need to buy the cardstock. Buy it by the ream (usually 250 sheets), or at least in packages of 100 or more.
   b. Cover Letter: Not all Observing Programs use cover letters, if you choose to, then you should buy a ream of standard paper for these. I use standard weight paper in a light blue hue for mine. You can also use standard white printer paper.
   c. Envelopes: Buy a box of 9 x 12 manila envelopes. Mine come in boxes of 100.
   d. Manila Folders: Buy a box, or better yet, reuse old ones. In either case you will need to trim off the tab so that it fits in the envelope.
   e. Pin Protection: I use small pieces of thin cardboard or plastic that I cut from various packages that I receive. I cut it in squares of about 1.5 inches. I then place the pin so that the pin back is sticking into the cardboard and away from the certificates. I then use a piece of tape to secure this to the outside of the manila folder (pin is pointing outward to protect the certificate). Bubble-wrap has also been used.
   f. Mailing Labels. I use computer generated labels. This is a bit of overkill. You can handwrite the addresses on the envelopes as most coordinators do.
4. Remember, you are on a limited budget, and the AL is also. Try to be frugal, but professional.

Responding to Observing Program Inquiries:

Inquiries should be responded to as soon as possible. You should at least acknowledge receipt with an "I'll get back to you shortly." message if necessary. It is preferable to use email when possible to avoid mailing costs. Remember that you are a representative of the AL, be professional and courteous. Responses should be consistent with the Observing Program's webpages. If the inquiry is beyond the scope of the Observing Program Coordinator, please forward it on to an NOPD to be addressed.

Responding to Submissions:

Submissions should be resolved as soon as possible. But, within a month!

Your job as Observing Program Coordinator is to confirm that the member has followed the instructions and done all the requirements. We are not police and do not have to check every bit of data. The reality is that these programs are largely on the Honor System.

The process:

1. Review the materials submitted.
2. If the observations do not meet the requirements:
    a. Determine what needs to be done to meet the requirements.
    b. Inform the submitter of what needs to be done for certification.
3. If the observations meet the requirements:
    a. Confirm that the submitter is a member in good standing of the AL (except for the Sky Puppy Observing Program and the Bronze level of Radio Astronomy). This should be done by sending an email to Mitch at **rosters@astroleague.org** with the information you have about the submitter (Name, Astronomy Club, address, phone, email, etc.). The extra information is in case there is more than one person with the same name.
    b. Create a certificate and envelope to send to the submitter. Include a pin as appropriate. **This should be done within one month of receiving the submission unless there are problems to be corrected by the submitter.** If this is a problem for the primary Coordinator, then the backup Coordinator should assist in meeting this deadline. Please contact an NOPD to discuss the situation if there are issues.

c. Update the quarterly Reflector as requested (for each issue). Details on the formatting are at the end of this document.
d. Update the AL on-line database with the new information. This is a critical step. This can be done monthly, or at the time that you send the information in to the Reflector. Details on formatting are at the end of this document.

Responding to Pin or Certificate Replacement Requests:

There are times when you will be contacted by a member with a request for a replacement pin, certificate, or both. The process is:

1. Confirm what is being requested:
    a. The Observing Program
    b. The approximate date earned
    c. The certificate number if known
2. Confirm that the certification has been earned. The member should be in the on-line database and on your list.
3. Determine the reason for the request:
    a. Post Office damage (no charge to the member)
    b. Error in name or Astronomy Club on the certificate (no charge to the member)
    c. Lost or misplaced
    d. Request for a duplicate
    e. Other
4. Inform the member of the cost for the replacement:
    a. Note, these values may change as costs increase.
    b. We do not differentiate for international requests at this time.
    c. Current costs are shown on the Observe web page on the AL website:
        https://www.astroleague.org/observing-program-division/
5. A check should be sent to you and made out to the Astronomical League.
6. Once payment is received send the replacement materials to the member.
7. Forward the check to the AL Treasurer and ask that it be applied to the budget for the specific Observing Program.

Philosophical points:

- No member should incur any cost for pins or certificates that were damaged, lost, or incorrect beyond their control.

    - The Astronomical League should not lose money because members are requesting replacement or duplicate certifications.
    - If a member requests more than one astronomy club affiliation be included on their certificate, we will do that.
- We do NOT want to be very public about the fact that we will provide a second pin when requested. Since they are paying for the extra pin, there is no cost to the AL, but it is not the best practice.
- If the member is requesting multiple clubs be shown in the Reflector, we do not do that. Ask the members which club they want posted in the Reflector. Multiple clubs may be shown in the database. Please contact an NOPD to implement this.

Responding to Issues:

The key to resolving issues is to remain calm. Sometimes members get excited and a little aggressive. The Rules are the Rules! If a submitter does not meet the requirements, they should not be given a certificate or pin. You should explain to them calmly and clearly what the rules say, quoting the website. If necessary, the issue can be escalated to an NOPD. You should know that the NOPD will follow whatever is written on the AL website. As needed, the NOPD will keep the AL President informed. If you are not able to resolve it working with the NOPD, the AL President will be the final arbitrator.

Annual Activities:

Each Year as we approach the annual AL-Con, coordinators must submit two reports.

- Budget request for the upcoming year. Usually this covers postage mostly. Be sure to factor in additional mailing supplies and certificates when you are running low. Also, there will be times when you need to buy additional pins. Please include a budget request for pins if you will need to restock during the next year. The national office will check for this approval by the Council before ordering additional pins. This should be sent to the requesting NOPD in an email. If you plan to donate the expenses to the AL, thank you very much! You would request a budget of $0.00 for the coming year.
- Expense reckoning for the previous year (or less if you do this more often than once each year). This should be a list of all your expenses for your Observing Program(s). The reckoning should be sent to the requesting NOPD in an email. To receive a reimbursement for

expenses, send an email to the AL Treasurer with copies of the receipts. You should also save a copy of those receipts. They will send you a check. If you coordinate more than one Observing Program, the reckonings will need to be separate, but you will receive only one check for the total requested reimbursement. If your intention is to donate these expenses, then you do not need to submit the request to the AL Treasurer, but please include all of the expenses in the reckoning to the NOPD.

- Activity reports will be generated from information in the on-line database. Be sure that your information has been submitted to the database.

How to Submit Awards to the Reflector:

Reflector submissions should be sent when asked (quarterly). The deadline is far in advance of the issue being published. (September 1 for the December issue…)

Send your submissions to: **editor@astroleague.org** and **aaron@clevenson.org**

A submission should be in this format: (The punctuation is critically important.)

No. 1, **John A. Smith**, Advanced (, level if appropriate), Galileo Astronomy Club; No. 2, **Jane Doe**, Lunar Society of New York; No. 3, **Fred Flintstone**, Member-at-Large

Only include a level if your Observing Program has more than one level. Many only have one level.

How to Submit Awards to the AL Website Database:

Updates to the AL Website Database can be done at any time. Once a month is often enough, or you can do it every time that you send updates to the Reflector (this is the minimum). The format and content for submissions is slightly different and not as critical for the database.

Submissions should be sent to the webmaster responsible for the database, Mike Hotka at **mhotka@yahoo.com** and the Observing Program Liaison, Aaron Clevenson at **aaron@clevenson.org**

A submission should be in this format:

My Observing Program			
Awardee	**#**	**Date**	**Astronomical Society**
John A. Smith	**1**	**3/11/13**	**Galileo Astronomical Society**
Jane Doe	**2**	**3/11/13**	**Lunar Society of New York**
Fred Flintstone	**3**	**3/11/13**	**Member-at-Large**

Include a level if appropriate for your award.

Questions or Problems:

Work with your NOPD to get answers to any questions you may have, or to deal with any challenges that pop up.



Aaron Clevenson, Observing Program Liaison ver. 20261017