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Subject: **Arecibo Science Advocacy Partnership: December 2013 Member Newsletter**
Date: December 23, 2013 9:30:43 PM EST
To: lac5@psu.edu
Reply-To: ASAP Secretary <secretary@areciboscience.org>
▶ 2 Attachments, 321 KB



Dear ASAP Member,

As some of you will have noted, Arecibo celebrated its 50th anniversary this year with symposia in several places and a celebration at the Observatory. *Physics Today's* November issue led with a dramatic cover image (see below) and article on the Observatory. There was also a piece with nice photos in [Wired](#) by Frank Drake's daughter Nadia. The two-day Anniversary Symposium in the Visitor Center at Arecibo brought together a large and remarkable group of people who have contributed to the Observatory and its science over the years. See the [program](#) on the NAIC website for the participants and the slides of the talks.

Roughly half of the ASAP Board members participated in the Symposium as well as a number of members and emeritus Board members. We were pleased to see that the Observatory continues to function well scientifically. The Planetary Radar group is thriving under a new NASA grant to track near-Earth asteroids and expanding. The Astronomy group is at minimum staff but managing some 80% of the projects on a full schedule. And the Atmospheric group is bringing its new ionospheric heating facility into operation and moving its Optical Facility to the island of Culebra.

The Observatory is now managed by three partner organizations with SRI leading USRA (Universities Space Research Association) and UMET (Universidad Metropolitana in San Juan). Working out all of the issues of employees, budgets and management practices has been an on-going challenge, but there was certainly some significant progress to be seen late this year. A long struggle reconcile employee benefits among the three partners has been accomplished and other routine matters such as purchasing were going much more smoothly.

Funding remains a pressing problem. NSF Astronomy funding is ramping down while Atmospheric Science funding is increasing somewhat. NASA funds operate the planetary radar program but do little to fund overall operations. The Observatory is thus facing a budget shortfall this year, but hopes to find ways of alleviating it. This all said the NAIC management has managed to avoid laying off anyone so far. The government shutdown was a huge worry, but Arecibo somehow managed to continue operating through it while other major observatories shut down and furloughed their staff.

Meanwhile the ASAP Board has been meeting throughout the year to assess and plan how to support the Observatory in these very changed, and still very challenging conditions we now have. The pressure to recompute the management of NSF-supported facilities again grows stronger not weaker, and so we must be ready. The Board has thus taken up three major directions for ASAP in 2014—

--A major new project is to coordinate the development of exciting long term scientific planning for the Observatory in collaboration with both the NAIC staff and its Science and Management Advisory Committee (SMAC).

--ASAP also plans to work closely with—and help to enhance the effectiveness of—the AO Users Committee (AOUC), which has not met in nearly two years. AO needs user advice critically now and on a more continuous basis than the AOUC can provide.

--Double the ASAP membership to about 300 scientists. ASAP is the only venue that joins AO's three different science communities, and it is essential that their full weight be joined and heard in coming years if AO is to prosper and survive.

--ASAP is also considering some form of mentoring program for new AO users.

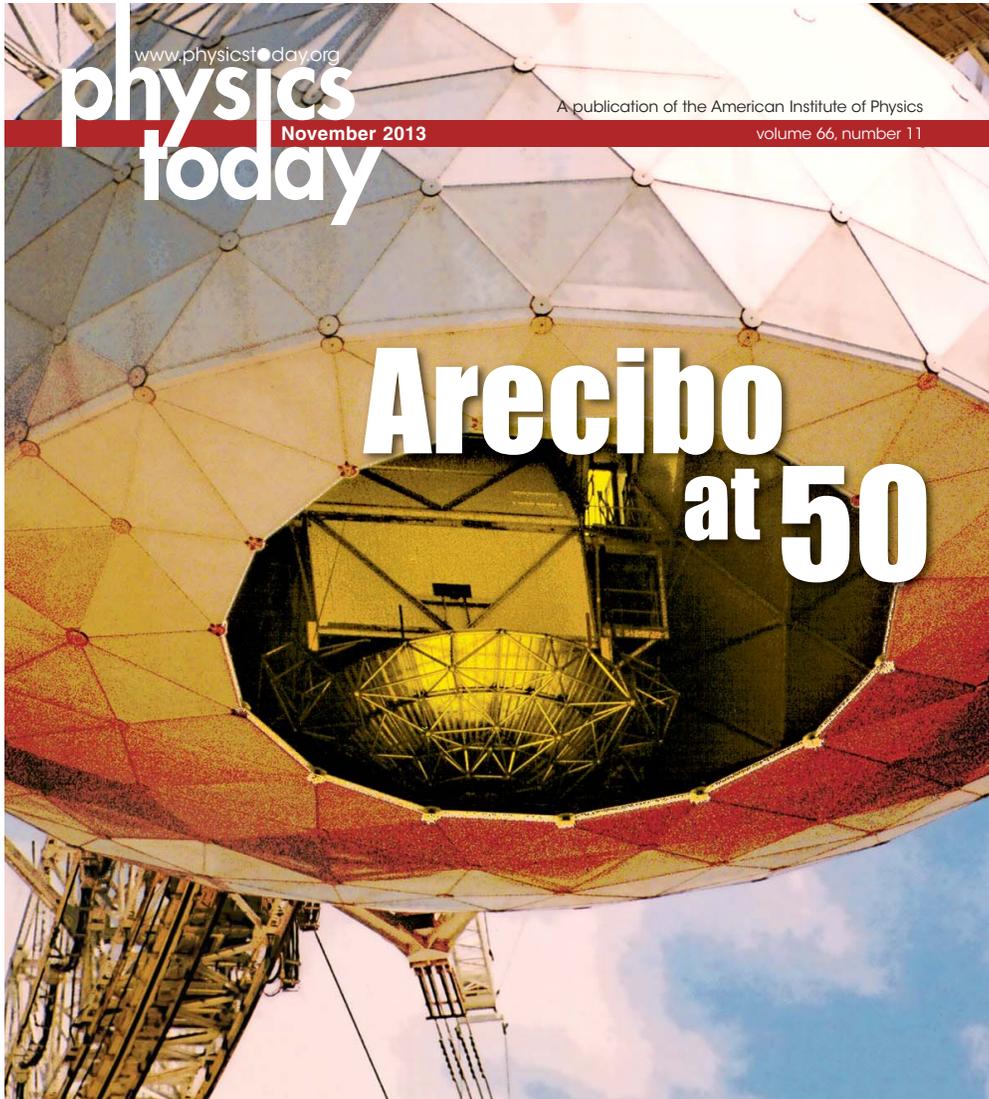
So, if you care about Arecibo, then please help find and recruit new ASAP members. Graduate student (or even undergraduates actively involved in AO work) members are welcome, and at this point financial support is less important than growing ASAP numbers. The [Membership Brochure](#) is available for download.

Please then help us build the ASAP membership!

Please also write the Board with your suggestions and comments. The Board is very eager to have your suggestions both on how best to protect AO as well as on the structure and goals of the new ASAP!

Please send this letter to your friends and associates and tell them about the ASAP website: <http://areciboscience.org/>.

With sincere thanks and regards,
The ASAP Board



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physics
today

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Arecibo at 50

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