

Helmholtz Alliance Planetary Evolution and Life Newsletter #1

The Helmholtz Alliance 'Planetary Evolution and Life' is now in business since half a year (April 2008). A sizeable number of graduate students and post-docs have been hired and research work has begun in earnest.

With this first newsletter - sent at the occasion of the release of our web page - we would like to give an overview covering previous, ongoing and planned activities. We aim for issuing the Newsletter in the future in a loose sequence as we see fit. The Newsletter will be sent to the distribution but will also be collected on the web page for future reference.

Web page:

The Helmholtz Alliance 'Planetary Evolution and Life' web page is now online:

www.dlr.de/hgf_alliance_pel

Content of the Web page:

- A general description of the science case
- General information about the partners, a "who is who" and the structure of the Alliance
- Past and future meetings
- Graduate Training News
 - List of graduate students and Post-Docs participating in the Alliance
 - University lectures and seminars held by Alliance partners

These lists are not all complete and topic leaders may wish to update the description of their science case. Please help us by sending updates in particular names of your graduate students, post-docs and lectures. We believe that the latter pieces of information will be particularly interesting for graduate student and post-docs.

Science Advisory Board

At the proposal of the Alliance coordinator, DLR Chairman of the Executive Board Prof. Wörner has formed a Scientific Advisory Committee for the Alliance. The members are:

Prof. F. Westall, Orleans
Prof. V. Dehant, Brussel
Prof. F. Taylor, Oxford
T. Reiter, DLR Executive Board Member

Meetings:

The Helmholtz Alliance started with a Kick-Off Meeting on February 19th, 2008, where the Research Topic Leader presented overviews about their research topics.

The first Alliance week took place from May 13th -16th 2009 in Berlin. The Agenda can be found on the web page. The alliance week saw a presentation of the individual work packages by work package leaders. Future meetings of the Alliance were discussed. It was agreed that individual research topics would have their topical meetings and workshops on a schedule agreed within the topic group. The Alliance week would be held once a year in early summer. In addition, thematic workshops should be organized. These should be of tutorial character and allow for ample discussion. Overview presentations by leaders in the fields would be invited. Themes to be considered include water (see below), life, magnetic fields, atmosphere evolution and others.

A first meeting of lecturers and colleagues interested in defining a curriculum for planetary sciences is being organized for Oct. 1st at DLR. The expected outcome of the meeting will be a first draft of the outline for such a curriculum. The meeting is also expected to help define a grad student and post-doc seminar for the Berlin area.

First Topical Workshop:

A Workshop with the topic 'Water' will be held on January 5th and 6th January at DLR in Berlin. We have confirmation for invited talks by A. Brack (water and bio), Chaplin (physical chemistry of water), F. Forget (water in the atmosphere), A. Morbidelli (water and accretion), S. Squyres (water and geology of Mars). Also invited but not confirmed yet are Kohlstedt (rheology) and T. Encrenaz (water in the solar system)

Immediately following this Workshop, a Soft Skill Workshop (Jan 7./8.2009) is being planned for graduate students and Post-Docs. This workshop still needs to be confirmed. We are planning to provide a course on scientific presentation and on fast reading skills.

Graduate Training Manager:

We are glad to announce that Barbara Stracke has been hired as graduate training manager. She is about to finish her doctorate degree and therefore knows about the problems of graduate students first hand. She will work closely with the Alliance coordinator Tilman Spohn and the graduate teachers in the Alliance. In addition, Barbara Stracke will help to coordinate the scientific activities of the Helmholtz Alliance. For administrative issues Karin Eichentopf is still responsible.

Logo:

A competition to design a logo for the Alliance has been kicked off at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. The results are expected for early December; a decision will be made within the Alliance thereafter.