

## **South African Astroinformatics Association (SA<sup>3</sup>)**

In March 2013 the Directors of the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO), the Hartebeesthoek Radio Observatory (HartRAO) and the South African SKA Project (SKA SA) declared the formation of the SA Virtual Observatory as a collaboration of the Astronomical National Facilities, under the administration of the National Research Foundation (NRF).

On 15 April the NRF Corporate Executive lent their support to this initiative.

In May it was agreed that the SA Virtual Observatory would be known as the *South African Astroinformatics Association (SA<sup>3</sup>)*. The first Management Committee would comprise Linsay Magnus (SA SKA) as chair with Patricia Whitelock (SAAO, UCT) and Sudhanshu Barway (SAAO).

The primary purpose of SAVO will be:

1. to facilitate access by the SA astronomical community to multi-wavelength astronomical data as well as to the tools for dealing with them;
2. to ensure that data produced by facilities in SA are accessible to the international community (in a manner that does not violate any ownership rights);
3. to develop human capital through schools and workshops that introduce people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to astronomy through the tools of the Virtual Observatory.

At this stage SA<sup>3</sup> does not have its own budget so we anticipate working closely with the IT initiatives currently underway at the existing facilities, as well as on the educational initiatives, which are essential for our broader community.

South African Astronomy is currently going through a strategic planning exercise and there is great potential for future growth particularly in the astroinformatics area, which is so vital to the multi-wavelength nature of astronomy.

We are pleased to be part of the IVOA where we expect to contribute as well as to learn.

Patricia Whitelock  
May 2013