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The OGIP FITS Working Group

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Abstract. We present an overview of the workings of the OGIP FITS Working Group (OFWG).

1. Introduction

Nearly all high-energy astrophysics projects provide data in FITS format (Wells, Greisen, & Harten 1981). However, arbitrary and/or inconsistent use of file formats and header keywords leads to confusion and requires that specialized software be used for correct data interpretation and analysis. The need to support specialized FITS formats and software systems is a significant (sometimes unmanageable) burden for data archives. However, adherence to simple, agreed-upon conventions can alleviate this burden at little cost.

The Office of Guest Investigator Programs (OGIP) at the Goddard Space Flight Center has organized a working group to identify appropriate conventions, and, with community support, to encourage adherence to these conventions.

2. The OFWG

The OFWG was set up to (1) ensure that new FITS definitions used within the OGIP do not violate any established FITS standards/conventions; (2) encourage standardization of keyword usage, data types, and FITS file formats used within the OGIP (i.e., the so-called Rationalized Data File or RDF format); and (3) disseminate OFWG recommendations to the broader High Energy Astrophysics and FITS communities to promote community-wide standardization.

3. Community Involvement

The OFWG recognizes that many of the issues it considers are of potential interest to the wider FITS community. The OFWG encourages community involvement by announcing proposed standards/conventions to the HEA and FITS communities to gauge community reaction, and by disseminating accepted recommendations for possible use in the community. The OFWG uses two e-mail exploders to distribute proposals or recommendations and gauge community response:

HEAFITS - which primarily serves the high energy astronomy community

FITSBITS - serving the entire FITS community

as well as contributing to discussions on the newsgroup *sci.astro.fits*.

4. For More Information

The minutes of all OFWG meetings, along with the text of all full recommendations and pending proposals, are publically available via the anonymous ftp account on *legacy.gsfc.nasa.gov* in two areas directly related to the OFWG:

fits_info/ofwg_minutes containing ASCII files of the minutes from all OFWG meetings

fits_info/ofwg_recomm containing ASCII (and occasionally also PostScript) files of OFWG recommendations, pending proposals, etc.

Information regarding the OFWG is also available via the WWW. The most useful starting point is probably the URL

http://heasarc.gsfc.nasa.gov/0/docs/heasarc/ofwg/ofwg˙intro.html

All of the documents available via anonymous ftp are also accessible via the WWW.

References

Wells, D. C., Greisen, E. W., & Harten, R. H. 1981, A&AS, 44, 363