



The Astronomical League

A Federation of Astronomical Societies

Astro Note B3 – Astronomical League Membership and Benefits

Introduction – The mission of the Astronomical League is clearly stated in the masthead: to promote the science of astronomy. Being an all-volunteer organization, the League has pursued this goal for more than 60 years among the lay public by encouraging the formation and joint efforts of amateur astronomy societies. Today, our membership totals more than 250 societies and, together with members-at-large, represents more than 15,000 individuals.

Our Bylaws define the following categories of membership:

- **Member Society:** any club, society or organization with a bonafide interest in astronomy.
- **Affiliate Member:** any national astronomical society or organization.
- **Patron Member:** Any individual with a bonafide interest in astronomy wishing to make an increased contribution to the League above the Member-at-Large rates.
- **Member-at-Large:** any individual with a bonafide interest in astronomy.
- **Supporting Member:** any company, manufacturer, corporation or organization with a sincere belief in the ideals of the Astronomical League.
- **Honorary Member:** bestowed only with unanimous approval of Council upon any individual who has made a significant, sustained or outstanding contribution to the Astronomical League or the science of astronomy.
- **Lifetime Member:** any individual with a bonafide interest in astronomy and a desire to lend financial support to the League.

In order to become a member, the organization or individual must apply to the National Office, accept the League Bylaws, pay the prescribed dues and be accepted by Council, the governing body of the Astronomical League. Dues are set by Council for each membership category. Contact the National Office Manager or visit the League's website www.astroleague.org for a copy of the Bylaws and the current dues schedule.

Conventions – Because League members are distributed across the United States, the Astronomical League is divided into eleven geographic, administrative regions. Each of these regions sponsors an annual convention. These regional meetings provide an opportunity for amateurs to gather without traveling large distances as may be required

for the national convention. Most regional conventions are one or two-day, weekend affairs although others, like the Texas Star Party of the Southwest Region, have grown and drawn national attention and participation. Each year, the Astronomical League sponsors a national convention. The location of this event moves around the country as different local societies vie for sponsorship. This movement also gives members from different parts of the country an opportunity to attend an occasional national meeting without long distance travel. Thus, amateur astronomers from around the country can meet to share ideas, establish networks with others having similar interests, and meet new friends or renew past friendships.

National conventions usually last three or four days and may include paper sessions, panel discussions, exhibits, telescope displays, art and photographic contests, field trips and star parties. Council meets during the national convention to conduct League business and the general membership elects national officers.

At the paper sessions, amateurs and invited professionals present their experience and ideas relating to their particular field of interest in astronomy. Field trips may provide a chance to see a nationally famous observatory in the vicinity and, on occasion, may offer an opportunity to observe through the professional telescopes. It is also customary to set aside at least one evening for a star party by the host society where all attendees have the chance to share experiences at the eyepieces of the variety of telescopes available.

Other Activities – Each member receives The Reflector, the quarterly newsletter of the Astronomical League. This publication carries news of other club's activities, articles by individual members, reports of observing activities and news and notices about the League.

Members can order astronomy-related books at a 10 percent discount through the Book Service. Observing Clubs offer encouragement and certificates of accomplishment for demonstrating observing skills with a variety of instruments and objects. Our Education Committee provides planned study guides for societies who want to provide organized courses or group study in astronomy.

Besides The Reflector newsletter, the League publishes a variety of Observing Program Manuals and pamphlets. These manuals are thorough introductory guides to observing and deal with deep sky objects, eclipses, the Sun, comets and meteors. Most of these manuals form the basis for participation in the associated Observing Program.

Why Join? – You can see from this material that the Astronomical League is a service organization which strives to fulfill its mission by serving the needs of its members both as individuals and as member societies. But most of all, the League is people: people who share a common joy and wonder as they explore the various objects and

phenomena in the sky. The League is here to help you see ... and wonder ... and marvel ... and become more enriched for having done so.