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Working Group on Astronomical Software

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The primary role of the AAS Working Group on Astronomical Software is to function as the body which formulates, reviews, and endorses modifications to the FITS data format standard. The WGAS FITS Committee, chaired by Dr. Peter Teuben (University of Maryland) has representatives from all major data providers and all major astronomical software systems. In 1999 the FITS Committee undertook a formal review of the Version 100-2.0 of the FITS Standard following its release by the NASA Office of Standards and Technology (NOST) FITS Technical Panel and its subsequent approval by the NOST Accreditation Panel. On 1 October 1999 the WGAS FITS Committee voted 17 in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstaining to endorse the NOST document as the official FITS standard. With this vote and similar votes expected from the European and Japanese FITS committees, it is expected that a resolution will be brought to the IAU FITS Working Group and the IAU General Assembly to make V100-2.0 the official world-wide FITS standard. The new version of the NASA FITS standard is available at `http://fits.gsfc.nasa.gov/`.

Standards for representation of world coordinate systems (WCS) in FITS were discussed at the ADASS'99 Conference in Kona, Hawaii (October 1999). Two revised papers by E. Greisen and M. Calabretta on a generalized approach to world coordinates and specific recommendations for celestial coordinate systems were endorsed in a FITS "Birds-of-a-Feather" session at ADASS. A third paper describing conventions for spectral data was seen as needing further review and discussion. The WCS papers can be obtained from `ftp://ftp.cv.nrao.edu/NRAO-staff/egreisen/` in the files `wcs.ps`, `ccs.ps`, and `scs.ps` (G-zipped versions are also available).