

AstroSurf 2007

13th – 15th June, Heriot-Watt University

This was the second meeting of the AstroSurf network, it was successfully opened by Eric Herbst with a talk entitled “Models of Interstellar Chemistry: the Tug-of-War Between Astronomical and Chemical Complexity”, I felt that this was an excellent introduction the next two days as it covered both chemistry and astronomy and hence appealed to all members of the audience. Throughout the two days there was a good mix of talks covering both aspects of astrochemistry, which as a chemist, I found useful as it provides up-to-date background information and a better understanding of how astronomers study the aspects of the ISM we model in our lab.

Day two mainly included talks about the formation of ices and how these ices can be observed in the ISM, a particularly interesting talk was Helen Fraser's, who discussed the concept of ice mapping and presented some new astronomical observations and related these back to work carried out in the laboratory. The talk by Liv Hornekaer entitled “Could Interstellar Molecular Hydrogen Form on PAHs” was of particular relevance as I also study the formation of H₂. Calculations were presented that showed that molecular hydrogen formation on PAHs is a valid formation pathway under certain interstellar conditions. Previous conferences I have attended the formation of H₂ has dominated many of the talks and although this is my particular area of interest it was beneficial to listen to a variety of topics being discussed. The second day concluded with presentation by H. Zacharias who discussed the use of the Free Electron Laser (FLASH) to induce surface reactions.

After a very pleasant conference dinner, the final day involved presentations covering a wide range of topics, including talks on “Photoprocesses mediated by surfaces and nanostructures” and investigations into reactions within condensed chiral layers. It was fascinating to learn about the range of techniques that can be used model the interstellar medium in both experimental and theoretical work. I felt that the conference was very successful; however, it would have of benefit to those of us that had posters if there had been a designated poster session when we could have presented our work. Many thanks to the organisers.