THE IDENTIFICATION OF z-DROPOUTS IN PAN-STARRS1: THREE QUASARS AT 6.5 < z < 6.7*

B. P. Venemans1, E. Bañados1, R. Decarli1, E. P. Fariña1, F. Walter1, K. C. Chambers2, X. Fan3, H.-W. Rix1, E. Schlaflly1, R. G. McMahon3, R. Simcoe6, D. Stern7, W. S. Burgett8, P. W. Draper9, H. Flewelling2, K. W. Hodapp2, N. Kaiser2, E. A. Magnier2, N. Metcalfe9, J. S. Morgan2, P. A. Price10, J. L. Tonry2, C. Waters5, Y. AlSayyad11, M. Banerji4,5, S. S. Chen6, E. A. González-Solares5, J. Greiner12, C. Mazzucchelli1, I. McGregor3, D. R. Miller6, S. Reed4, and P. W. Sullivan6

1 Max-Planck Institute for Astronomy, Königstuhl 17, D-69117 Heidelberg, Germany; venemans@mpia.de
2 Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii, 2680 Woodlawn Drive, Honolulu, HI 96822, USA
3 Steward Observatory, The University of Arizona, 933 North Cherry Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85721-0065, USA
4 Institute of Astronomy, University of Cambridge, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0HA, UK
5 Kavli Institute for Cosmology, University of Cambridge, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0HA, UK
6 MIT-Kavli Center for Astrophysics and Space Research, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA
7 Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Mail Stop 169-221, Pasadena, CA 91109, USA
8 GMTO Corporation, 251 S. Lake Avenue, Suite 300, Pasadena, CA 91101, USA
9 Department of Physics, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, UK
10 Department of Astrophysical Sciences, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544, USA
11 Department of Astronomy, University of Washington, Box 351580, Seattle, WA 98195, USA
12 Max-Planck-Institut für extraterrestrische Physik, Giessenbachstrasse 1, D-85748 Garching, Germany

Received 2014 December 22; accepted 2015 February 5; published 2015 February 27

ABSTRACT

Distant luminous quasars are unique probes of the high-redshift intergalactic medium (IGM) and of the growth of massive galaxies and black holes in the early universe. Absorption due to neutral hydrogen in the IGM makes quasars beyond a redshift of z ≈ 6.5 very faint in the optical z band, thus locating quasars at higher redshifts requires large surveys that are sensitive above 1 micron. We report the discovery of three new z > 6.5 quasars, corresponding to an age of the universe of <850 Myr, selected as z-band dropouts in the Pan-STARRS1 survey. This increases the number of known z > 6.5 quasars from four to seven. The quasars have redshifts of z = 6.50, 6.52, and 6.66, and include the brightest z-dropout quasar reported to date, PSO J036.5078 + 03.0498 with M_1450 = −27.4. We obtained near-infrared spectroscopy for the quasars, and from the Mg II line, we estimate that the central black holes have masses between 5 × 10^8 and 4 × 10^9 M⊙ and are accreting close to the Eddington limit (L_B bol /L_Edd = 0.13 − 1.2). We investigate the ionized regions around the quasars and find near-zone radii of R_NZ = 1.5 − 5.2 proper Mpc, confirming the trend of decreasing near-zone sizes with increasing redshift found for quasars at 5.7 < z < 6.4. By combining R_NZ of the PS1 quasars with those of 5.7 < z < 7.1 quasars in the literature, we derive a luminosity-corrected redshift evolution of R_NZ,corrected(= (7.2 ± 0.2) − (6.1 ± 0.7) × (z − 6) Mpc. However, the large spread in R_NZ in the new quasars implies a wide range in quasar ages and/or a large variation in the neutral hydrogen fraction along different lines of sight.

Key words: cosmology: observations – galaxies: active – galaxies: individual (PSO J036.5078+03.0498, PSO J167.6415-13.4960, PSO J338.2298+29.5089) – quasars: general

1. INTRODUCTION

Quasars are the most luminous non-transient objects known. Their high luminosity makes quasars ideal to probe the universe at early cosmic times. Since distant (z ≥ 5.7) luminous quasars are rare, with an estimated source density of ~1 Gpc⁻³ (e.g., Fan et al. 2004; Willott et al. 2010b), surveys covering a large area of the sky are required to uncover the distant quasar population. Over the last 15 years more than 70 quasars with redshifts between 5.5 < z < 6.5 have been discovered in various surveys (e.g., Fan et al. 2006; Jiang et al. 2008; Mortlock et al. 2009; Willott et al. 2010a; Morganson et al. 2012; Bañados et al. 2014). Most of these quasars have been found by looking for sources with a large break between the optical i and z bands (e.g., Fan et al. 2006), the so-called i-band dropouts or i-drops. To find quasars beyond z ~ 6.5, wide-field surveys with coverage beyond ~1 μm are needed.

Currently, four quasars above z > 6.5 have been discovered in near-infrared surveys. Mortlock et al. (2011) presented a quasar at z = 7.1 discovered in the UK infrared Telescope Infrared Deep Sky Survey (UKIDSS; Lawrence et al. 2007), while Venemans et al. (2013) reported three quasars at 6.0 < z < 6.9 from the Visible and Infrared Survey Telescope Kilo-Degree Infrared Galaxy (VIKING) survey. Detailed studies of these four z > 6.5 quasars have given insight into the properties of the universe less than a gigayear after the Big Bang. For example, the optical spectrum of the 7.1 quasar places constraints on the fraction of neutral hydrogen (Mortlock et al. 2011; Bolton et al. 2011), while Simcoe et al. (2012) use near-infrared spectroscopy to put limits on the metal enrichment (“metallicity”) of the intergalactic medium (IGM) up to z ~ 7. Furthermore, these quasars set a lower
The Astrophysical Journal Letters, 801:L11 (7pp), 2015 March 1

Table 1
Imaging and Spectroscopic Observations of Quasar Candidates

| Object  | Date        | Telescope/Instrument | λ Range / Filters | Exposure Time | Slit Width |
|---------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|
| P167-13 | 2014 Apr 26 | VLT/ FORS2           | 0.74–1.07 μm      | 2630 s        | 1.5        |
|         | 2014 May 30–Jun 2 | Magellan/FIRE    | 0.82–2.49 μm      | 12004 s       | 0.5        |
| P036+03 | 2014 Jul 25 | NTT/EFOSC2          | 0.60–1.03 μm      | 7200 s        | 1.2        |
|         | 2014 Sep 4–6 | Magellan/FIRE      | 0.82–2.49 μm      | 8433 s        | 0.5        |
|         | 2014 Oct 20 | Keck I/LRIS         | 0.55–1.03 μm      | 1800 s        | 1.0        |
| P338+29 | 2014 Oct 19 | MMT/Red Channel     | 0.67–1.03 μm      | 1800 s        | 1.0        |
|         | 2014 Oct 30 | Magellan/FIRE       | 0.82–2.49 μm      | 7200 s        | 0.5        |
|         | 2014 Nov 27 | LBT/ MODS           | 0.51–1.06 μm      | 2700 s        | 1.2        |
|         | 2014 Dec 6  | LBT/LUCI            | 2.05–2.37 μm      | 3360 s        | 1.5        |

a For the full name and coordinates, see Table 2.
b Observations in cloudy conditions.

dropouts, we made use of the Hα, nπ1, iπ1, zπ1, and yπ1 bands (see also Figure 1 in Bañados et al. 2014): (S/N)zπ1 > 3 AND (zπ1 – yπ1 > 1.4) OR (S/N)iπ1 < 3 AND (zπ1lim,3σ – yπ1 > 1.4).

2.2. Public Infrared Surveys

To extend and verify the photometry of the quasar candidates selected from the PS1 catalogs, we first matched the sources with several public infrared surveys.

UKIDSS: The PS1 candidates were matched with the near-infrared data of the UKIDSS survey (Lawrence et al. 2007). The UKIDSS Large Area Survey (LAS) provides Y, J, H, and K imaging over ~4000 deg². We matched the PS1 z-dropout list with the catalogs from UKIDSS data release13, using a search radius of 2″. We identified objects as foreground interlopers if they had a Y – J > 0.6 or yπ1 – J > 1 (which is typical for cool dwarfs; see, e.g., Best et al. 2013) and removed them from our candidate lists.

WISE: The Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE; Wright et al. 2010) surveyed the entire mid-infrared sky in four
bands centered at 3.4, 4.6, 12, and 22 μm. The NEOWISE observations (Mainzer et al. 2011) surveyed 70% of the sky at 3.4 and 4.6 μm (hereafter W1 and W2). Both surveys were combined to produce the AllWISE catalogs. To rule out spurious candidates, we required PS1 z-dropouts without a match in the VHS or UKIDSS surveys to have a counterpart in the AllWISE catalogs within 3″ to be considered real sources. Objects with an S/N > 3 in W1 and W2 were assigned a higher priority if their colors fulfilled the additional criteria: −0.2 < W1AB − W2AB < 0.86 AND W1AB − W2AB > −1.45 × (γp1 − γp2) − 0.455, which is loosely based on the PS1–WISE colors of brown dwarfs (e.g., Best et al. 2013). Objects with an S/N < 3 in W1 or W2 were assigned an intermediate priority, and the remaining candidates were given a low priority.

For the ~13,000 objects with a match in at least one of the above surveys, we performed forced photometry on the PS1 images to confirm the colors and non-detections (see Bañados et al. 2014). After visually inspecting the remaining ~1000 candidates, we selected the best ~500 objects that were our main targets for follow-up observations.

3. FOLLOW-UP OBSERVATIONS

To confirm the colors of the possible quasars and to remove lower-redshift interlopers, we imaged 194 z-dropout candidates during five observing runs. We obtained optical and infrared images between 2014 January 24 and 2014 August 13 with the MPG 2.2 m/GROND (Greiner et al. 2008), NTT/EFOSC2 (Bizzoni et al. 1984), NTT/SofI (Moorwood et al. 1998), and the Calar Alto 3.5 m/Omega2000 (Bailer-Jones et al. 2000); see Table 1 for the details of the observations.

Candidates were considered foreground interlopers if they had γp1 − γJ > 1 (see Section 2.2). Sources with a γp1 − J < −1 or undetected in J were rejected on the basis that they could be moving, varying, or a spurious object in the PS1 catalog. We reobserved objects with −1.0 < γp1 − J < 1.0 with the NTT in the filters I_N and Z_N. Only three sources remained undetected in I_N or were red with I_N − Z_N ≥ 2. These objects were targets for spectroscopy.

We obtained optical and near-infrared spectroscopy of all the three candidates that had good quasar colors after the follow-up imaging. We carried out spectroscopic observations between 2014 April 26 and 2014 December 6 using the following instruments: VLT/FORS2 (Appenzeller et al. 1998); Megellan/FIRE (Simcoe et al. 2008, 2010); NTT/EFOSC2; Keck/LRIS.
We computed bolometric luminosities by applying the bolometric correction obtained by Shen et al. (2008) to the monochromatic luminosity density measured at 3000 Å. The Eddington luminosity is defined as $L_{\text{Edd}} = 1.3 \times 10^{38} (M_{\text{BH}}/M_\odot)$ erg s$^{-1}$.

A summary of the photometric properties and the parameters derived from the spectra is provided in Table 2. Below, we describe the new quasars in more detail.

### 4.1. PSO J167.6415-13.4960

The quasar PSO J167.6415-13.4960 (hereafter P167-13) was discovered based on forced photometry on VHS images at the positions of PS1 candidates. Our FORS2 discovery spectrum revealed a source with a strong continuum decrement around 9100 Å, and we identified the object as a quasar with a redshift of $z \approx 6.52$. From the near-infrared spectrum, we derive a redshift $z_{\text{MgII}} = 6.508 \pm 0.001$. This quasar is the faintest of our new discoveries with $M_{\text{MgII}} = -27.36 \pm 0.13$, and the Eddington ratio is consistent with maximal accretion ($L_{\text{Edd}}/L_{\text{Edd}} = 1.2 \pm 0.5$).

### 4.2. PSO J036.5078+03.0498

PSO J036.5078+03.0498 (hereafter P036+03) was selected as part of our extended, bright $z$-dropout search and was matched to a source in the UKIDSS and WISE catalogs. The high S/N FIRE spectrum revealed blue quasar continuum emission ($\beta = -1.70 \pm 0.05$) at a redshift $z_{\text{MgII}} = 6.527 \pm 0.002$. The absolute magnitude of $M_{\text{MgII}} = -27.36 \pm 0.03$ makes this quasar one of the most luminous objects known at $z > 6$. The bolometric luminosity is estimated to be $L_{\text{bol}} = 3.3 \times 10^{47}$ erg s$^{-1}$. The central black hole has an estimated mass of

---

Table 2: Photometric Properties and Derived Parameters of the New $z > 6.5$ Quasars from PS1

| Abbreviated name | PSO J167.6415-13.4960 | PSO J036.5078+03.0498 | PSO J338.2298+29.5089 |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Abbreviated name | P167-13               | P036+03               | P338+29               |
| RA(J2000)        | 11h10m32s.98          | 02h26m01s.88          | 22h32m55s.15          |
| Decl.(J2000)     | $-13^\circ29'45''$    | $+03^\circ02'59''$   | $+23^\circ30'32''$   |
| $I_{\text{Bol}}$| $>24.68^a$            | $23.62 \pm 0.18$     | $>24.37^a$            |
| $z_{\text{MgII}}$| $>22.54^a$            | $21.51 \pm 0.24$     | $>22.25^a$            |
| $\lambda_{\text{MgII}}$| $22.08 \pm 0.09$    | $20.46 \pm 0.04$     | $21.92 \pm 0.09$     |
| $\lambda_{\text{FeII}}$| $20.49 \pm 0.12$   | $19.37 \pm 0.04$     | $20.13 \pm 0.08$     |
| $J$              | $21.21 \pm 0.09$      | $19.51 \pm 0.03$     | $20.74 \pm 0.09$     |
| $W_{\lambda, \text{AB}}$| $21.13 \pm 0.39^b$ | $19.43 \pm 0.08$     | $20.51 \pm 0.21$     |
| $M_{\text{ISO}}$ | $-25.58 \pm 0.13$    | $-27.36 \pm 0.03$    | $-26.04 \pm 0.09$    |
| $\beta$          | $-1.0 \pm 0.1$        | $-1.70 \pm 0.05$     | $-1.85^{+0.08}_{-0.05}$|
| $z_{\text{MgII}}$| $(4.9 \pm 2.0) \times 10^\delta$ | $(1.9^{+1.1}_{-0.7}) \times 10^\delta$ | $(3.7^{+1.3}_{-0.9}) \times 10^\delta$ |
| $M_{\text{BH}} (M_\odot)_{\lambda_{\text{MgII}}} = (3500)^{+100}_{-140}$ | $6527 \pm 002$ | $6658 \pm 007$ |
| $L_{\text{bol}}/L_{\text{Edd}}$ | $1.2 \pm 0.5$ | $0.96^{+0.30}_{-0.35}$ | $0.13^{+0.08}_{-0.04}$ |
| $R_{\text{SZ}}$ (proper Mpc) | $1.5 \pm 0.7$ | $3.1 \pm 0.7$ | $5.2 \pm 0.7$ |
| $R_{\text{SZ, corrected}}$ (proper Mpc) | $2.3 \pm 1.1$ | $2.8 \pm 0.6$ | $6.9 \pm 0.9$ |

$^a$ Non-detections listed as $3\sigma$ upper limits.

$^b$ Listed in the AllWISE Reject table.

(Oke et al. 1995); MMT/Red Channel Spectrograph; and LBT/ MODS (Pogge et al. 2010) and LBT/LUCI (Seifert et al. 2003). Details of the observations are listed in Table 1. We reduced the data following standard reduction steps (e.g., Venemans et al. 2013; Bañados et al. 2014). We show the merged spectra in Figure 1.

4. THREE QUASARS AT $z > 6.5$

All three $z$-dropouts for which we obtained optical spectroscopy showed a strong continuum break in their optical spectrum (Figure 1) and were identified as quasars at redshifts $6.5 < z < 6.7$. We fitted the continuum with three components: a power law with slope $\beta (f_\lambda \propto \lambda^{\beta})$, a Balmer continuum, and an Fe $\pi$ template (see, e.g., De Rosa et al. 2014). In all cases, the Balmer continuum was found to be negligible at the wavelengths we considered ($\lambda_{\text{rest}} \lesssim 3000$ Å). A single-Gaussian fit of the emission lines (most prominently C iv and Mg $\pi$) provided a sufficiently good model of the line profiles given the S/N of our spectra. Only in the spectrum of the brightest quasar, PSO J036.5078 + 03.0498, were we able to constrain on the Fe $\pi$ emission (Section 4.2). The near-infrared spectra of the other two quasars did not have sufficient S/N. This did not significantly affect the fit of the Mg $\pi$ lines in these quasars.

The redshifts were determined by the peak of the Mg $\pi$ line. Other bright emission lines, such as Si iv $\lambda 1397$ and C iv $\lambda 1549$, are blueshifted by 300–2000 km s$^{-1}$ with respect to Mg $\pi$. Such shifts are similar to those measured in spectra of other distant luminous quasars (e.g., Richards et al. 2002; De Rosa et al. 2014).

We estimated black hole masses using the local scaling relation based on the Mg $\pi$ line (Equation 1) in Vestergaard & Osmer 2009), which has a systematic uncertainty of a factor of $\sim 3$. The black hole mass uncertainties quoted in Sections 4.1–4.3 and in Table 2 represent only statistical errors.
$M_{\text{BH, MgII}} = (1.9^{+1.1}_{-0.6}) \times 10^7 M_\odot$. The accretion rate is close to Eddington with $L_{\text{bol}}/L_{\text{Edd}} = 0.96 \pm 0.55$. The quality of the infrared spectrum is not sufficient to constrain the Fe II emission to better than 2σ. We measure Fe II/Mg II = 3.4 ± 1.7, fully consistent with previously discovered quasars at similar redshifts (e.g., De Rosa et al. 2014).

4.3. PSO J338.2298+29.5089

PSO J338.2298+29.5089 (hereafter P338+29) was one of the $z$-dropout candidates with a match in the WISE catalog. The discovery spectrum shows a source with a strong, narrow emission line at $\sim$9314 Å and continuum redward of the line, which we identify as Lyα at a redshift of $z = 6.66$. From the FIRE spectrum, we measure $z_{\text{MgII}} = 6.658 \pm 0.007$, $M_{\text{MgII}} = -26.04 \pm 0.09$, and a blue continuum slope $\beta = -1.85^{+0.08}_{-0.05}$. Although the Mg II line suffers from sky residuals on its blue side, we estimate a black hole mass of $M_{\text{BH, MgII}} = (3.7^{+1.3}_{-1.0}) \times 10^7 M_\odot$ and an accretion rate of $L_{\text{bol}}/L_{\text{Edd}} = 0.12^{+0.05}_{-0.04}$.

5. QUASAR IONIZATION REGION

Quasar near zones are the zones surrounding distant quasars where the UV radiation of the central source has ionized the H I. The size of the near zone ($R_{\text{NZ}}$) is a function of, among others, the quasar age, the flux of ionizing photons, and the fraction of neutral H I (f$_{\text{HI}}$) in the IGM. A study of near zones of 5.7 < $z$ < 6.4 quasars was performed by Carilli et al. (2010), measuring $R_{\text{NZ}}$ around 27 quasars. To compare the near zone sizes as function of redshifts, Carilli et al. (2010) scaled the measured $R_{\text{NZ}}$ to an absolute magnitude of $M_{\text{MgII}} = -27$: $R_{\text{NZ, corrected}} = R_{\text{NZ}} \times 10^{0.4(27-M_{\text{MgII}})}/3$. They found that the ionized region around quasars decreases with increasing redshift and follows the relation $R_{\text{NZ, corrected}} = (3.4 \pm 0.3) - (8.0 \pm 1.1)(z - 6)$. This signals an increase in $f_{\text{HI}}$ close to quasars at higher redshifts, although it is not straightforward to translate a change in $R_{\text{NZ}}$ to a change in $f_{\text{HI}}$ (e.g., Bolton & Haehnelt 2007).

We measured the near zones following the method described in Fan et al. (2006) and also employed by Carilli et al. (2010). The results are shown in Figure 2 (a). We derive near-zone radii of 1.5, 3.1, and 5.2 Mpc (proper) for P167-13, P306 + 03, and P338 +29, respectively. The uncertainty in the computed near zone (including the uncertainty in the quasar’s systemic redshift derived from Mg II) is about 0.7 Mpc (Carilli et al. 2010). The sizes scaled to $M_{\text{MgII}} = -27$ are $R_{\text{NZ, corrected}} = 2.3, 2.8$, and 6.9 Mpc, respectively.

In Figure 2 (b), we compare the near zones of the PS1 quasars with those of 5.7 < $z$ < 7.1 quasars from the literature. The PS1 quasars roughly follow the trend of smaller near zones at higher redshifts. A weighted linear fit results in a relation $R_{\text{NZ, corrected}} = (7.2 \pm 0.2) - (6.1 \pm 0.7)(z - 6)$ Mpc. Interpreting the decrease in $R_{\text{NZ}}$ as an increase in $f_{\text{HI}}$, $R_{\text{NZ}} \propto (1 + z)^{-1}f_{\text{HI}}^{-1/3}$ (e.g., Fan et al. 2006; but see Bolton & Haehnelt 2007), the decrease in $R_{\text{NZ, corrected}}$ by a factor of 6.5 between $z = 6$ and $z = 7$ implies an increase in the neutral fraction of a factor of ~180. Combined with a measured $f_{\text{HI}} \approx 2 \times 10^{-4}$ at $z \sim 6$ (e.g., Fan et al. 2006), this suggests $f_{\text{HI}} \approx 0.04$ at $z = 7$, confirming the rapid evolution of $f_{\text{HI}}$ at $z > 6$ (e.g., Fan et al. 2006; Bolton et al. 2011). The large spread (a factor of ~3) in (corrected) near-zone sizes between individual quasars indicates a wide range in quasar ages and/or a large variation in $f_{\text{HI}}$ along different lines of sight.

6. SUMMARY

We identified three new quasars at redshifts 6.5 < $z$ < 6.7 in PS1, nearly doubling the number of known $z > 6.5$ quasars from four to seven. The newly discovered quasars have a wide range of properties (Table 2). The rest-frame UV luminosities are between $M_{\text{MgII}} = -25.6$ and $M_{\text{MgII}} = -27.4$. The brightest of the PS1 quasars is the most luminous quasar discovered at $z > 6.5$ so far (Figure 3), with a luminosity at 1450 Å close to $L_{\text{Edd}}$.
that of the bright SDSS quasar J1148 + 5251 at $z = 6.42$ (Fan et al. 2003). The faintest PS1 quasar is only marginally brighter than the faintest $z > 6.5$ quasar found in the VIKING survey (J0109–3047; Venemans et al. 2013). Since the areal coverage of PS1 is more than 10x larger than that of VIKING, this is very promising for our continuing PS1 $z$-dropout search.

The PS1 quasars are powered by black holes with estimated masses of $(0.5 - 4) \times 10^9 M_\odot$, based on the Mg II line widths and the quasar luminosities. The black holes are accreting in the range of 0.13–1.2 times the Eddington limit. Black hole masses, accretion rates, and (when estimated) Mg II/Fe II ratio are similar to those derived for other $z > 6$ quasars (e.g., Willott et al. 2010a; De Rosa et al. 2014).

We derived the ionized region around the quasars and found (luminosity-corrected) near zones between 2.3 and 6.9 Mpc, in line with the sizes measured around 5.7 < $z < 6.4$ quasars. By comparing the near-zone radii of quasars between 5.7 < $z < 7.1$, we derive that the average size of the quasar ionization region decreases by a factor of ~6.5 between $z = 6$ and $z = 7$. This implies a neutral hydrogen fraction in the IGM of a few percent at $z = 7$, although the scatter in $R_{\text{HII}}$ at all redshifts (a factor of 3 between the new quasars) suggests large variations in $f_{\text{HII}}$ along different lines of sight.

We thank the referee for carefully reading the manuscript and providing constructive comments and suggestions.

B.P.V., E.P.F., and F.W. acknowledge funding through ERC grant “Cosmic Dawn.” E.B. thanks the IMPRS for Astronomy & Cosmical Physics at the University of Heidelberg. X.F. and I. D.M. acknowledge support from US NSF grant AST 11-07682, and R.S. and D.M. from US NSF grant AST-1109915.

The Pan-STARRS1 Surveys have been made possible through contributions of the Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii, the Pan-STARRS Project Office, the Max-Planck Society and its participating institutes, Max-Planck-Institute for Astronomy, Heidelberg and Max-Planck-Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, Garching, The Johns Hopkins University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, Queens University Belfast, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, the Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network Incorporated, the National Central University of Taiwan, the Space Telescope Science Institute, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration under grant No. NNX08AR22G issued through the Planetary Science Division of the NASA Science Mission Directorate, the National Science Foundation under grant AST-1238877, the University of Maryland, and Eotvos Lorand University (ELTE).

Part of the funding for GROND was granted from the Leibniz-Prize to Prof. G. Hasinger (DFG grant HA 1850/28-1).

This publication makes use of data products from the Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer, a joint project of the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory/California Institute of Technology, funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The LBT is an international collaboration among institutions in the USA, Italy, and Germany. The partners are The University of Arizona; Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica, Italy; LBT Beteiligungsgesellschaft, Germany, representing the Max-Planck Society, the Astrophysical Institute Potsdam, and Heidelberg University; The Ohio State University; The Research Corporation, on behalf of The University of Notre Dame, University of Minnesota, and University of Virginia.

Facilities: PS1 (GPCI), UKIRT (WFCAM), ESO:VISTA (VIRCAM), WISE, NOT (FOSCO2 SOFI), Max Planck:2.2 m (GROND), CAO:3.5 m (OMEGA2000), VLT:Antu (FORS2), Magellan:Baade (FIRE), Keck:1 (LRIS), MMT (Red Channel Spectrograph), LBT (MODS, LUCI).

REFERENCES

Appenzeller, I., Fröckle, K., Fürting, W., et al. 1998, Msngr, 94, 1
Bahados, E., Venemans, B. P., Morganson, E., et al. 2014, AJ, 148, 14
Bailer-Jones, C. A., Bizenberger, P., & Storz, C. 2000, Proc. SPIE, 4008, 1305
Best, W. M. J., Liu, M. C., Magnier, E. A., et al. 2013, ApJ, 777, 84
Bolton, J. S., & Haehnelt, M. G. 2007, MNRAS, 381, L35
Bolton, J. S., Haehnelt, M. G., Warren, S. J., et al. 2011, MNRAS, 416, L70
Buzzoni, B., Delabre, B., Dekker, H., et al. 1984, Msngr, 38, 9
Carilli, C. L., Wang, R., Fan, X., et al. 2010, ApJ, 714, 834
De Rosa, G., Venemans, B. P., Decarli, R., et al. 2014, ApJ, 790, 145
Fan, X., Hennawi, J. F., Richards, G. T., et al. 2004, AJ, 128, 515
Fan, X., Strauss, M. A., Becker, R. H., et al. 2006, AJ, 132, 117
Fan, X., Strauss, M. A., Schneider, D. P., et al. 2003, AJ, 125, 1649
Greiner, J., Bomann, W., Clemens, C., et al. 2008, PASP, 120, 405
Jiang, L., Fan, X., Annis, J., et al. 2008, AJ, 135, 1057
Kaiser, N., Aussel, H., Burke, B. E., et al. 2002, Proc. SPIE, 4836, 154
Kaiser, N., Burgert, W., Chambers, K., et al. 2010, Proc. SPIE, 7733, 1277330E
Komatsu, E., Smith, K. M., Dunkley, J., et al. 2011, ApJS, 192, 18
Lawrence, A., Warren, S. J., Almaini, O., et al. 2007, MNRAS, 379, 1599
Mainzer, A., Bauer, J., Grav, T., et al. 2011, ApJ, 731, 53
McMahon, R. G., Banerji, M., Gonzalez, E., et al. 2013, Msngr, 154, 35
Mortlock, D. J., Patel, M., Warren, S. J., et al. 2009, A&A, 505, 97
Mortlock, D. J., Warren, S. J., Venemans, B. P., et al. 2011, Natur, 474, 616
Mortlock, D. J., Patel, M., Warren, S. J., et al. 2009, Proc. SPIE, 7014, 70140U
Oke, J. B., Cohen, J. G., Carr, et al. 1995, PASP, 107, 375
Pogge, R. W., Atwood, B., Brewer, D. F., et al. 2010, Proc. SPIE, 7735, 9
Richards, G. T., Vanden Berk, D. E., Reichard, T. A., et al. 2002, AJ, 124, 1
Richards, G. T., Vanden Berk, D. E., Reichard, T. A., et al. 2002, AJ, 124, 1
Seifert, W., Appenzeller, I., Baumeister, H., et al. 2003, Proc. SPIE, 4836, 154
Shen, Y., Greene, J. E., Strauss, M. A., Richards, G. T., & Schneider, D. P. 2008, ApJ, 680, 169
Simcoe, R. A., Burgasser, A. J., Bernstein, R. A., et al. 2008, Proc. SPIE, 7014, 70140U
Simcoe, R. A., Burgasser, A. J., Bochanski, J. J., et al. 2010, Proc. SPIE, 7735, 772514
Simcoe, R. A., Sullivan, P. W., Cooksby, K. L., et al. 2012, Natur, 492, 79
Stubbs, C. W., Doherty, P., Cranmer, C., et al. 2010, ApJS, 191, 376
Tonry, J. L., Stubbs, C. W., Lykke, K. R., et al. 2012, ApJ, 750, 99

Figure 3. Absolute UV magnitude ($M_{1450}$) as function of redshift for all known quasars at $z > 6.4$. The dashed line indicates the minimum redshift probed by the $z$-dropout technique (Venemans et al. 2013). The black squares are previously known $z$-dropouts from Mortlock et al. (2011) and Venemans et al. (2013). The gray circles represent the highest redshift quasars discovered in optical surveys (Fan et al. 2003; Willott et al. 2007; Willott et al. 2010a). The new $z > 6.5$ quasars presented in this work are indicated with red stars.

The Astrophysical Journal Letters, 801:L11 (7pp), 2015 March 1
Vanden Berk, D. E., Richards, G. T., Bauer, A., et al. 2001, AJ, 122, 549
Venemans, B. P., Findlay, J. R., Sutherland, W. J., et al. 2013, ApJ, 779, 24
Venemans, B. P., McMahon, R. G., Walter, F., et al. 2012, ApJL, 751, L25
Vestergaard, M., & Osmer, P. S. 2009, ApJ, 699, 800
Wang, R., Wagg, J., Carilli, C. L., et al. 2013, ApJ, 773, 44

Willott, C. J., Albert, L., Arzoumanian, D., et al. 2010a, AJ, 140, 546
Willott, C. J., Delorme, P., Omont, A., et al. 2007, AJ, 134, 2435
Willott, C. J., Delorme, P., Reylé, C., et al. 2010b, AJ, 139, 906
Willott, C. J., Omont, A., & Bergeron, J. 2013, ApJ, 770, 13
Wright, E. L., Eisenhardt, P. R. M., Mainzer, A. K., et al. 2010, AJ, 140, 1868