

Heritage Committee: Annual Report for 2012

Present Membership

	Term	Affiliation
Elizabeth Griffin <i>Chair</i>	2012–15	HIA/NRC
Richard Jarrell	2011–14	York University
Nathalie Martimbeau	2012–15	Montreal Planetarium
David Turner	2012–14	Saint Mary’s University
Ian Shelton	2011–14	Mount Allison University
Randall Rosenfeld	2012–15	University of Toronto
Gordon Walker	2012–15	UBC and UVic
Eugene Milone	2012–15	University of Calgary
William McCutcheon	2012–16	UBC

New members:

We welcome Eugene Milone onto the Committee. Gene has been prominent in the teaching of astronomy at the University of Calgary for many years, while also excelling in stellar photometry. Much of his observational work has been carried out at the University’s own observatory, and his insistence that all astronomy students, whether observationally or theoretically inclined, gain hands-on experience has proved to be of immeasurable value to the students as well as to the coherence of the group within the department. Besides stellar photometry Gene’s expertise extends to solar-system physics and also to archaeoastronomy.

As of November 30, we also welcome Dr. William McCutcheon (UBC); he has agreed to serve on the Committee until 2016.

Committee Activities - Video interviews: In furtherance of our ongoing project to record interviews with senior Canadian astronomers, more videos were made during the 2012 CASCA meeting in Calgary, AB: a joint one of as many founding or early CASCA Board members as could be rounded up (René Racine, Philipp Kronenberg, John Percy, Ernie Seaquist and Bill McCutcheon), and an individual one of Gene Milone (U Calgary).

Individual Activities

Efforts to rescue the information in astronomy’s non-electronic records were the focus of an AAS/AIP Workshop held in Washington, DC, in April, resulting in an initiative to propose a new AAS Working Group on “Time Domain Astronomy”. Griffin summarized the results of that Workshop at the History of Astronomy’s special session during the IAU General Assembly in Beijing, August 2013. She also described the current state of the project at the DAO to digitize selections of its collection of some 109,000 photographic spectra with a recently-upgraded PDS digitizer; a second PDS was also returned to near-full service during the summer. The only drawback to commencing full-scale digitizing is funding, and suggestions as to how to identify likely sources are welcome.

Jarrell has continued as a member of the board of the Historical Astronomy Division of the AAS. He gave a talk at the Toronto Centre of the RASC in May on “The Lazarus Effect in Astronomy? The near-death experience of Canadian meteor science”.

Rosenfeld was featured as a ‘talking head’ in a documentary on forged scientific artifacts, for broadcast on Smithsonian Channel, Discovery UK, France 5, the History Channel, and BBC Worldwide in 2013.

Publications

Rosenfeld has published “William Wales and Joseph Dymond, Astronomical Observations During the 1769 Transit of Venus from Hudson’s Bay—the Toronto Manuscript”, *JRASC* 106, 4 (2012), 170-176. He also submitted commissioned articles for “The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers”, ed. T. Hockey et al., 2 vols. (New York: Springer, 2013), on Sebastian Münster (1488-1552), Antonio Núñez Zamora (1565-1640?), Pierre Du Val (1618-1683), and Ludwig Becker (1860-1947).

Milone has included a brief history of the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory (Calgary) on his website [<http://people.ucalgary.ca/milone/rao.html>]. Some of the statements made by Milone in response to the announcement of a provincial grant for the RAO can be read at <http://people.ucalgary.ca/milone/pressc.html>.

An account of the development of Astronomy at UBC has been prepared by Gordon Walker.

A series of three articles by former Committee member Victor Gaizauskas describing, from a personal view, the Queen Elizabeth Telescope project and its ultimate fate has been published in the *JRAS Canada*.