

Heritage Committee: Report to the Board for May 2013

This Report builds on, rather than duplicates, material in the one submitted to the Board in December 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

* *Commenced 30 November 2012*

Membership: Membership has increased over the past 2 years, and now embraces a very wide spectrum of expertises, from history of science, museum curatorship, instrument design and building, archiving, optical, radio, mm and space astronomy, to data recovery and management, research, and teaching, and represents Canada from NS to BC. That diversity is our strength; through it we have got to know a broad cross-section of Canada’s astronomers, while the aspects of astronomical heritage which we pursue constitute a very varied palette and range in date from the mediæval to the present.

Committee Activities - *Video interviews:* In furtherance of our ongoing project to record interviews with senior Canadian astronomers, a video was made of John Hutchings in February.

The efforts to rescue the information in North American non-electronic astronomical records (an AAS/AIP Workshop held in Washington DC in April 2012, and already reported), resulted in (a) a proposal to create an AAS Working Group on “Time Domain Astronomy”, and (b) an application for a double Special Session on that theme at the AAS meeting in January 2014. The on-going programmes to bring the DAO’s major collection of heritage observations on-line in the public domain feature strongly in both initiatives.

At the DAO, over 2000 spectra are now in the public domain, together with a substantial fraction of log-book entries from both contributing telescopes (1.2-m and 1.8-m). The only drawback to commencing full-scale digitizing is funding, and suggestions as to how to identify likely sources are welcome.

Individual Activities

Jarrell contributed entries for 6 Canadians and 8 non-Canadians to the 2nd edition of the Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers, and as one of the editorial team he helped to complete the preparation of all the material. He also concluded his term of membership of the board of the Historical Astronomy Division of the AAS.

Turner was consulted about the star pattern on another church ceiling, this time in the UK.

Rosenfeld won second prize in the 2013 Griffith Observer Writing Contest, with his article entitled, *Meteors Like Flasks, Wine-Consecrated Foundation Stones, and Noble Liquors Reflecting the Æther: Sparkling Notes from the Cultural Interaction of Astronomy and Alcohol*. He was also the historical advisor for the exhibit *Innovators in Instrumentation: Advancing Astronomy at the Dunlap Institute*, currently on display at Victoria College of the University of Toronto until October 31, 2013.

Walker prepared a power-point presentation of the history of the CFHT (*Politics to Perfection: How the CFHT Came To Be*), drawing from it for his after-dinner speech given at the annual CFHT meeting in May.

A seminar by Griffin, given at the University of Toronto iSchool in March, featured the scientific significance of making historic data accessible for modern research. At the AAS January meeting in Long Beach she described new results for ϵ Aurigae that were derived by comparing spectra of its recent eclipse with historic ones that had been borrowed from the DAO and the Mount Wilson photographic archives and specially digitized at the DAO.

Publications

Rosenfeld, R.A., et al.: 2013, *The Venus Aureole Effect: Minimum Aperture for Visual Detection*, JRASC 107, 29

Shiltsev, V., Nesterenko, I., & Rosenfeld, R.A.: 2013, *Replicating the Discovery of Venus's Atmosphere*, Physics Today 66, 64

Rosenfeld, R.A.: 2013, *The Prehistory of the Society's Seal*, JRASC 107, 90