

Heritage Committee: Interim Report to the Board, November 2016

Member	Term	Affiliation
Elizabeth Griffin <i>Chair</i>	2015–18	DAO/NRC
William McCutcheon	2016–19	University of British Columbia
Nathalie Martimbeau	2015–18	McGill University
Eugene Milone	2015–18	University of Calgary
David Pantalony	2014–17	Science Curator, CSTM, Ottawa
John Percy	2017–20	University of Toronto
Lee Robbins	2015–18	University of Toronto
Tim Robishaw	2015–18	DRAO/NRC
Randall Rosenfeld	2015–18	University of Toronto
Ian Shelton	2017–20	(University of Toronto)
David Turner	2017–20	Saint Mary's University
Gordon Walker	2017–20	UBC and UVic
Jasper Wall	2015–18	University of British Columbia

Committee activities have continued to focus on two projects:

(1) *Book on Canadian radio astronomy.* As reported in November, our commitment to assist with developing a book on “The History of Canadian Radio Astronomy”, originally planned and commenced by the late Richard Jarrell (former long-serving member and Chair of this Committee) took a major step forwards last July, when Robishaw organized at the DRAO a 2-day Workshop on the History of Canadian Radio Astronomy (<http://astroherzberg.org/radiohistory2016>). An extensive archive which Richard had collected relating to the history of Canadian radio astronomy, including audio interviews with the original players, is being made available to the authors, most of whom are Committee members. The timing of the Workshop fitted with planned visits to the DRAO by Miller Goss (NRAO) and Woody Sullivan (Washington), both highly accredited historians of radio astronomy after commencing as radio astronomers themselves. The Book project is now formally going ahead, and commitments from potential authors are being obtained. Martha Jarrell (widow) has been extremely helpful in preparing Rich Jarrell’s audio tapes for shared use by authors.

(2) *CASCA Archive.* The creation, installation and management of a physical archive of CASCA materials by Committee member Randall Rosenfeld is now an organized entity. Enquiries should be sent directly to him (rosenfel-at-chass.utoronto.ca). CASCA should again record its gratitude to the RASC for use of its own archive space for CASCA purposes (Rosenfeld is also the RASC Archivist).

DAO Heritage plate collection. The DAO plate-scanning programme had been halted as the original PDS needed expert attention, but was then set back substantially by the untimely passing of the PDS guru, Leslie Saddlemyer, in 2017 January. The DAO’s second PDS also needed expert work before it was fully ready to use. Ian Shelton was contracted for three months to work on the obvious problems, and a great deal of progress was achieved despite the extremely steep learning curve which he had to manage. The original PDS is now working reliably again and is able to digitize plates that take many hours of continuous operation to scan, while the second PDS is now fully operational for digitizing spectroscopic plates.

Looking Ahead

(1) CASCA would greatly benefit from a database of professional Canadian Astronomers. It should include routes to archives of (for instance) CVs, lists of students supervised, etc., particularly for the service of history or obituary writers.

(2) We mention again an intention to host (in 2018, at the DAO) an international Workshop on the management of astronomy's worldwide heritage of photographic plates and associated materials. Outcomes will include guidelines regarding (a) digitizing spectra and images to a quantitative standard, and (b) preparing searchable electronic databases of observatory plate archives. (Enquiries to Elizabeth.Griffin-at-nrc-cnrc.gc.ca).

Members' Activities in Brief

Percy will lead the Toronto Astronomical Heritage walking tour twice this summer.

Milone reports the construction in Nose Hill Park (north Calgary) of a new "medicine wheel" (an ancient traditional symbol for healing) of apparently non-traditional design. No information about any intended astronomical significance of its features has been given.

Shelton is leading an effort to preserve and extend the scientific and cultural legacy of the DDO by establishing programmes that include operating the 74-inch telescope both for Outreach and for scientific research.

Honours

Milone and Rosenfeld were among the recipients of the 2017 Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize for Historical Astronomy, awarded by the AAS HAD, for contributions to the Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers, 2nd edition, 2014 (Springer Verlag).

Committee Needs and Priorities

The Committee will need modest funding (a few \$K) to reimburse research costs, as and when incurred, in the preparation of Rich Jarrell's book, *The History of Canadian Radio Astronomy*.

Presentations

Percy: *Toronto's Astronomical Heritage*, Probus Club of North Oakville (2016 June 9), University College, U of T (Nov 3), and The Riverwood Conservancy, Mississauga (2017 April 11).

Rosenfeld: *Astronautical Founders: a 19th-Century Kingston Connection?*, Physics Colloquium, RMC, 2017.

Griffin, McCutcheon, Robishaw, Rosenfeld and Wall each gave presentations at the DRAO Workshop on the History of Canadian Radio Astronomy (<http://astroherzberg.org/radiohistory2016>).

Publications

R.E.M. Griffin, *Rescue old data before its too late*, *Nature* 545, 267, 2017.

R.A. Rosenfeld, *Time on Display in Civic Landscapes: Quebec City*, *JRASC* 110, 242, 2016

R.A. Rosenfeld, *The Records of the NRCs Associate Committee on Meteorites (ACOM), and the CSAs Meteorites and Impacts Advisory Committee (MIAC)*, *JRASC* 111, 30, 2017.

R.A. Rosenfeld, *ACOM & MIAC Calendar of Documents, RASC Archives, 2016*, https://www.rasc.ca/sites/default/files/ACOM-MIAC_Calendar_of_Documents_3.pdf

J.R. Percy, *The Little Campus (UTM) That Grew*, *JRASC* 110, 259, 2016.

J.R. Percy, *Happy Birthday, Canada!* *JRASC* 111, 32, 2017.