

Heritage Committee: Biennial Report to the Board, November 2019

| Member | Term | Affiliation |
|--------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| Elizabeth Griffin <i>Chair</i> | 2018–20 | DAO/NRC |
| William McCutcheon | 2019–22 | University of British Columbia |
| Eugene Milone | 2018–21 | University of Calgary |
| David Pantalony | 2018–21 | Science Curator, CSTM, Ottawa |
| John Percy | 2017–20 | University of Toronto |
| Tim Robishaw | 2018–21 | DRAO/NRC |
| Randall Rosenfeld | 2018–21 | 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 | 2018–21 | University of British Columbia |

Committee activities

Book (update): *The History of Canadian Radio Astronomy*.

This is still a work in progress; the submission date for the MS has been set at September 1 2020. The Editors-in-chief (Wall and Griffin) were the signatories to the contract with Springer.

Committee contribution to LRP2020

A White Paper was submitted by the Committee in September, highlighting the value of the new science that can be extracted when old data supplement more modern data. Our chapter made the point that analogue data have been stored on a variety of media and that, over time, data on those media are now becoming unreadable as the media themselves deteriorate. In fact, the same applies to data stored on primitive digital media too. Astronomy seems not to appreciate its good fortune in having access to so many potentially useable data from the distant past. The cost and labour of rescuing the information in those inherited data is trivial compared to the outlay already expended on years of telescope time, and is negligible compared to major international projects of present times. If no action is taken to attempt preservation, the advantages of having people who still remember how to handle those analogue data will vanish. Efforts must be directed as a matter of urgency at preserving those data and converting their information correctly into electronic formats.

IAU Symposium – application

A new application has been made to the IAU to hold a Symposium at Harvard in June 2021, on the topic of digitizing astronomy's rich heritage of photographic plates. Griffin is a co-applicant. June 2021 will see the completion of the mammoth Harvard project to digitize its 450,000 large-scale images dating back over 100 years. The application is strongly supported by IAU Division B ("Data and Documentation") as the Co-ordinating Division; support has also been sought from Divisions C (Education & Outreach), D (High Energy) and G (Stars). A similar application was made last year, and only narrowly missed being accepted.

Members' Activities in Brief

Presentations

Percy: *Toronto's Astronomical Heritage*, invited talk at the 2019 RASC–AAVSO joint General Assembly (June), and in Toronto Public Library (September).

Rosenfeld: *Who doth not see the measures of the Moon/Which thirteen times she danceth every year?/And ends her pavan thirteen times as soon?*, jointly with D.H. Levy, 2019 RASC–AAVSO joint General Assembly (June).

Rosenfeld: *Dorner Telescope Museum*, at the RASC–AAVSO joint General Assembly (June) and at the RASC Sudbury Centre (September).

Rosenfeld: *The RASC’s Dorner Telescope Museum*, at the ATS Convention, Sunspot, NM (October)

Rosenfeld: *Truth at the Eyepiece and Music of the Spheres*, at the Enchanted Skies Star Party, Magdalena, NM (October).

Publications

J.R. Percy, 2019, *Donald MacRae: An Under-Recognized Canadian Astronomer*, JRASC 113, 171–173

J.R. Percy, 2019, *Computing: Then and Now*, JRASC 113, 114–116

R.A. Rosenfeld, 2019, *The Republic of Letters*, JRASC 113, 157-160