

**AAS Historical Astronomy Division
Annual Report 2009**

Thomas Hockey, Chair

1 April 2010

This report describes the activities of the Historical Astronomy Division [HAD] in calendar year 2009.

Membership

HAD has 286 active members (including 57 division affiliates). Dues remain constant at \$8 for members and \$10 for affiliates.

Officers and Committee

Current officers of the Division are Thomas Hockey (University of Northern Iowa), Chair; Jarita C. Holbrook (University of Arizona), Vice Chair; and Joseph S. Tenn (Sonoma State University), Secretary-Treasurer. Committee members-at-large are Kevin Krisciunas (Texas A & M University) and James Lattis (University of Wisconsin). Sara J. Schechner (Harvard University) remains on the Committee as Past Chair. Terms of all, except the Secretary-Treasurer (who was reappointed to a four-year term ending in January 2013), run from January 2009 until January 2011.

An election for a new Vice Chair (who is also the Chair-elect) and two new Committee members is scheduled for summer 2010. The Nominating Committee consists of Sara Schechner (Chair), Daniel Green, and Alan Hirshfeld.

Finances

HAD finances are in good shape. At the end of 2009 HAD had \$14,860.10 in its account. The LeRoy E. Doggett Prize Fund had \$30,598.53. We appreciate those AAS members who continue to donate to HAD and to the Prize Fund.

Meetings

Although it has occasionally met separately, the HAD currently meets annually in conjunction with the January AAS meetings. We had an excellent meeting at Long Beach, in January 2009, together with the 213th AAS Meeting. There were two special HAD sessions, with 17 invited speakers, addressing thematic topics. These were followed by a session of 6 contributed papers and a poster session of 3 papers.

The first special session, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the astronomical telescope, was titled "History of the Telescope" and organized by Peter Abrahams and Sara Schechner. The second examined "Photometry: Past and Present." It was organized by Eugene F. Milone.

The HAD-sponsored Donald Osterbrock Memorial Lecture, introduced by Sara Schechner and presented by Donald Olson ("Van Gogh's Starry Nights, Lincoln's Moon, Shakespeare's Stars, and More: Tales of Astronomy in Art, History, and Literature"), was a well attended AAS plenary session. This special lecture was made possible by a generous gift made in memory of former HAD Chair and Doggett Prize recipient Donald E. Osterbrock. At a HAD "mini-banquet," organized by the HAD Secretary-Treasurer for later that evening, nearly thirty HAD members gathered at a local Greek restaurant to toast speaker Olson.

New officers took their seats at the annual HAD Business Meeting. The HAD Committee met the following day and appointed Joe Tenn to a full term as HAD Secretary-Treasurer. Tenn had previously been filling a vacated term.

Long Beach also saw the second-ever HAD Booth on the exhibit floor, staffed throughout the AAS meeting by 22 HAD members.

The Cultural Astronomy Summer School

In June, HAD sponsored the Cultural Astronomy Summer School [CASS]. An International Year of Astronomy activity, it took place as a splinter session prior to the 214th meeting of the AAS.

CASS explored the place of astronomy in human culture, including the history of astronomy, ethnoastronomy and archaeoastronomy, and topics such as time finding, calendars, and navigation by

the stars. The course aimed to enrich the current training of professional astronomers by giving them tools and themes to use in undergraduate education or public outreach programs.

CASS was directed by Thomas Hockey. Faculty included Stephen McCluskey, Joann Eisberg, and Ed Krupp. There were sixteen CASS students. Preference was given to graduate students in astronomy. Other CASS students were early-career astronomy professionals; still others were in-service astronomy teachers.

CASS concluded with a bus trip to the Mount Wilson Observatory. A two-hour tour was arranged by Harold A. McAlister (Mount Wilson Institute) and Gale D. Grant (Mount Wilson Observatory Association). It was conducted by Don Nicholson, son of Seth Nicholson (Mount Wilson astronomer 1915-1957) and expert on the history of the Observatory.

Each CASS student received a completion certificate. Informal activities included a spontaneous group lunch and a car trip to the Griffith Observatory.

Travel

In October, the HAD Chair was invited by AAS President John Huchra to attend a meeting of the AAS Executive Council. It was an opportunity for other Division representatives and the HAD Chair to share with Council members Division activities and concerns. In November, the HAD Chair visited College Park, Maryland, for a meeting of AIP member-society history chairs and liaisons. This inaugural conference was organized by Gregory Good, new Director of the Center for History of Physics.

Prizes

The HAD Prize Committee is chaired by the immediate past HAD Chair, Sara Schechner, and also includes the current HAD Chair, the HAD Secretary-Treasurer, and members-at-large Brenda Corbin (USNO retired) and Marc Rothenberg (NSF). The first biennial HAD Book prize will be awarded in 2011 "to the author(s) of a book judged to advance the field of the history of astronomy or to bring history of astronomy to light." Nominations have been solicited for books published in 2006 through 2009. Rules for the prize were established by the HAD Committee. The biennial

LeRoy E. Doggett Prize for Historical Astronomy will be awarded in 2012.

Publications

HAD News, edited by Joe Tenn, was published in April 2009 and October 2009 (both available at <http://www.aas.org/had/hadnews/>). Due to the efforts of Tenn, the HAD website now contains titles of all papers presented at all HAD meetings (and other history papers presented to the AAS) with links to abstracts, an almost complete set of *HAD News*, links to all obituaries published in the *BAAS*, and a selection of links to important online sources for history of astronomy.

Obituary Committee

The Historical Astronomy Division is responsible for the preparation of the memorials to deceased members of the AAS that are published annually in the *BAAS*. Twenty-one appeared in *BAAS* XC. Under the editorship of HAD Vice Chair Jarita Holbrook, 9 obituaries were submitted this past year. In this work, Holbrook was assisted by Virginia Trimble, appointed by the AAS Council as a member of the HAD Obituary Committee. The AAS makes all obituaries produced by HAD available online at the SAO/NASA ADS website.

Other

Portions of the *AAS Directory* having to do with HAD were updated. We are grateful to the American Astronomical Society for establishing a special registration rate for Division Affiliate members attending only the HAD portion of the January 2010 AAS meeting.