

AAS HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017/2018

Patrick Seitzer, Chair

Membership

HAD had 314 active members (including 23 affiliate members) at the end of the 2017 calendar year. Of that total, 103 had emeritus status and 5 were Junior members. We have one AAS Patron (Irene Osterbrock). The small number of Junior members is cause for concern, and the Division is looking for ways to increase the number of students and early career professionals involved in the history of astronomy.

Officers

The officers for calendar year 2017 were Patrick Seitzer (University of Michigan), Chair; Alan Hirshfeld (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth) Vice-Chair, and Kenneth Rumstay (Valdosta State University), Secretary-Treasurer. The HAD Committee members-at-large were Robert Stencel (Denver University) and Pedro Raposo (Adler Planetarium). Marc Rothenberg (National Science Foundation) served on the committee as Past Chair.

Finances

As of 2017 December 31, balances for the three HAD accounts were as follows:

General Account: \$24,751
Leroy E. Doggett Prize Fund: \$43,001
Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize Fund: \$29,733

Meetings

At the January 2018 AAS meeting in National Harbor 16 oral presentations were given in three oral sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday, and 6 posters were up on Tuesday. In the first oral session on Tuesday several of the talks were twice the normal AAS oral length in order to give the speakers time to discuss their topic in greater depth.

The special oral session on Monday afternoon was entitled *The Future of Astronomy's Archived Observations – An Open Discussion*. The topic was archiving and information retrieval from photographic plates.

Publications

The newsletter of the Historical Astronomy Division, *HAD News*, is published online in April and October of each year. The April 2017 issue (#89) and the October 2017 issue (#90) were prepared under the supervision of HAD Secretary-Treasurer Ken Rumstay.

Prizes

HAD has two endowed prizes. The Leroy E. Doggett Prize is given in even years to recognize lifetime achievement. The Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize, given in odd years, recognizes the

best book published in the history of astronomy during a three-year period. The recipient of the 2018 Doggett Prize was Sara Schechner (Harvard University), who gave a plenary talk entitled *Tangible Things of American Astronomy* at the National Harbor AAS meeting. The 2017 Osterbrock Book Prize was awarded to Thomas Hockey for *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers (2nd edition)*.

Obituary Committee

The Historical Astronomy Division is responsible for the preparation of memorials to deceased members of the American Astronomical Society. Recently member deaths are promulgated on the AAS electronic newsletter. Obituaries are available on the HAD website and are deposited in the archives of the American Institute of Physics. For further information, please see the attached report of the HAD Vice Chair Alan Hirshfeld.

HAD Student Travel Award

The HAD awards one or more travel awards of \$500 to undergraduate and graduate students to present at the winter AAS meeting. This year three travel awards were given to: Laura Caron (undergraduate at Georgetown University), Samantha Thompson (graduate student at Arizona State University), and Teresa Wilson (graduate student at Michigan Tech University).

This Month in Astronomical History

The AAS has requested that HAD do a monthly column describing some event in astronomical history that happened that month. It is based on a similar column for the American Physical Society. Since inception, graduate student Teresa Wilson has been writing the columns. Beginning in February 2018, she transitioned to be an editor for this column. A call was made to the HAD membership for volunteers to write columns, and a significant number were received with very interesting topics. Teresa serves as editor, and the HAD Executive Committee referees all columns before publishing.

We encourage Junior members, students, and early career professionals to write columns.

AstroGen

Although the Astronomy Genealogy Project, spearheaded by Joseph Tenn, is not an official activity of HAD, it is an effort which HAD believes is quite valuable. AstroGen will list as many as possible of the world's astronomers with their academic parents (thesis advisors); currently there are over 5500 entries..

Submitted 2018 April 19 by Patrick Seitzer, Chair, AAS Historical Astronomy Division,
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Annual Report on AAS Obituaries

Alan Hirshfeld, HAD Vice-Chair

April 11, 2018

Since last year's obituaries report, an additional 33 obituaries have been completed; 17 are currently in progress by an assigned author; 6 author requests await a response; and 87 obituaries remain outstanding (down from 109 as of May 2017). Crystal Tinch and I continue to work from a shared Google Docs spreadsheet, whose pages list various subsets of the obituaries, including those completed and those in need of completion. Names of recently deceased members are added by Crystal or me, following notification from colleagues. I progressively enter information as to the status of the obituary: author yet to be assigned; author request sent/pending; author assigned/obituary in progress; obituary completed/posted. Thanks to Mary Mathias, AAS Content Editor & Website Coordinator, the obituary website has been redesigned, which greatly improves its user search capability.

To assist in the writing of obituaries, I proposed an initiative to the HAD Committee to request advance biographical and professional information from AAS Emeritus members. However, the initiative is currently on hold pending finalization of an AAS review of its privacy and security policies, specifically relating to the solicitation, use, and storage of members' personal data.