

## AAS HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION (HAD)

### ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019-20

**Alan Hirshfeld, Chair**

**March 27, 2020**

#### Officers

The officers for 2019-20 are Alan Hirshfeld (UMass Dartmouth), Chair; Kevin Krisciunas (Texas A&M), Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect; and Kenneth Rumstay (Valdosta State University), Secretary-Treasurer. The HAD Committee members-at-large are Rebecca Charbonneau (Cambridge) and Phil Nicholson (Cornell). Patrick Seitzer (University of Michigan) serves on the Committee as Past Chair.

#### Membership

At the end of the 2019 calendar year, HAD had **490** active members, its second substantial annual increase in membership from its historical average. Of the 2019 total, there are 183 Full members, 126 with Emeritus status, 143 Undergraduate Student members (formerly Junior members), 13 Graduate Student members (formerly Associate members), and 23 Divisional Affiliate members. We attribute our growth, in part, to the presence of a HAD recruitment table at recent January AAS meetings. HAD will continue its efforts to attract Graduate and Undergraduate Student members, for whom there will be no HAD membership fee.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	<b>2019</b>
Full	145	133	132	140	139	134	181	<b>183</b>
Associate (now Graduate)	39	41	48	48	49	45	43	<b>13</b>
Junior (now Undergraduate)	12	19	17	8	8	5	46	<b>143</b>
Emeritus	70	72	77	86	96	103	119	<b>126</b>
Divisional Affiliate	35	27	24	23	25	23	20	<b>23</b>
Other	6	2	4	3	3	4	3	<b>2</b>
Total	307	294	302	308	320	314	412	<b>490</b>

## **Finances**

As of 2019 December 31, balances for the three HAD accounts were as follows:

General Account: \$24,321.92  
Leroy E. Doggett Prize Fund: \$39,257.29  
Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize Fund: \$28,948.98

There have been no significant changes from the prior-year amounts. An audited financial report for 2019 will appear in the forthcoming Spring 2020 issue of *HAD News*.

## **Meetings**

The Historical Astronomy Division met, in conjunction with the 235<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AAS, on January 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu. Abstracts of the presentations may be found at <https://aas.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/AAS235-Meeting-Abstracts.pdf>.

HAD's 2020 Doggett Prize winner Robert W. Smith delivered a Plenary Lecture, "From the Invention of Astrophysics to the Space Age: The Transformation of Astronomy 1860-1990," on Sunday afternoon; and on Monday, in celebration of the Royal Astronomical Society's bicentenary, invited speaker Josh Nall (Whipple Museum) gave an RAS-sponsored talk on the organizational politics behind the founding of the RAS.

On the program were two Special Sessions:

- HAD I: "Centennial of Eddington's Solar-Eclipse Tests of Einstein's General Relativity." Session organizer: Jay Pasachoff (Williams College)

Invited Speakers:

Jeffrey Crelinsten (Impact Group, Toronto) "Einstein's Jury: The Race to Test Relativity" (Princeton Univ. Press, 2016)

Daniel Kennefick (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville) "No Shadow of a Doubt: The 1919 Eclipse That Confirmed Einstein's Theory of Relativity" (Princeton Univ. Press, 2019)

- HAD V: "IAU-100: Celebrating One Hundred Years of International Astronomy." Session organizer: Ken Kellermann (NRAO)

Invited Speakers:

D. M. Baneke (Descartes Centre, Utrecht University) "The International Astronomical Union: from its first 100 years into the Next Century"

Virginia Trimble (UC Irvine) "Curtis-Shapley, Bondi, Woltjer, and Me: 100 years of the Universe and its Contents"

David DeVorkin (Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum) "The Two China Question"

Thirteen contributed talks were given on Sunday during the HAD II “Traditional History and Philosophy” and HAD III “Research in the 20th and 21st Centuries” sessions. Twelve historically themed posters and iPosters were presented during the all-day HAD IV session on Monday.

A splinter meeting of the Working Group on the Preservation of Astronomical Heritage (WGAH) was held following the HAD I Special Session on Saturday. Details about the group’s mission and current projects may be found at <https://aas.org/comms/working-group-preservation-astronomical-heritage-wgah>. WGAH submits its own annual report to the AAS.

The annual HAD Town Hall business meeting was held on Sunday afternoon. That evening, 37 HAD members and guests convened for our annual “minibanquet” at a local restaurant.

### **Publications and Website Updates**

The newsletter of the Historical Astronomy Division, *HAD News*, is published online in April and October of each year. The April 2019 and October 2019 issues were prepared and published under the supervision of HAD Secretary-Treasurer Ken Rumstay.

During the past year, a group of HAD members completed the historical essay, “History of HAD: Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The document has been posted on the HAD website as a supplement to Katherine Bracher’s earlier essay on HAD’s founding and early years.

In addition, a team of 11 HAD members submitted a State of the Profession White Paper to the National Academy of Sciences “Astro2020” Decadal Survey. The document has been posted on the HAD website.

### **Prizes**

HAD has two endowed prizes. The Leroy E. Doggett Prize is given in even years to recognize lifetime achievement in the history of astronomy field. 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 2020 Leroy E. Doggett Prize was awarded to Robert W. Smith (University of Alberta) in recognition of his scholarly achievements in the history of space science and history of cosmology during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as for his lengthy record of research mentorship to the next generation of science historians. Dr. Smith delivered a plenary lecture at the January 2020 AAS meeting entitled “From the Invention of Astrophysics to the Space Age: The Transformation of Astronomy 1860-1990.”

### **AAS Member Obituaries**

The HAD Vice-Chair is responsible for seeking authors to write obituaries of deceased AAS members. The AAS has moved all of the obituaries from aas.org to baas.aas.org when the main AAS website was relaunched this past year. The BAAS is hosted at MIT Press on the PubPub publishing platform. The past two years of obituaries have been migrated and reformatted on the new site; the remaining ~500 older obituaries will be migrated over the coming months. The new URL for the AAS obituaries website is <https://baas.aas.org/obituaries>.

As of January 2020, there were 107 deceased AAS members on the Master List needing obituaries; 32 of these have assigned writers. Most of the backlog is for people who died more than five years ago.

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For further information or to volunteer to write an obituary of a deceased AAS colleague, please contact HAD Vice-Chair Kevin Krisciunas ([krisciunas@physics.tamu.edu](mailto:krisciunas@physics.tamu.edu)).

### **HAD Student Travel Award**

The HAD awards one or more travel awards to undergraduate and graduate students to present at the winter AAS meeting. In 2019, 2 travel awards were granted for presentations at the January 2020 AAS meeting in Honolulu for a total of \$1500 plus free HAD meeting registration and complimentary meal at the HAD banquet. The awardees were Rebecca Charbonneau (Cambridge), “The Russian-American International Clock Test,” and Andrealuna Pizzetti (Clemson), “Unveiling Algol’s first recorded eclipses.”

### **“This Month in Astronomical History” Column**

Each month, as part of a series started in July 2016, the Historical Astronomy Division highlights in the *AAS News Digest* an important discovery or memorable event in the history of astronomy. This peer-reviewed column is among our division’s primary efforts to inform society colleagues about key events in the history of astronomy and, we hope, emphasize the relevance of historical studies in the field. HAD member Jason E. Ybarra (Bridgewater University) recently entered his second year as editor of the column. Dr. Ybarra is responsible for soliciting submissions, providing guidance to authors throughout the editorial process, editing their work to conform to the division’s strict standards of publication, and coordinating the peer review of submitted copy by members of our division. In addition, he set up a searchable, web-based archive of articles (<https://had.aas.org/resources/astro-history>) and wrote a style manual for contributors to the column.

The following columns were published during 2019:

- December 2019: [John Michell and His Dark Star](#)  
*Written by Jason Ybarra*
- November 2019: [The Greek Drama of 6 November 1919: In Defense of Arthur Stanley Eddington](#)  
*Written by Daniel Kennefick*
- October 2019: [50 Years of Charge-Coupled Devices](#)  
*Written by Sara Turriziani*
- August 2019: [Reflections on 100 Years of the International Astronomical Union](#)  
*Written by Virginia Trimble*
- July 2019: [Northern Arizona's Role in the Apollo Moon Missions](#)  
*Written by Kevin Schindler*
- June 2019: [Eratosthenes and the Circumference of the Earth](#)  
*Written by Jason E. Ybarra*
- May 2019: [The 1919 Solar Eclipse from the Standpoint of Astronomy](#)  
*Written by Daniel Kennefick*
- April 2019: [BeppoSAX and Gamma Ray Bursts](#)  
*Written by Virara Turriziani*
- March 2019: [Astronomy Meets the Periodic Table](#)  
*Written by Virginia L. Trimble*
- February 2019: [400 Years of Kepler's Third Law](#)  
*Written by Jason E. Ybarra*

- January 2019: [Galileo's Discovery of the Moons of Jupiter](#)  
*Written by Philip D. Nicholson*

### **HAD Bylaws**

A thorough review of the HAD Bylaws was completed, and proposed amendments were forwarded to the AAS Board of Trustees for their recommendations. The various changes bring the HAD Bylaws into accord with updated AAS Bylaws, as well as clarify criteria for Affiliate Membership and HAD voting procedures and timelines. Upon approval by the BOT, the amended Bylaws will be transmitted to the HAD membership for final approval.

### **AstroGen**

Upon completion, the Astronomy Genealogy Project (AstroGen), spearheaded by Joseph Tenn, will list the world's astronomers with their academic parents (thesis advisors); currently there are approximately 27,000 theses recorded internationally. The database is currently being transferred from spreadsheet to searchable online format, as described by the poster presentation during the January 2020 AAS meeting: "Introducing AstroGen Online." Joe Tenn (Sonoma State), A. H. Rots (CfA, Harvard). HAD has agreed to contribute toward the completion of the project, which has been supported by a grant from the AAS.

Submitted 2020 March 27 by Alan Hirshfeld, Chair, AAS Historical Astronomy Division, UMass Dartmouth, [ahirshfeld@umassd.edu](mailto:ahirshfeld@umassd.edu)