

AAS HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION (HAD) ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018

ALAN HIRSHFELD, CHAIR

Membership

At the end of the 2018 calendar year, HAD had 412 active members, a significant increase from its prior six-year average membership of about 310 members. The total included 20 Affiliate and 43 Associate members, the latter including those in the new Graduate Student membership category. Of the 2018 total, 119 had Emeritus status and 46 were Junior members (now Undergraduate Student members), up from just 5 Junior members the previous year. HAD will continue its efforts to attract Graduate and Undergraduate Student membership, for whom there will be no HAD membership fee.

In 2018, HAD member Virginia Trimble was elected by the AAS Trustees as Patron of the AAS. (<https://aas.org/posts/news/2018/02/virginia-trimble-honored-aas-and-iau>) HAD and AAS Patron Irene Hansen Osterbrock passed away during the year.

Officers

The officers for calendar year 2018 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.

Officers starting in January 2019 are Alan Hirshfeld (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth), Chair; Kevin Krisciunas (Texas A&M University), Vice-Chair; and Kenneth Rumstay (Valdosta State University), Secretary-Treasurer. The HAD Committee members-at-large are Rebecca Charbonneau (University of Cambridge) and Philip Nicholson (Cornell University). Patrick Seitzer (University of Michigan) serves on the Committee as Past Chair.

Finances

As of 2018 December 31, balances for the three HAD accounts were as follows:

General Account: \$25,067
Leroy E. Doggett Prize Fund: \$40,638
Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize Fund: \$29,304

An audited financial report for 2018 will appear in the spring 2019 issue of *HAD News*.

Meetings

The Historical Astronomy Division met (in conjunction with the 233rd meeting of the AAS) on January 6th through the 8th at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle. Twenty-two oral presentations were made in four sessions, and six HAD posters (three of them in the new

iPoster format) were available for viewing on Monday.

The meeting began on Sunday afternoon with a special session titled *The Spitzer Observatory: The evolution of a space mission from initial idea, through years of competition and debate, followed by arduous solution of technical problems before launch and the acquisition of novel astronomical data*. Organized by longtime HAD member Martin Harwit, the session featured invited talks by Renee Rottner (University of California) and by David Gallagher and Michael Werner (both of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory). This excellent session was extremely well-attended, with over seventy people in the audience.

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

The Monday morning and afternoon (HAD II and III) sessions offered seventeen contributed talks, arranged roughly in chronological order by topic. The annual HAD Town Hall was held on Monday afternoon, between the hours of 1:00 and 2:00.

The six HAD IV poster papers (three conventional, three iPosters) were available for viewing during the entire day. After the evening poster session, thirty-three HAD members and guests convened for our annual "minibanquet" at a local restaurant.

HAD member David DeVorkin (Smithsonian Institution) had been scheduled to deliver a plenary lecture in commemoration of the sesquicentennial of George Ellery Hale's birth; however, due to the Federal government shutdown at the time, David was unable to attend and his colleague Marc Rothenberg gave the lecture in his place.

At the HAD V session on Tuesday morning, our Osterbrock Book Prize winners, Stella Cottam and Wayne Orchiston (see below), provided a review of the research that went into the preparation of their book. Then Philip Nicholson, Editor-in-Chief of the forthcoming third edition of the *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, took the stage to ask members for their advice in the book's preparation.

Abstracts of the HAD oral presentations and posters from the Seattle meeting can be found at https://had.aas.org/membership/had_meetings/2019.

Publications

The newsletter of the Historical Astronomy Division, *HAD News*, is published online in April and October of each year. The April 2018 issue (#91) and the October 2018 issue (#92) 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 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 2019 Osterbrock Book Prize was awarded to Stella Cottam and Wayne Orchiston for their 2015 publication *Eclipses, Transits, and Comets of the Nineteenth Century: How America's Perception of the Skies Changed*.

AAS Member Obituaries

The HAD Vice-Chair is responsible for seeking authors to write obituaries of deceased AAS members. These obituaries are posted to the AAS website (<https://aas.org/obituaries>) and the online BAAS and are deposited in the archives of the American Institute of Physics. The web page "Outstanding AAS Member Obituaries" <https://had.aas.org/obituaries/outstanding-obits> was updated in February 2019.

For the years 2017/2018:

Obituaries completed: 57/49
Obituaries in progress (authors assigned): 15/21
Author requests pending: 5/7
Obituaries not yet assigned authors: 94/73

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).

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 2017, 3 such travel awards were granted for presentations at the January 2018 AAS meeting at National Harbor for a total of \$1374.11. The awardees were Laura Caron (Georgetown University), Samantha Thompson (Arizona State University), and Teresa Wilson (Michigan Technological University).

In 2018, there were no applications for the student travel award for presentation at the 2019 AAS meeting in Seattle.

"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. An archive of these columns may be found online at <https://had.aas.org/resources/astro-history>. In February 2019, editorship of the column passed from Teresa Wilson to Jason E. Ybarra (Bridgewater University), who periodically issues a call to the HAD membership for volunteers to write columns. He may be reached at historycol@aas.org. The HAD Executive Committee referees all columns before publication.

HAD ByLaws

The HAD ByLaws were reviewed for compatibility with the AAS ByLaws. A few changes have been suggested regarding membership and who can serve on the HAD Committee. The proposed

ByLaws revisions will be transmitted to the HAD membership for final approval.

AAS Email Transition

On March 28, 2019, the AAS transitioned to a new email system based on Microsoft Office365. From the HAD perspective, this transition did not go smoothly. It took considerable effort by the Chair and Past Chair to setup the correct email addresses and forwarding. Our main email lists hadcomm@aad.org and hadmembers@aad.org are still not functioning as of date.

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 approximately 27,000 theses recorded internationally. Joseph Tenn (Sonoma State University) gave an update on the project at the AAS Seattle meeting; he is seeking volunteers to compile data for Germany, Italy, and Asian countries. The database will ultimately be accessible from the AAS website.

Submitted 2019 April 12 by Alan Hirshfeld, Chair, AAS Historical Astronomy Division, UMass Dartmouth, ahirshfeld@umassd.edu