

AAS HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION (HAD)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020-21

Kevin Krisciunas, Chair

March 25, 2021

Election

An election was held in October, 2020, to choose a new Vice-Chair and two Committee members-at-large. The Vice-Chair automatically advances to become HAD Chair after two years. Terry Oswalt was elected the new Vice-Chair. Amy Oliver and Samantha Thompson were elected to the positions of Committee member-at-large.

Officers

The officers for 2020-21 are Kevin Krisciunas (Texas A&M), Chair; Terry Oswalt (Emery-Riddle Aeronautical University), Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect; and Kenneth Rumstay (Valdosta State University), Secretary-Treasurer. The HAD Committee members-at-large are Amy Oliver (NRAO) and Samantha Thompson (National Air and Space Museum). Alan Hirshfeld (UMass Dartmouth) serves on the Committee as Past Chair. An HAD “Standard Operating Procedures” manual was completed, detailing the duties and timeline of activities for the various officers.

Finances

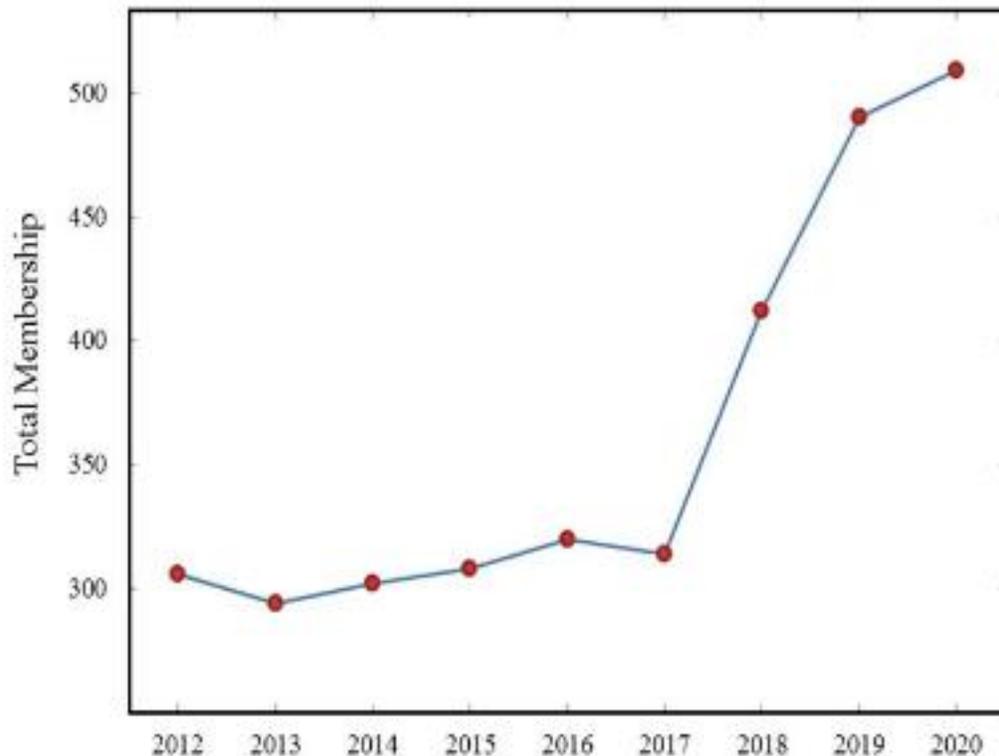
As of 2021 January 11, balances for the three HAD accounts were as follows:

General Account: \$36,952.63
Leroy E. Doggett Prize Fund: \$51,385.62
Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize Fund: \$41,224.53

These include rather impressive increases from the previous year’s amounts. An audited financial report for 2020 will appear in the forthcoming Spring 2021 issue of *HAD News*. We note that Don Osterbrock’s heirs have told us that they are donating any royalties from his books to the Osterbrock Book Prize Fund.

Membership

By December 31, 2020, HAD had **509** active members, a slight increase over the previous year’s total (see graph below, which gives the membership each year on December 31). At the time of this writing there were 460 members. The difference is most likely due to members forgetting to renew and pay their dues. The present breakdown is as follows: 159 Full members, 129 Full Emeritus members, 52 Graduate Student members (formerly Associate members), 46 Undergraduate Student members (formerly Junior members), 18 Divisional Affiliate members, and one Patron member. Other categories of Affiliate members include Alumni (1), Amateur (32), Educator (15), and International (2). Five staff are also regarded as HAD members. HAD will continue its efforts to attract Graduate and Undergraduate Student members, for whom there is no HAD membership fee.



Meetings

The Historical Astronomy Division met, in conjunction with the 237th meeting of the AAS, on January 11-13, 2021, as part of an online/virtual meeting. Abstracts of the presentations may be found at <https://had.aas.org/membership/had.meetings/2021>.

In the HAD I session on January 11 we had three invited talks:

David DeVorkin - Confirming that Stars behave according to the Laws of Physics - A Centennial Remembrance

Virginia Trimble – They said it couldn’t be done

Connemara Doran - Questions of Cosmology “so delicate, so rich, so precise”

The HAD Town Hall was held on January 11, after which HAD’s 2021 Osterbrock Book Prize winner Ileana Chinnici gave a talk based on her book about Angelo Secchi.

Six contributed talks were presented on Tuesday, January 12 in the HAD II session. Five iPosters were presented on Wednesday, January 13 in the HAD IV session.

On the program was one Special Session (Tuesday, January 12):

- HAD III: Voyager Probe’s “Golden Record” (meeting organizer- Jay Pasachoff)

Invited Speakers:

Jay Pasachoff: History of Astronomy: the Voyager Golden Record in Intellectual History

Jon Lomberg: A Billion Years Minus 43; the Voyager Record; also, Memories of Viking

Sarah May: Between time capsules and tweets -- the cultural context of the Golden Record

Emer Reynolds: "The Farthest": a Feature Film celebrating the Voyager Mission

Nick Oberg: The Voyagers Far into the Future

Given that the latest AAS/HAD meeting was a virtual meeting that took place online, there was no HAD "minibanquet" this year.

Publications and Website Updates

The newsletter of the Historical Astronomy Division, *HAD News*, is published online in the Spring and Fall of each year. HAD members are alerted to each new issue as it is posted. The Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 issues were prepared and published 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 2021 Osterbrock Book Prize was awarded to Dr. Ileana Chinnici (Osservatorio Astronomico di Palermo) for her book *Decoding the Stars: A Biography of Angelo Secchi, Jesuit and Scientist*. Dr. Chinnici delivered a talk after the Town Hall on Monday, January 11, 2021, as part of the virtual AAS meeting.

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. All of the obituaries that were on a previous site have been migrated and reformatted on the new site. The URL for the AAS obituaries website is <https://baas.aas.org/obituaries>.

As of March 2021, there were 99 deceased AAS members on the Master List needing obituaries; 29 of these have assigned writers. Most of the backlog is for people who died more than five years ago.

For further information or to volunteer to write an obituary of a deceased AAS colleague, please contact

HAD Vice-Chair Terry Oswalt (oswaltt1@erau.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. No travel awards were given in 2020, as the winter meeting was online only.

“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 finished his second year as editor of the column. He has been succeeded by Michael Marotta, an amateur astronomer affiliated with the Astronomical League. The editor 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, there is a searchable, web-based archive of articles (<https://had.aas.org/resources/astro-history>), which also has a link to author’s guidelines for contributors to the column.

The following columns were published during 2020:

- December 2020: [1200 Years of Algebra](#)
Written by Dareen Awwad and Jason E. Ybarra
- November 2020: [Sedna: In the Depths of the Solar System](#)
Written by Emily McMahon
- October 2020: [The First Hertzsprung-Russell Diagram](#)
Written by Michael E. Marotta
- September 2020: [Bayer's Uranometria](#)
Written by Jason E. Ybarra
- August 2020: [America's First Woman Astronomer: Maria Mitchell \(1818-1889\)](#)
Written by Jascin N. Leonardo Finger
- June 2020: [James Christy Discovers Charon](#)
Written by Michael Marotta
- May 2020: [First Recorded Perihelion Of Halley's Comet](#)
Written by Jason E. Ybarra
- April 2020: [The "Remarkable" Eclipse of 1894](#)
Written by Thomas Hockey
- March 2020: [The First Recorded Scientist](#)
Written by Sethanne Howard
- January 2020: [The Birth of Stellafane](#)
Written by Kristine Larsen

HAD Bylaws

A thorough review of the HAD Bylaws was completed, and proposed amendments were approved by the AAS Board of Trustees and ratified by the HAD membership in last October's election. 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.

AstroGen

The Astronomy Genealogy Project (AstroGen), spearheaded by Joseph Tenn, lists many of the world's astronomers, both past and present, with their academic parents (thesis advisors); currently there are approximately 33,000 theses recorded internationally. The online searchable database can be accessed at <https://astrogen.aas.org/front/index.php>. HAD contributed \$500 toward the completion of the project, whose earlier phases had been supported by a grant from the AAS.

Submitted 2020 March 25 by Kevin Krisciunas, Chair, AAS Historical Astronomy Division, Texas A&M University, krisciunas@physics.tamu.edu.