# The Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society

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We report on the activities of the Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society. We meet regularly together with the main January meeting of the American Astronomical Society (most recently in 2018 at National Harbor, Maryland) and occasionally with the Divisions (Solar Physics; Planetary Sciences; High-Energy Astrophysics) or at the spring main meeting. We also have a semiannual newsletter, which contains news relevant to the history of astronomy and book reviews. We "exist for the purpose of advancing interest in topics relating to the historical nature of astronomy. By historical astronomy we include the history of astronomy; what has come to be known as archaeoastronomy; and the application of historical records to modern astrophysical problems." We award the Doggett Prize for career achievement and the Osterbrock Prize for a book. The vice-chair supervises attaining the obituaries of deceased AAS members.

# **About HAD**

"The Division shall exist for the purpose of advancing interest in topics relating to the historical nature of astronomy. By historical astronomy we include the history of astronomy; what has come to be known as archaeoastronomy; and the application of historical records to modern astrophysical problems. Meetings shall be organized to promote adequate discussion among participants and shall attempt to provide a forum for discussion of recent developments in these areas. The Division will assist the Society in the commemoration of important historical anniversaries and in the archival preservation of current materials of importance to future historians of astronomy."

### **History of the Historical Astronomy Division**

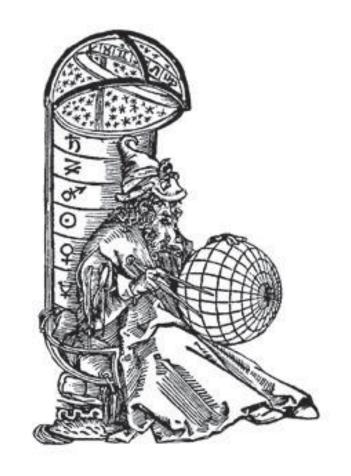
[This article by Katherine Bracher first appeared in The American Astronomical Society's First Century, David H. DeVorkin, ed. (Washington, DC: The AAS, 1999), pp. 277-286.] https://had.aas.org/resources/hadhistory

"Dear Colleague," the letter read, "We have reason to believe that you may be interested in becoming a 'charter member' of the new Historical Astronomy Division (HAD) of the American Astronomical Society (AAS)..." Dated April 24, 1980, it went on to describe the goals of the new Division, how to join, and was signed by Kenneth Brecher for the Organizing Committee. A year and a half later the HAD boasted 267 members and held the first of its (so far) 23 successful meetings. But this newest Division of the AAS had been in the planning stages for more than a year before the Council approved it and it began to solicit members.

The original impetus for the founding of a Historical Astronomy Division came from conversations between John A. Eddy, Owen Gingerich, and Kenneth Brecher during the fall of 1978, when Eddy was on leave from the University of Colorado and spending some time at the Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Mass. Each of the three had interests in the history of astronomy, and they began to realize that these interests were shared by other members of the AAS. Gingerich had already published extensively in traditional history of astronomy, especially on Copernicus. Eddy had investigated historical records of sunspot activity (rediscovering what is now known as the Maunder Minimum)

and was also interested in the Native American medicine wheels as possible astronomical constructions. Brecher's interests lay in the areas of supernovae and stellar evolution (such topics as the reported red color of Sirius in antiquity). But main-stream astronomers, by and large, regarded such topics as marginal to their concerns.

ears	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary-Treasurer	Committee
2017-2019	Patrick Seitzer	Allan Hirschfeld	Ken Rumstay	Pedro Raposo
				Robert Stencel
2016-2017	Marc Rothenberg	Patrick Seitzer	Ken Rumstay	Brenda Corbin
				Linda French
2015-2016	Marc Rothenberg	Patrick Seitzer	Jay Holberg	Brenda Corbin
				Linda French
2013-2015	Jay Pasachoff	Marc Rothenberg	Joseph Tenn	Linda French
				Wayne Orchiston
2011-2013	Jarita Holbrook	Jay Pasachoff	Joseph Tenn	Richard Jarrell
				Wayne Osborn
2009-2011	Thomas Hockey	Jarita Holbrook	Joseph Tenn	Kevin Krisciunas
				James Lattis
2007-2009	Sara Schechner	Thomas Hockey	Joseph Tenn	Jay Holberg
				Eugene Milone
2005-2007	Donald Yeomans	Sara Schechner	Ronald Brashear	Peter Abrahams
				Daniel Green
2003-2005	Thomas Williams	Donald Yeomans	Ronald Brashear	John Briggs
				Alan Hirshfeld
2001-2003	Barbara Welther	Thomas Williams	Ronald Brashear	Brenda Corbin
				Thomas Hockey
1999-2001	Virginia Trimble	Barbara Welther	Thomas Hockey	Sara Schechner
				Stephen McCluskey



#### The Astronomer, a 1500 woodcut by Albrecht Dürer.

#### **Obituaries**

Obituaries of Society members are published as a tribute and for future historians of science. The Vice-Chair of the Historical Astronomy Division (HAD) is responsible for commissioning and compiling the obituaries. We depend entirely on the network of astronomical colleagues, including astronomy department and observatory administrators, for notification when an astronomer has died.



In This Issue
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From the Vice-Chair

From the Secretary-Treasure

The HAD 2017 Obituary Report

Assessment of the Abt Archive

HAD Session at the October DPS Meeting

Minutes of the January 2018 Town Hall

# The LeRoy E. Doggett Prize for Historical Astronomy

The Historical Astronomy Division awards the LeRoy E. Doggett Prize biennially to an individual who has significantly influenced the field of the history of astronomy by a careerlong effort.

Recipients 2018: Sara J. Schechner 2016: Albert van Helden 2014: F. Richard Stephenson 2012: Woodruff T. Sullivan, III 2000: Owen Gingerich 2010: Michael J. Crowe 2008: David H. DeVorkin

H-A-D NEWS

The Newsletter of the Historical Astronomy Division

of the American Astronomical Society

Number 91 \* April 2018

The January 2018 HAD Meeting

Ken Rumstay, Valdosta State University

The Historical Astronomy Division met (in

conjunction with the 231" meeting of the American

Astronomical Society) January 8th through the 10th

at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention

Center in Maryland, just a short distance from

Washington DC. Sixteen oral presentations were

made in the course of three sessions on Tuesday

and Wednesday, while six posters were available

Future of Astronomy's Archived Observations - An

Sara Schechner accepts the 2018 LeRoy E. Doggett Prize A scene from Monday's special session The Future of

from HAD Past Chair Marc Rothenberg. Sara presented her Astronomy's Archived Observations - An Open Discussion.

prize lecture, Tangible Things of American Astronomy, on Following an informative panel discussion, questions from

introduced the Executive Committee. He began the all three accounts.

session by summarizing earlier discussion about

HAD meeting dates. We have decided to continue

our tradition of having paper sessions and our

annual Town Hall in conjunction with winter

meetings of the American Astronomical Society.

That would not preclude our having HAD sessions

in conjunction with other meetings, and we plan to

have one at the June 2018 AAS meeting in Denver

(with a guided tour of the historic Chamberlin

Observatory). We also hope to have a HAD

session at the October meeting of the Division of

Planetary Sciences, to be held in Knoxville. The

desirability of having historical talks at meetings

member from each division join HAD and serve as

As Vice-Chair, Alan Hirshfeld is responsible for

providing obituaries of deceased AAS members;

these are posted to the HAD website and the

online Bulletin of the American Astronomical

Society. When possible we rely on colleagues of

the deceased to provide these, but Alan has taken

which we may attract more youngsters to our fold.

HAD membership statics (2013-2017)

HAD NEWS April 2018

After a brief delay caused by technical difficulties 
The tables below provide a detailed account of

(which plagued much of the AAS meeting), Pat

HAD's financial state. They indicate that we are in

Seitzer welcomed all those in attendance and excellent fiscal shape, with increasing balances in

Secretary-Treasurer Ken Rumstay presented data to HAD during the past year: Daniel Brocious,

the end of 2017 our total membership stands at the end of 2017 our total membership stands at

the end of 2017 our total include with this time last
314, a slight decline compared with this time last
Otto Franz, Donald Groom, Amold Heiser, Alan

year. During the past five years our numbers have year. During the past five years our numbers have

year. During the past five years on the following remained steady, as documented in the following Kulsrud, Marie Lukac, Stephen McCluskey, David

remained steady, as documented in junior table. An alarming trend is the decrease in junior table. An alarming trend is the decrease in junior table.

members; we are considering various means by Woody Sullivan, Virginia Trimble, Tom Williams,

\$18,129.99 \$17,553.73 \$20,543.25

4,505.54 5,069.95 6,030.31

\$35,637.99 \$34,767.75 \$37,234.13

\$20,157.38 \$21,121.44 \$24,852.34

886.23 47.35 1,618.3.

LeRoy E. Doggett Prize account (2015-2017)

individuals who had made financial contributions

Robert Wing, Adolf Witt, and Donald Yeomans.

Those attending the Town Hall also heard progress

reports from Jarita Holbrook on the AAS Oral

History Project, and from Jennifer Bartlett (Chair

of the Working Group for the Preservation of

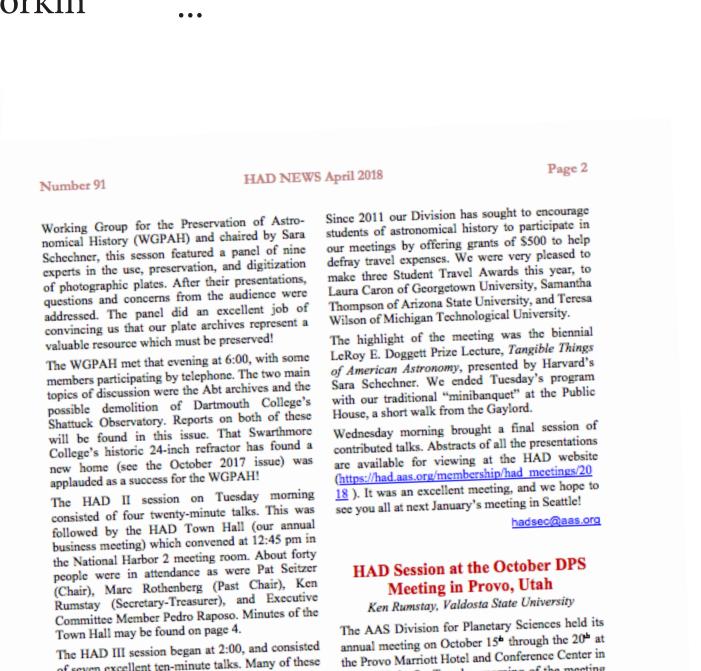
Astronomical History) regarding the fate of the

Abt archives. Their reports on these two important

HAD initiatives may be found on pages six and

5,081.80 2,080.43 1,822.80

2006: Steven J. Dick 2004: Michael Hoskin 2002: Donald E. Osterbrock 1998: Curtis Wilson



Buratti and Paul R. Weissman), Iapetus: Tenth Former HAD Secretary-Treasurer Joe Tenn was spotted at the

AAS Donors, Sponsors and 40+E reception on Wednesday evening. So were many other HAD members!

> HAD NEWS April 2018 The HAD 2017 Obituary Report Doolittle, Robert F. II Nather, R. Edward Alan Hirshfeld, U. Mass. at Dartmouth Drake, Michael J. Neukum, Gerhard Since last year's obituaries report, an additional thirty-three obituaries have been completed; Ostro, Steven J. seventeen are currently in progress by an assigned Peregrine, David S. author; six author requests await a response; and Plavec, Mirek J. 87 obituaries remain outstanding (down from 109 Pomerant, Martin as of May 2017). Crystal Tinch and I continue to Ptak, Roger L. work from a shared Google Docs spreadsheet, whose pages list various subsets of the obituaries, Raimond, Ernst Rakos, Karl D. including those completed and those in need of completion. Names of recently deceased members Rasool, S. Ichtiaque are added by Crystal or me, following notification Reichert, Gail A. from colleagues. I progressively enter information Richards, Mercedes as to the status of the obituary: author yet to be Roberts, George C assigned; author request sent/pending; author assigned/obituary in progress; obituary completed/ posted. I would like to express my thanks to Mary Roemer, Elizabeth Mathias, the AAS's former Content Editor and Website Coordinator: the obituary website has Greyber, Howard D. been redesigned, which greatly improves its user Guttman, Paul H. Ruf f le, Paul M. search capability. Haddock, Fred T. Schif f macher, Edward R To assist in the writing of obituaries, I proposed an Hansen, J. Richard Shorthill, Richard W. initiative to the HAD Committee to request Hedeman, E. Ruth Steinlin, Uli advance biographical and professional information Hobbs, Robert W. from AAS Emeritus members. However, the Sternglass, Ernest J Horak, Henry Georgi initiative is currently on hold pending finalization Stone, Sidney N. of an AAS review of its privacy and security policies, specifically relating to the solicitation, Juda, Michael Sturch, Conrad R. use, and storage of members' personal data. Svestka, Zdenek F. We would like to ask for your assistance in Tooper, Robert F. reducing our backlog of outstanding obituaries! If you could provide at least a brief description of the Kent, Jack T. Upton, Edward Key Lloyd life and career of any of the individuals listed at Kliore, Arvydas J. Van Steenberg, Michael E Koch, David G. Varadi, Ferenc Kohman, Truman P. Submitted April 11, 2018 Warwick, James Walte Kowal, Charles T. Crishnaswamy, Sumant Kundu, Mukul R. Legg, Thomas H. Lin, Robert P. Maf f ei, Paolo

> > Margarve, Thomas E.

Mitalas, Romas

Namba, Osamu

Marlborough, John Michael Young, Arthur

McNamara, D. Harold Zelle, Joseph F.

Merilan, Michael Preston Zapolsky, Harold S

2016 Transit of Mercury and the Solar Parallax

lährken; and Glenn Schneider). Abstracts of these

would like to thank Jay Pasachoff for taking the

AAS divisions in the near future.

sentations may be viewed on the DPS website

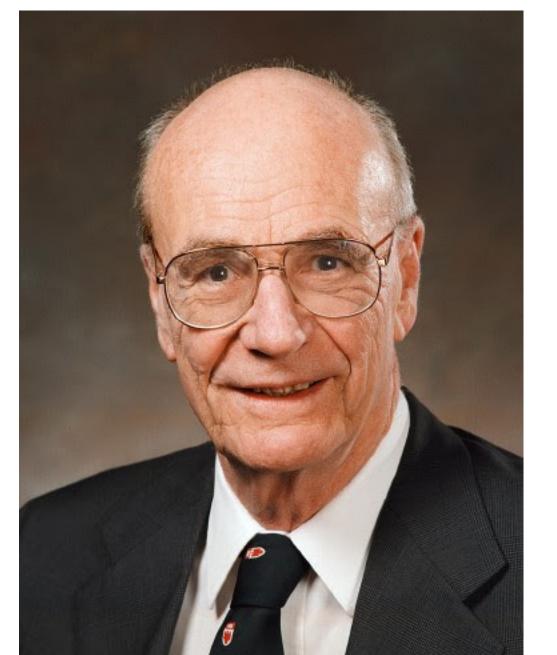












will be necessary for their retention. The assessors

noticed spiders in the units and evidence of

Historians of science would value the contents.

The reviewers' reports, the authors' responses, and

the editors' mediation of those discussions show

how the editorial process shaped the resulting science. Communications from authors and

reviewers provide glimpses into their personalities,

document other events in their lives, identify the

# The Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize for Historical Astronomy

The Historical Astronomy Division awards the Donald E. Osterbrock Book Prize biennially 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.

2017: Thomas Hockey for Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers (2nd edition)

2015: Barbara J. Becker for Unravelling Starlight: William and Margaret Huggins and the Rise of the New Astronomy 2013: Harvey M. Bricker and Victoria R. Bricker for Astronomy in the Maya Codices

2011: Nathan Sivin for Granting the Seasons: The Chinese Astronomical Reform of 1280, With a Study of Its Many Dimensions and a Translation of its Records

preliminary edits of transcripts and we would like and public officials and inviting people to sign a

astroholbrook@gmail.com. multi-disciplinary research and educational

https://goo.gl/jDruf8 , along with a history of the

At the January 2018 AAS meeting in National

Harbor, MD, I brought the observatory issue to the

attention of the Working Group for the

Preservation of Astronomical Heritage (WGPAH)

and the Historical Astronomy Division (HAD).

to enlist a few more. If you would be interested in petition. This online petition may be found at

