

INTER-DIVISION IV-V-IX / WORKING GROUP HISTORIC RADIO ASTRONOMY

CHAIR

Wayne Orchiston

VICE-CHAIR

Kenneth I. Kellermann

MEMBERS

**Rodney D. Davies, Suzanne V. Débarbat,
Masaki Morimoto, Slava Slysh,
Govind Swarup, Hugo van Woerden,
Jasper V. Wall, Richard Wielebinski**

TRIENNIAL REPORT 2006 - 2009

1. Introduction

The Working Group was formed at the IAU XXV General Assembly in Sydney, 2003, as a joint initiative of Commissions 40 *Radio Astronomy* and Commission 41 *History of Astronomy*, in order to assemble a master list of surviving historically-significant radio telescopes and associated instrumentation found worldwide, and document the technical specifications and scientific achievements of these instruments. In addition, it would maintain an on-going bibliography of publications on the history of radio astronomy, and monitor other developments relating to the history of radio astronomy (including the deaths of pioneering radio astronomers).

Wayne Orchiston (Australia) and Ken Kellermann (USA) were appointed as the WG chair and vice-chair, respectively, at the WG Business Meeting at IAU XXVI General Assembly in Prague, 2006, where the new WG Committee and terms of reference for 2006 - 2009 were finalized.

The membership list of the WG contains the names of about one hundred astronomers who are active in the history of radio astronomy field or interested in it. More than 30 WG members actively researched aspects of radio astronomical history during 2005 - 2007.

2. National master lists of surviving historically-significant radio telescopes

WG members actively worked on national master lists for Australia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the USA, and a number of research papers were prepared documenting individual instruments or instruments and research associated with specific radio astronomy field stations.

3. Preservation of historically-significant radio telescopes and associated relics

Stanford University recently demolished the five 60 ft antennas at their field station off Highway 280 (California), but the concrete piers there that many well-known radio astronomers carved their names on were preserved for posterity.

4. Publications on the history of radio astronomy

A list of papers and books on the history of radio astronomy published during 2005-2008 is scheduled to appear in the July 2008 issue of the *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*. Meanwhile, this journal continues to include history of radio astronomy papers in every issue.

5. The IAU XXVI General Assembly, Prague 2006

At the Prague General Assembly of the IAU the WG Committee held a Business Meeting, a one-day science meeting devoted to *The History of European Radio Astronomy* and a half-day Science Meeting on *Radio Astronomy Fifty Years Ago: From Field Stations to 'Big Science'*. Papers presented at the European Radio Astronomy meeting subsequently were published in a special issue of *Astronomische Nachrichten*, edited by Richard Wielebinski, Ken Kellermann & Wayne Orchiston.

6. The end of an era

The WG continued to record the deaths of pioneering radio astronomers and report these in its Progress Reports published in the *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage* (Orchiston et al. 2004, 2005, 2006).

7. Graduate studies in history of radio astronomy

A notable recent development has been the introduction of an off-campus part-time PhD program in history of astronomy at James Cook University, Townsville, Australia. Currently, six students are researching aspects of early Australian and U.S. radio astronomy, supervised by Wayne Orchiston, Bruce Slee, Richard Strom and Richard Wielebinski. In addition, one student (supervised by Alastair Gunn and Wayne Orchiston) completed a U.K. history of radio astronomy Masters research project.

Wayne Orchiston
chair of the Working Group

References

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