

COMMISSION 41

HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

HISTOIRE DE L'ASTRONOMIE

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COMMISSION 41 WORKING GROUPS

Div. XII / Commission 41 WG Archives

Div. XII / Commission 41 WG Historical Instruments

Div. XII / Commission 41 WG Transits of Venus

PROCEEDINGS BUSINESS MEETING on 22 August 2006

1. Opening of meeting

On Tuesday 22 August 2006 approximately 40 people attended the Commission 41 *History of Astronomy* Business Meeting at the IAU XXVI General Assembly in Prague. Commission president Alex Gurshtein opened the meeting, welcoming the commission members and calling for a moment of silence for those members who passed away in the last triennium. David DeVorkin was appointed recording secretary for the meeting, with Steven Dick as the scrutineer of the ballot. A moment of silence was then observed in the memory of members departed over the last triennium, including: Jerzy Dobrzycki (Poland), Robert Duncan (Australia), Mohammad Edalati (Iran), Philip Morrison (USA), John Perdix (Australia), Neil Porter (Ireland), Gibson Reaves (USA), Brian Robinson (Australia), and Raymond E. White (USA).

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the Sydney meeting were informally approved but not seconded. Clive Ruggles requested that section 4.1, ("4.1 New C41 Members") required alterations that are still in progress since many discrepancies among the various listings are still unreconciled. Clive is doing a heroic job readying this material for the next Secretary.

3. President's report

President Gurshtein noted the activities and accomplishments of the Commission during the previous triennium, including:

- (a) A proposal to the IAU to declare the year 2009 as the *International Year of Astronomy* in honor of the 400th anniversary of the application of the telescope to astronomy by Galileo;
- (b) A petition to the European Union to issue common postage stamps with astronomical themes in 2009;
- (c) a response to the UNESCO-WHC initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage" to include astronomical sites on the "World Heritage List".

(d) participation or endorsement in the successful designation of the Struve Arc as a World Heritage Site.

(e) Promotion and support of recent publications, including: Proceedings IAU Colloquium No. 196 (*Transits of Venus*, 2005); and *Astronomical Instruments and Archives from the Asia-Pacific Region*, 2004. (f) Meetings under Commission 41 auspices: IAU Colloquium No. 196; *Sharing the Celestial Sphere*, Beijing 2005; SEAC06 European Conference on Archaeoastronomy (Greece).

(g) Sponsorship of four active Working Groups: Archives, Astronomical Chronology, Historical Instruments, and Transits of Venus.

(h) Maintenance of communications with other international bodies, including the IUHPS. President Gurshtein also noted that “Commission 41 is starting to prepare a broad interdisciplinary meeting that could be entitled the First World Congress on the History of Astronomy” in cooperation with the IUHPS. The recording secretary asked for clarification if this was an approved activity of Commission 41, and the matter was referred to “Other Business” (see below).

The President also discussed various difficulties Commission 41 has encountered in the last triennium:

1. The Relations of Commission 41 with the rest of the IAU “not as good as would be desired.” The re-structuring of the IAU into Divisions weakened Commission 41’s position seriously until Division XII was formed, the “Union wide” division.
2. Commission 41 has not been able to obtain official IAU recognition through officially sanctioned sessions for the history of astronomy. The Commission has not been successful gaining approvals for Joint Discussions, Special Sessions or Symposia under the sanction of the Union either for Sydney or for Prague. The president offered an explanation: that the methodology of astronomy and that practiced by its historians is not in “synchronicity.”
3. The President remarked on the fate of the long-awaited “General History of Astronomy” (Michael Hoskin, General Editor) noting that only three volumes of the projected eight have appeared in the past three decades. He noted that if asked by EC members why not more of these volumes have appeared, he would be embarrassed to try and explain the delay. He then declared the series to be “dead” and suggested it be replaced by a “General Chronology of Astronomy.”
4. The president suggested that there might be limits on the number of papers any one member of Commission 41 is allowed to author, or deliver, during a General Assembly.

Informal discussion followed the president’s report. Various proposals were made and discussed, but none were actually proposed or seconded, or brought to a vote, and therefore do not bear mention in the minutes. The president’s report was not moved for acceptance or seconded.

Rajesh Kochhar was invited to provide an informal report on the 2005 Beijing meeting, which he delivered extemporaneously and to the general satisfaction of the membership present.

4. Secretary’s report

Clive Ruggles reported that Newsletters #6, #7, and #8 had been issued in April of each year. It had not been possible in this triennium to continue issuing paper copies to Commission members, because of the lack of any funds to cover the cost of this. He noted with appreciation that the distinctive blue program booklet “History of Astronomy: Commission 41 Activities at Prague” was underwritten by the National Observatory of Japan upon Mitsuru Soma’s initiative.

The production of definitive membership lists continues to be a serious problem because, as an Inter-Union Commission, Commission 41 membership is managed by bodies that are not in full communication with one another and work under different criteria. This makes it especially hard for the secretary to determine consistently which names are recognized by each of the bodies involved (IAU and the IUHPS/DHST, which does not maintain individuals as members). The suggested solution is to manage the membership list internally in Commission 41, but this does not solve acknowledgment by the parent bodies. Clive Ruggles will reconcile present lists, based upon the names presented in the Sydney “Minutes of the General Business Meeting held on 23 July 2003” and communicate them in due course to the OC.

The secretary then identified 154 names as members of the Commission at the 2003 General Assembly, and 13 elected in 2003 and appointed to Commission 41. A call was made for the acceptance of the secretary’s report. It was moved and seconded.

5. Admission of new Commission 41 members

The secretary displayed a set of lists of names of people wishing to be admitted. Commission members approved and seconded that Commission 41 appoint the entire list, in all categories. The following people were approved as members of the Commission: Robert BREINHORST (Germany), Yvan Dutil (Canada), Michael Dworetzky (USA), Anthony Fairall (South Africa), Edward H. Geyer (Germany), Erik Høg (Denmark), Alexander Kosovichev (USA), Ioannis Lirizis (Greece), J. McKim Malville (USA), Gennady Pinigin (Ukraine), Tom Ray (Ireland), Gerhard Ruben* (Germany), Steven Shore (Italy), Michelle Storey (Australia), Peter Usher (USA), Iryna Vavilova (Ukraine), Patrick Woudt (South Africa), and Hitoshi Yamaoka (Japan).

Discussion: a person asked if the IAU membership lists are public knowledge. The secretary answered that the IAU does not allow distribution of name lists. [Secretary's addendum: I've since checked various Commission web pages and many do include name and country lists: it is further details that are prohibited. This does need clarifying with the IAU, since if we are allowed to publish an up-to-date name/country list, we should do so on the website.]

The ICHA admission procedures: "Sections 2 and 3 were not approved or fully discussed. Discussion centered on relative rights and authority of associate and full members.

6. Formal approval of the procedures for admitting non-IAU members to the ICHA

The secretary led the discussion of the new procedures for admitting new non-IAU members to Commission 41 according to guidelines specified in the blue proceedings brochure, pp. 28-29. Approval was sought only for items enumerated in Section 1: "Purpose and status of these procedures." 1.1 was approved; 1.2 was ratified; and 1.3 was approved. Sections 2 and 3 were not approved or fully discussed. Discussion centered on relative rights and authority of associate and full members. No resolutions were framed, none seconded.

7. Election of Commission 41/ICHA Officers for 2003–2006

Elections were duly held, taking into account absentee ballots, resulted in the following Organizing Committee for the 2006-2009 triennium: Nha Il-Seong (Korea, president), Clive Ruggles (UK, vice-president) Alex Gurshtein (USA, past president), Teije de Jong (Netherlands), David DeVorkin (USA), Rajesh Kochhar (India), Tsuko Nakamura (Japan), Wayne Orchiston (Australia), Antonio A. P. Videira (Brazil), and Brian Warner (South Africa). Steve Dick kindly acted as scrutineer of the ballots, ably assisted by John Steele.

8. Working Groups

Each Working group met subsequent to the Commission 41 business meeting, decided on leadership and membership, and if they needed to continue in the next triennium.

Archives: Ileana Chinnici (Italy, Chair), Brenda Corbin (USA), Suzanne Dbarbat (France), Daniel Green (USA), Irakli Simonia (Georgia), Wayne Orchiston (Australia), and Adam Perkins (UK). Contact person: Ileana Chinnici, INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Palermo Giuseppe S. Vaiana, Piazza del Parlamento 1, 90134 Palermo, Italy <chinnici@astropa.unipa.it>.

Historical Instruments: Luisa Pigatto (Italy, Chair), Juergen Hamel (Germany), Kevin Johnson (UK), Rajesh Kochhar (India), Tsuko Nakamura (Japan), Nha Il-Seong (Korea), Wayne Orchiston (Australia), Bjorn Pettersen (Norway), Sara Schechner (USA) and Yunli Shi (China). Contact person: Luisa Pigatto, INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Padova, Vicolo dell' Osservatorio, 5, I-35122 Padova, Italy <luisa.pigatto@oapd.inaf.it>.

Transits of Venus: Steven Dick (USA, Chair), Hilmar Duerbeck (Germany), Robert van Gent (Netherlands), David Hughes (UK), Willie Koorts (South Africa), Wayne Orchiston (Australia), and Luisa Pigatto (Italy). Contact person: Steven J. Dick, NASA Chief Historian, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Headquarters, Code IQ, Room CO72, 300 E Street SW, Washington DC 20546-0001, USA <steven.j.dick@nasa.gov>.

Historical Radio Astronomy (joint with Division X): Wayne Orchiston (Australia, Chair), Rod Davies (UK), Suzanne Dbarbat (France), Ken Kellermann (USA), Masaki Morimoto (Japan), Slava Slysh (Russia), Govind Swarup (India), Jasper Wall (Canada), Richard Wielebinski (Germany), and Hugo van Woerden (Netherlands). Contact person: Wayne Orchiston, School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland 4811, Australia <wayne.orchiston@jcu.edu.au>.

9. Resolutions

No formal resolutions were proposed or discussed. Informally, there were two suggestions: Brenda Corbin proposed that the OC find someone to take over the duties of the web site, since Wolfgang Dick will not be continuing in this valuable function. She offered thanks to W. Dick, and the Commission heartily agreed.

Wayne Orchiston formally proposed that “we congratulate Ileana Chinnici and Clive Ruggles on the excellent job they did producing the C41/ICHA Newsletter during the last triennium”. This was loudly seconded and heartily approved.

At a meeting of the new officers and Executive Committee that evening we assigned duties to members for the 2009 OC in Brazil: David DeVorkin - Secretary; Wayne Orchiston - Newsletter Subcommittee - Editor/print Newsletter; Clive Ruggles - Newsletter Subcommittee - Webmaster/website. Since that meeting, once duties were clarified, it was decided that Ileana Chinnici would be the Editor of the print version of the Newsletter. The secretary will act as coordinator and catalyst for the management of the Newsletter and website, which will be the primary responsibilities of the above named. Materials for submission to either form of communication will be the common responsibility of the OC with the approval of the vice-president and/or president.

The balance of the meeting dealt with defining plans for the 2009 General Assembly, which will have as its theme the “International Year of Astronomy 2009” (IYA2009). It is the responsibility of the OC to create a plan that will be acceptable to members of Commission 41 and appealing to the new “All-Union” Division XII. The OC decided that it would aim high, to a full symposium or special session, and given the focus of the IYA on education, we will also attempt to attract joint support by Commission 46. Suggestions for themes centered around the idea of “Instrumentation for Astronomy Through the Ages” which would carry a strong telescope theme but not be limited to optical devices only. We might suggest an invited discourse to the General Assembly, possibly Albert van Helden on Galileo. We strongly agreed to create and appoint a Scientific Organizing Committee, chaired possibly by Brian Warner (who was not at the meeting). We will also need a “Local Organizing Committee” and hope that Antonio A. P. Videira of Brazil will be willing to organize that critical group.

10. Other business

The recording secretary recalled the question of planning for a “First World Congress on the History of Astronomy” reported by the president, asking for someone to read into the record a formal proposal for the Commission’s consideration and action. Several voices spoke against the plan, concerned that Commission 41 efforts and resources be wholly engaged for the next General Assembly in 2009. No one spoke for the plan. Hence no resolution was offered and the idea was dropped.

President Gurshtein closed the meeting at about 3:30 pm.

Alexander A. Gurshtein
president of the Commission