DIVISION X, XII / COMMISSION 40, 41 / WORKING GROUP
RADIO ASTRONOMY

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TRIENNIAL REPORT 2006-2009

1. Introduction

The IAU Working Group on Historical Radio Astronomy (WGHRA) was formed at
the 2003 General Assembly of the IAU as a Joint Working Group of Commissions 40
(Radio Astronomy) and 41 (History of Astronomy), in order to: a) assemble a master
list of surviving historically-significant radio telescopes and associated instrumentation
found worldwide; b) document the technical specifications and scientific achievements of
these instruments; c) maintain an on-going bibliography of publications on the history
of radio astronomy; and d) monitor other developments relating to the history of radio
astronomy (including the deaths of pioneering radio astronomers).

The WGHRA is now an Inter Division (DX and DXII) Working Group.

2. WG Web site

The IAU WGHRA maintains a web site at http://rahist.nrao.edu/ which includes
past WG reports, brief biographical notes on Grote Reber Gold Medalists for Innovative
Contributions to Radio Astronomy, brief memorial articles on recently deceased radio
astronomers, and links to various sources of material on the history of radio astronomy.

3. Preservation

The WG noted with satisfaction that the reported deterioration of the Bell Labs horn
reflector used by Penzias and Wilson to detect the CMB has been addressed by Lucent
Technologies, and that the horn has been refurbished.

In the Netherlands, the 25-meter Dwingeloo dish, inaugurated in 1956, and used for
major research programs up to 1998, has been repaired and modernized by CAMRAS, a
foundation run by radio amateurs, since 2006. The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture
and Science has granted a major subsidy for the full restoration of the telescope, to be started in 2012. The telescope will be made available for education and research projects by high-school students. The 60th anniversary of the first 21 cm mapping of the Milky Way with the 7.5 meter dish at Kootwijk was celebrated at the original site on 11 May 2011.

In 2003, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory initiated the first Archives devoted exclusively to radio astronomy. The NRAO Archives seeks out, collects, organizes, and preserves institutional records, personal papers, audio-visual materials, and oral histories of enduring value documenting NRAO’s development, institutional history, instrument construction, and ongoing activities, including its participation in multi-institutional collaborations. As the national facility for radio astronomy, the Archives also includes an increasing collection of materials on the history and development of radio astronomy and the work of individual astronomers especially in the United States. See http://www.nrao.edu/archives/.

In addition to the institutional records of NRAO, the NRAO Archives includes Web resources on early radio astronomy courses and on Nan Dieter Conklin and Harold “Doc” Ewen, as well as personal papers of Ronald Bracewell, John Findlay, David Heeschen, John Kraus, Grote Reber, Richard Thompson, and James Ulvestad. Acquisitions since 2009 include small collections of papers from Marshall Cohen, Mark Gordon, David Hogg, Kenneth Kellermann, and Paul Vanden Bout. Major acquisitions in 2011, on which processing has just begun, are the papers of the late Donald Backer and papers received from Bernard Burke.


Additional material on the history of radio astronomy can be found at: http://www.astro.washington.edu/users/woody/hra.html

4. Conferences


At the 2011 General Assembly of URSI Commission J, Kellermann reviewed the careers of recently deceased radio astronomers.

5. Other Major Publications

Wielebinski and Wilson (2010) have reviewed the history of radio astronomy. Goss & McGee (2009) have published a biography of Ruby Payne-Scott which conveys her

Ken Kellermann
Chair of Working Group on Historical Radio Astronomy

References


