

Heritage Committee: Annual Report 2011/12

Present Membership

	Term	Affiliation
Elizabeth Griffin <i>Chair</i>	2009–12	HIA/NRC
Paul Feldman	2009–12	HIA/NRC
Richard Jarrell	2009–12	York University
Nathalie Martimbeau	2010–13	Montreal Planetarium
David Turner	2009–12	Saint Mary's University
Ian Shelton	2011–14	Univ. of Toronto & Mount Allison Univ.
François Wesemael	2011–14	Université de Montréal

We learned with sadness of the untimely death of François Wesemael in late 2011. François had recently come onto the Committee with exciting enthusiasm, and it was a great pity that we did not tap into any of it in time.

Paul Feldman has asked to resign from the Committee, and we offer him our thanks for invaluable information and advice throughout his tenure of service.

New members

We welcome two new members (2012–2015): Randall Rosenfeld and Gordon Walker.

Randall is the Archivist to the RASC. He brings a great deal of scholarship in things historical; he was awarded the RASC's Simon Newcomb Award for excellence in scientific writing, and also had an asteroid named after him in April of this year. (Randall's joining is subject to his pending application for CASCA membership).

Gordon is an eminent stellar physicist. A native of the UK (Edinburgh; PhD Cambridge), his career-long association with BC commenced in 1962, first at the DAO (as a PDF) until 1964, and latterly at UBC (until 1998). His development of the instrument which was forerunner for detecting planets through precise stellar radial velocities has won deserved acclaim. Still active, he has been closely involved with Canada's space mission, "MOST". Gordon also is deeply interested in the history both of instruments and of the people who built them.

Future membership

David Turner and Richard Jarrell have agreed to serve from 2012–2014. Elizabeth Griffin will extend her term of membership to 2015.

Committee Activities

Video interviews: In furtherance of our ongoing project to record interviews with senior Canadian astronomers, two more videos were made during the 2011 CASCA meeting in London, ON: (1) a joint one of John Rice (Brandon University) and Tony Moffat (Université de Montréal), on May 31, and (2) a joint one of Gretchen and Bill Harris (University of Waterloo and McMaster University, respectively, on June 1. Alan Batten (DAO and UVic) was interviewed at the DAO on August 30. More interviews are planned for the 2012 CASCA meeting. The videos are being archived at the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa.

Individual Activities

Aspects of astronomy's non-electronic records were the focus of a special workshop, co-led by EG, during IAU Symposium 285 ("New Horizons in Time Domain Astronomy") in Oxford (UK) in September 2011. EG also helped organize a workshop in College Park (MD, USA) at the American Institute for Physics, to formulate a Plan for managing astronomy's heritage of observational materials in North America such that the irreplaceable information which many contain could be preserved and eventually shared by the community for numerous important aspects of time-domain science.

Digitization of the DAO photographic spectra with the upgraded in-house PDS is continuing; over 1000 spectra have now been prepared in that way, and are available (except those protected by proprietary rights) via the CADC Website (<http://cadc.hia.nrc.gc.ca/dao/pa.html>). A second PDS, brought here from KPNO, is currently being reassembled and tested by a Co-op engineering student, and will probably be fitted with the same data acquisition hardware and software as the operational one.

Other Matters

The Heritage Committee has been discussing how to enhance its activities and participation in meetings or events. In 2011 the CASCA Board supported our proposal to enter into discussions with other scientific organizations that have historical departments, regarding the possibility of affiliation that would allow shared participation in certain events; the model is that of the HAD vis-à-vis the AAS. In the Fall, Richard Jarrell (who is closely associated with the Canadian Science and Technology History Association) met with the CSTHA Chair (Bertram McDonald, Dalhousie University) and produced a workable plan which the Committee has since accepted. Other similar arrangements need to be investigated.