

Report from the Working Group on Historical Radio Astronomy

September 2017

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Purpose of the WG

The WG was first established in 2003 as an IAU WG, but since the URSI GASS in Beijing in 2014 it is a joint WG of the IAU and URSI. Its aims are to i) maintain an ongoing bibliography of publications relevant to the history of radio astronomy, ii) document and preserve surviving historically-significant radio telescopes and associated instrumentation, and iii) document the careers of deceased radio astronomers in biographical memoirs.

The WG has 41 members at the moment, amongst whom are 14 “national reporters” responsible for keeping track of developments of relevance to the WG in their respective countries or regions. The WG is completely open for anyone to join; please contact any of the above if you are interested.

Publications and research

Ten books dealing with the history of radio astronomy have been published since 2013 including

Baars	<i>International Radio Telescope Projects – a Life among Their Designers, Builders and Users</i>
Goss	<i>Making Waves, the Story of Ruby-Payne Scott. Australian Pioneer of Radio Astronomy</i>
Orchiston	<i>Exploring the History of New Zealand Astronomy</i>
Schwartz & Zensus	<i>History of MPIfR (in German)</i>
Elbers	<i>The Rise of Radio Astronomy in the Netherlands</i>
Goss, Morris, Sheshadri	<i>Radio Astronomers at Sea</i>
Robertson	<i>John Bolton & a New Window on the Universe</i>
Baars & Kärcher	<i>Radio Telescope Reflectors – Historical Development of Design and Construction</i>
Nakamura & Orchiston	<i>The Emergence of Astrophysics in Asia</i>
Frater, Goss, & Wendt	<i>Four Pillars of Radio Astronomy</i>

A total of twenty-nine papers have been published in various places: Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage, Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of India, Nancius Hambugenisis, Bibliographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers and the URSI Bulletin.

Presentations on historical topics were given in fifteen conferences from 2014 to 2017 including

2014	50 th Anniversary of Medicina Northern Cross
2015	JIVE-ERIC Inaugural Symposium
	IAU Symposium on Extragalactic Jets
	The Golden Years of Radio Astronomy, IAU GA
2016	A Workshop on the History of Canadian Radio Astronomy
	All-Wave Astronomy, Shklovsky-100
	Problems of Modern Astronomy – I.S. Shklovsky Centennial Conference
	Innovation & Discovery in Radio Astronomy - A Celebration of the Career of Ron Ekers

	Sleefest: Celebrating Bruce Slee's Seventy Years in Radio Astronomy
	1 st Pietro Barachi Conference on Italy-Australia Radio Astronomy
2017	Black Hole Astrophysics with VLBI: Past, Present and Future – Celebration of the Scientific Career of Makoto Inoue
	Ginzburg Centennial Conference on Physics
	Looking Back and Ahead - a Mini-Symposium in Honour of Wim Brouw
	Fred Lo Science Symposium
	Radio Interferometry: History and Lessons Learnt, URSI GASS

WGHRA Website

The WG website <http://rahist.nrao.edu/> is a repository of a considerable amount of historical material including contributions to the IAU Triennial Reports for 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015; the presentations on the history of radio interferometers at URSI GASS 2017; the report on WG activities at the Commission J business session at URSI GASS 2017; a list of Grote Reber Medalists; biographical memoirs of deceased radio astronomers; related resources; and access to the NRAO/AUI archives (<http://jump2.nrao.edu/dbtw-wpd/textbase/archivesearch.htm>).

Please contact Ken Kellermann (kkellerm@nrao.edu) at any time if you have additional material to include on the website.

Future activities

A 3-hour session on Historical Radio Astronomy is planned on 24 August 2018 during the IAU GA in Vienna. The topic will be Single dishes: history and lessons learnt.

Activity will continue on the Jansky site restoration and historical landmark.

A number of books are in preparation including

Orchiston, Sullivan and Robertson	<i>The Foundations of Australian Radio Astronomy (2018)</i>
Goss, Ekers, Hooker	<i>From the Sun to the Cosmos, J. L. Pawsey</i>
Kellermann, Bouton, Brandt	<i>Open Skies</i>
Jarrell, Wall, Griffen, Robishaw	<i>Canadian Radio Astronomy</i>
Schwartz, Zensus	<i>History of MPIfR (English translation)</i>
Schilizzi, Ekers, Hall	<i>History of the Square Kilometre Array 1993-2012</i>
Dickman, Vanden Bout	<i>Construction of the Atacama Large Millimeter - Submillimeter Array</i>