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 as well as current WG reports, brief biographical notes on Grote Reber Gold Medalists for Innovative Contributions to Radio Astronomy, photographs and 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. However, the Bell Labs property where Karl Jansky made his pioneering discovery is being sold to a real estate developer.
In 1998 Bell Labs erected a Karl Jansky Monument on the exact location of the original Jansky antenna. Regretably this monument has fallen into disrepair, but efforts are underway to secure the preservation of the site and its public access.

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, Bernard Burke, 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. A major acquisition in 2011 was the papers of the late Donald Backer.


Additional material on the history of radio astronomy can be found at:

We are very pleased to note that in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the history of astronomy, Sullivan was awarded the 2012 Doggett Prize of the AAS in recognition of his "leadership in the history of astronomy community."

4. Conferences

Celebrations of the 50th anniversary of NRAO, Bridle et al.(2008) and Parkes (see http://www.atnf.csiro.au/research/conferences/Parkes50th/program.html) and the 40th anniversary of Westerbork (http://www.astron.nl/wsr40/) and Effelsberg (http://www.mpifr-bonn.mpg.de/div/effelsberg/40years/en/index.html each contained historical reviews of the development of radio astronomy. In November 2009, Kellermann and Ekers organized a session on Discoveries in Astronomy at the
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At the 2011 General Assembly of URSI Commission J, Kellermann reviewed the careers of recently deceased radio astronomers. The Working Group web site maintains a list of deceased radio astronomers with brief career descriptions. Notification of future deaths should be brought to the attention of the Working Group Chair for posting on the web site.

5. Other Major Publications


Orchiston & Mathewson (2009) have described the development of the Chris Cross at Fleurs, while Stewart et al (2010) have described the Radiophysics field station at Penrith. Orchiston et al. (2011) have edited the publication of Highlighting the History of Astronomy in the Asia-Pacific Region which includes papers by Stewart et al. (2011a), Stewart et al. (2011b), Stewart et al. (2011c), Wendt et al. (2011a), Wendt et al. (2011b) and Wendt et al. (2011c) Orchiston has completed his project on early French radio astronomy and is working with M. Ishiguro to document the early history of radio astronomy in Japan which is to be published in late 2012 Ishiguro & Orchiston (2012).

Ken Kellermann
Chair of Working Group on Historical Radio Astronomy
References


Stewart, R., Orchiston, W., & Slee, B., 2011, The Sun has Set on a Brilliant Mind: John Paul Wild (1923-2008), Solar Astronomer Extraordinaire, in Highlighting the History of Astronomy in the Asia-Pacific Region, 527-542


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