

Division C Commission C4
WG2 Classical Observatories from the Renaissance to the 20th Century

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TRIENNIAL REPORT 2015–2018

1. Introduction

The Working Group C4 WG2 was created following the IAU General Assembly in Hawai'i in 2015. The objective of the WG is putting forward WH nominations of classical observatories, especially transnational, serial nominations, for example La Plata and Hamburg observatories, like the Struve Geodetic Arc (2005).

The initiative started already in August 2009 with the Commission 41 WG *Astronomy and World Heritage* (AWHWG, 2009–2012, 2012–2015) after the signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding* between the IAU and UNESCO on Astronomy and World Heritage in October 2008.

2. Developments within the past triennium

During the Hawaii GA 2015 a contribution was presented by Wolfschmidt und published in the proceedings: *“Route of astronomical observatories” project: Classical observatories from the Renaissance to the rise of astrophysics*, Wolfschmidt (2016).

During the 2015–2018 triennium, the WG2 concentrated on gathering more information about Classical Observatories. For the Category of Astronomical Heritage, tangible immovable, case studies for the theme “Classical Observatories from the Renaissance to the 20th Century” were already made: Cape of the Good Hope, Greenwich, Paris, Meudon, Einstein Tower, Mt. Wilson, Sidney, cf. also the overview in the publication of Wolfschmidt (2009), Ruggles & Cotte (2010) and Ruggles (2017) (first and second thematic study).

The next objective is to promote further case studies of classical observatories and to publish them in the web portal (www.astronomicalheritage.net).

Another new activity was started: The IAU list of *Outstanding Astronomical Heritage* (OAH) sites

A further new objective of the WG2 Classical Observatories is to compile a list of astronomical sites or institutions that have had a significant role in the history of astronomy, regardless if they are included or not in the UNESCO's list. There should be no using of the words "Astronomy World Heritage" in the title of the certificate which would create confusion with the concept of World Heritage and the World Heritage Convention in general. The idea is to call it "IAU List of Outstanding Astronomical Heritage" (OAH). While the word "Outstanding" has particular connotations within the WH Convention, but this would be not as sensitive as using the phrase "World Heritage", while still being as powerful. This idea of a "IAU Certificate" was adopted during the 99th annual meeting of the IAU Executive Committee in Mexico (2016).

In the meantime the preliminary structure that has been designed to request such information is a provisional characterization that, in about 500 words, accounts for the following information:

- IAU observatory code
- Author(s)
- Name of the site
- Country
- City/State/Province/Region
- Geographical coordinates (lat/long and/or UTM)
- Short description of the scientific / cultural heritage and any related natural heritage

For historical observatory sites:

- Founding date(s)
- Famous astronomers and instrument makers associated with the site
- Importance for the history of astronomy

For broader cultural sites related to astronomy:

- date/period of construction and use
- Importance for cultural astronomy
- Bibliography (books and published articles)
- Related case studies on the portal [with links]
- Is it a World Heritage Site, part of a World Heritage Site, or on the relevant National

Tentative List?

- Present use and astronomical relevance today
- Webpage
- Images and other AV materials

Optional:

- State of preservation [optional]
- Comparison with related or similar sites [optional]
- Threats or potential threats [optional]

I will start to propose important sites in the "Portal to the Heritage of Astronomy" (<https://www.astronomicalheritage.net/>). The process for handling the nomination and consideration of further sites will be discussed in the GA in Vienna (2018).

3. Closing remarks

The future activities of the WG2 will produce a growing IAU list of *Outstanding Astronomical Heritage* (OAH) and hopefully will succeed in putting forward WH nominations of classical observatories.

Gudrun Wolfschmidt
Chair of Working Group

References

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- WOLFSCHMIDT, GUDRUN, 2016, “Route of astronomical observatories” project: *Classical observatories from the Renaissance to the rise of astrophysics*. In: IAU Volume 11, Issue A29A (Astronomy in Focus), pp. 124–128.
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