

RASC History Committee Report

2017 December 10



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Archives Expansion

Under the broad aegis of the Society's forthcoming sesquicentennial celebrations in 2018, the Executive Director developed a proposal for a modest but much needed expansion of the Society's physical footprint, to provide a more generous multifunction setting for our Archives. The proposal was to re-rent the space formerly occupied by the Society Office, in addition to the space the RASC currently occupies. Given the state of the office rental market in Toronto, Mr. Attwood is to be congratulated on finding such an economical solution to the overcrowding of the official seat of the RASC (not that anyone heard Urania complain). Mr. Attwood presented the proposal to the RASC Board of Directors at their fall meeting in early November. Prior to voting on the proposal on Sunday November the 5th, on the preceding evening the Board was treated to a tour of the Society's Archives, and was shown a variety of artifacts representing the range of the collection (Figure 1 *supra*), and a discussion of the significance of the material record of our 150 years of existence. For much of that time ours is the record of high-level organized astronomy in Canada, amateur and professional (until the creation of the NRC's Associate Committees in the 1960s leading in part to the creation of CASCA in 1970). The paper trail in the Society's Archives of the astronomy that was done, the astronomers who did it, and the apparatus used and the images produced, witness to a rich and interesting history, as the writings of Dr. Roy Bishop, Peter Broughton, Clark Muir and others have demonstrated. Many of the stories remain to be told, and some could benefit from re-examination. The astronomy done by RASC members are not only threads in the narrative of amateur and professional science in Canada, but are parts of the cloth forming the historical fabric of the country's collective cultural achievement. This material requires the best setting we can provide to ensure its curation, productive accessibility, and responsible and creative use.

The BOD have been most generous in making available resources to renovate the Archives. The project managers are Renata Koziol, the RASC Accounting Manager, and Julia Neeser, the RASC Office Manager, who have provided top-notch creative input and quality control during the renovations; their careful work has advanced the project to the point where the physical move of the Archives can begin in earnest.

In addition to having more room to house our Archives (some of the collections, such as the Dr. Geoff Gaherty *fonds*, the Dr. Thomas R. Clarke *fonds*, and the Dr. Geoffrey Bell *fonds* can now be moved from *ad tem* boxes to proper filing cabinets), the new space will offer more commodious arrangements for researchers consulting our Archives, double the capacity for the Archives Rare Book Collection, a small conservation and analysis lab area and kitchen, and, for the first time, adequate gallery facilities for displaying artifacts. The last will allow us to mount themed exhibitions based on our collections to which we can invite the public as a form of education and public outreach (EPO). The space can also be used for seminars, for delivering EPO programs to small classes, for meetings of RASC groups (with the approval of the Executive Director and Archivist), and for RASC fundraising events. The space will also be equipped for off-site participation in some of these activities.

It will also permit us to more freely accept suitable donations, and to go some way to realizing the

vision of the former RASC Historical Committee (predecessor of the present History Committee), which proposed in 1984 "that the focus of the library would be the history of astronomy with special attention given to its development in Canada" (R. Peter Broughton, *Looking Up: a History of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* [Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1994, p. 88]).




Figure 2 (left). *ca.* century-old French doors dividing conservation lab/kitchen from filing cabinets and display area in new RASC Archives. ©R.A. Rosenfeld.

Figure 3 (below). Meeting and seminar area of new RASC Archives. ©Randy Attwood.

The furnishing of the space has just begun. It is expected to be largely complete by early January of the new year.




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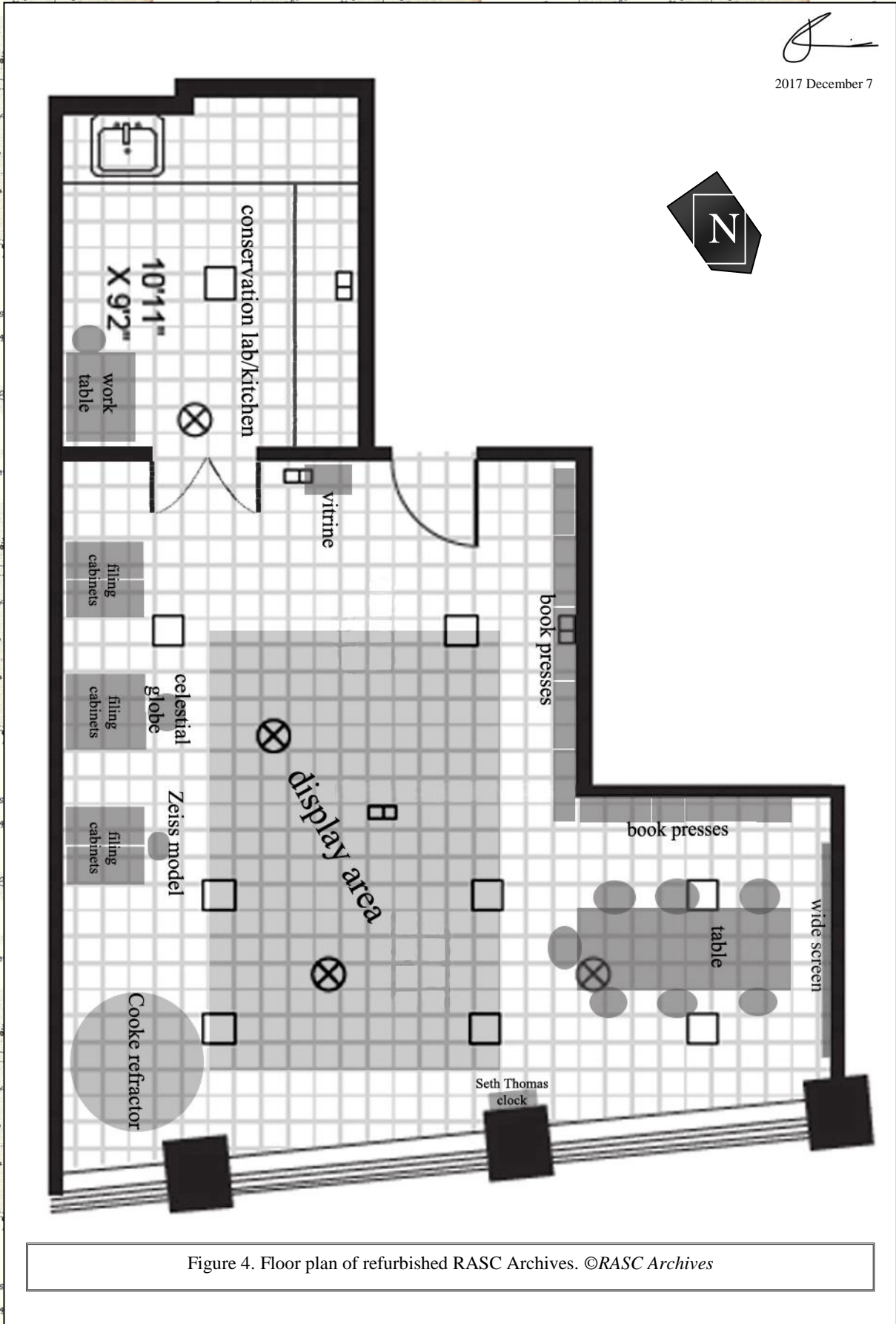
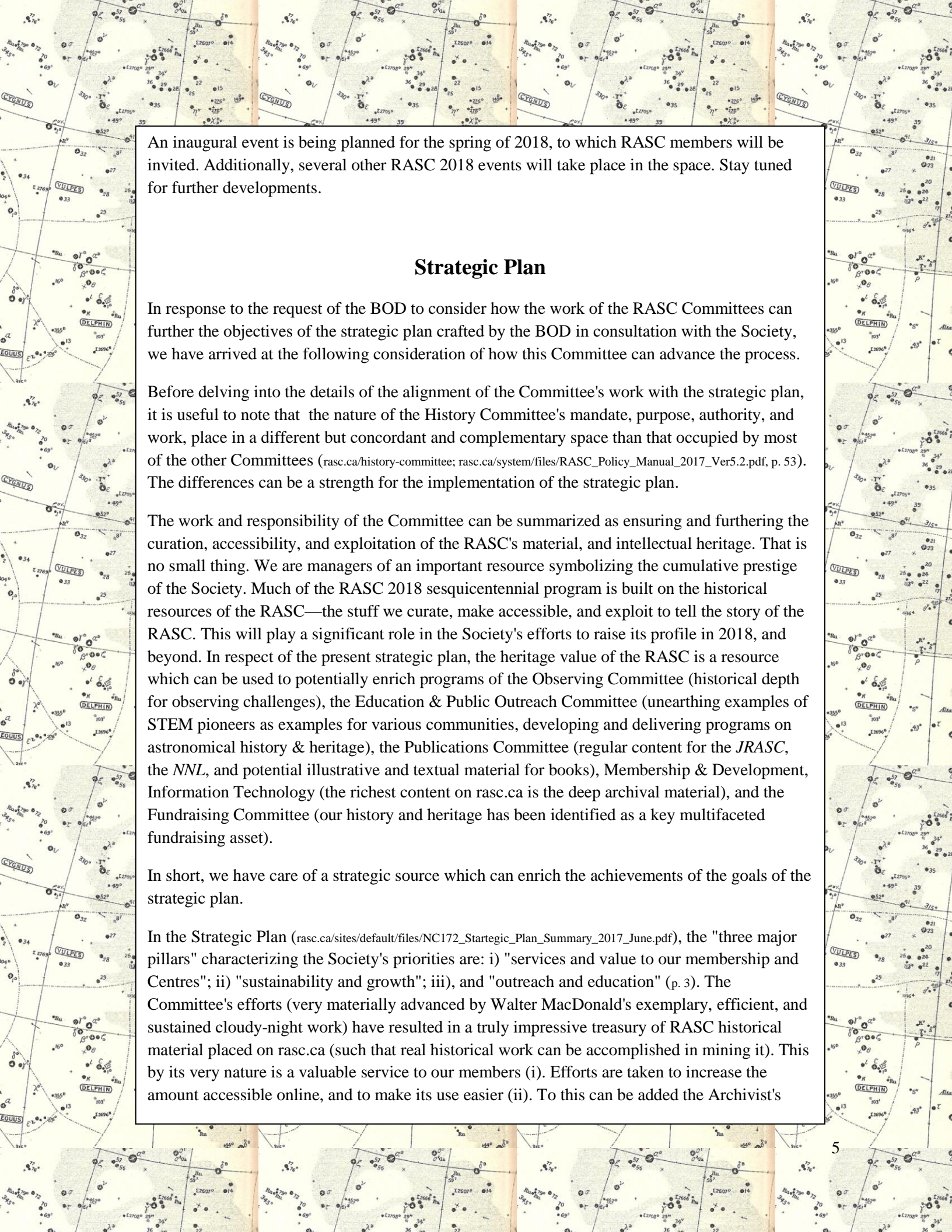


Figure 4. Floor plan of refurbished RASC Archives. ©RASC Archives



An inaugural event is being planned for the spring of 2018, to which RASC members will be invited. Additionally, several other RASC 2018 events will take place in the space. Stay tuned for further developments.

Strategic Plan

In response to the request of the BOD to consider how the work of the RASC Committees can further the objectives of the strategic plan crafted by the BOD in consultation with the Society, we have arrived at the following consideration of how this Committee can advance the process.

Before delving into the details of the alignment of the Committee's work with the strategic plan, it is useful to note that the nature of the History Committee's mandate, purpose, authority, and work, place in a different but concordant and complementary space than that occupied by most of the other Committees (rasc.ca/history-committee; rasc.ca/system/files/RASC_Policy_Manual_2017_Ver5.2.pdf, p. 53). The differences can be a strength for the implementation of the strategic plan.

The work and responsibility of the Committee can be summarized as ensuring and furthering the curation, accessibility, and exploitation of the RASC's material, and intellectual heritage. That is no small thing. We are managers of an important resource symbolizing the cumulative prestige of the Society. Much of the RASC 2018 sesquicentennial program is built on the historical resources of the RASC—the stuff we curate, make accessible, and exploit to tell the story of the RASC. This will play a significant role in the Society's efforts to raise its profile in 2018, and beyond. In respect of the present strategic plan, the heritage value of the RASC is a resource which can be used to potentially enrich programs of the Observing Committee (historical depth for observing challenges), the Education & Public Outreach Committee (unearthing examples of STEM pioneers as examples for various communities, developing and delivering programs on astronomical history & heritage), the Publications Committee (regular content for the *JRASC*, the *NNL*, and potential illustrative and textual material for books), Membership & Development, Information Technology (the richest content on rasc.ca is the deep archival material), and the Fundraising Committee (our history and heritage has been identified as a key multifaceted fundraising asset).

In short, we have care of a strategic source which can enrich the achievements of the goals of the strategic plan.

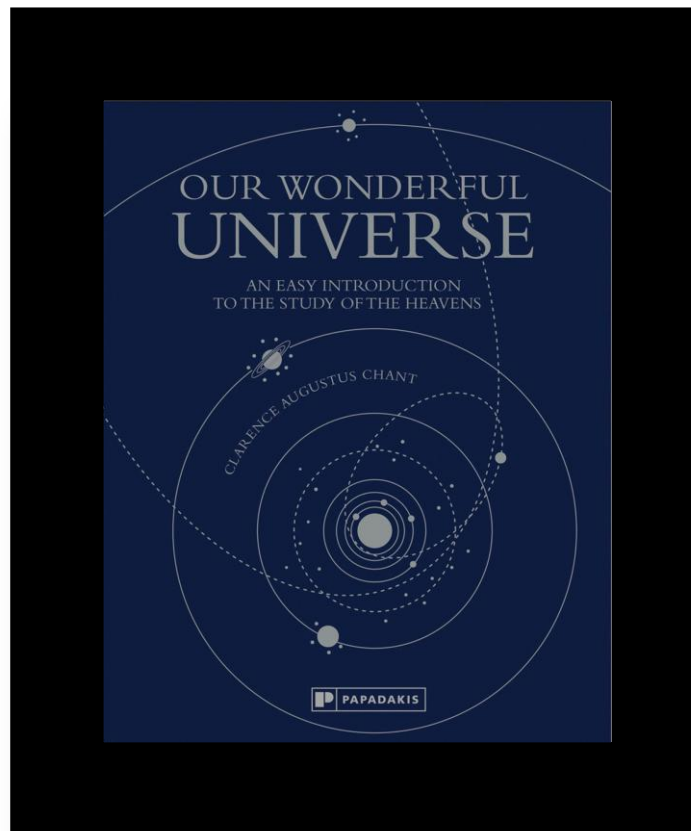
In the Strategic Plan (rasc.ca/sites/default/files/NC172_Strategic_Plan_Summary_2017_June.pdf), the "three major pillars" characterizing the Society's priorities are: i) "services and value to our membership and Centres"; ii) "sustainability and growth"; iii), and "outreach and education" (p. 3). The Committee's efforts (very materially advanced by Walter MacDonald's exemplary, efficient, and sustained cloudy-night work) have resulted in a truly impressive treasury of RASC historical material placed on rasc.ca (such that real historical work can be accomplished in mining it). This by its very nature is a valuable service to our members (i). Efforts are taken to increase the amount accessible online, and to make its use easier (ii). To this can be added the Archivist's

modest efforts (supported by the Committee's collective expertise) to augment our holdings, ensuring the growth of the Society's assets (ii). And the Committee's oversight of the collection, aided by the efforts of the Society Office staff, ensures its sustainability (ii). Research in the Archives which becomes the basis for published articles, books, and presentations by Committee members is a form of outreach and education—as is the making available of our historical resources to others around the globe who request digitized images of our artifacts for reproduction (iii).

It is the Committee's goal during the sesquicentennial year to carry the above initiatives further. Advances will be noted in further Committee Reports.

Acquisitions

The most recent acquisition is a curiosity of current publishing, namely an unrevised art reprint(!) of the first English edition (1928) of C.A. Chant's popular introduction to astronomy, *Our Wonderful Universe*; (Clarence Augustus Chant, *Our Wonderful Universe: An Easy Introduction to the Study of the Heavens* (London: Papadakis, 2017); papadakis.net/books/our-wonderful-universe/). Chant did quite handsomely off the various editions and translations of the book in his lifetime (Broughton, *Looking Up* 1994, p. 24), although its chief value now is as an example of 1920s-1940s astronomy popularization—its can hardly function, even as a basic introduction to the state of the modern science. At least the reproduction values are high (good paper, clear images), and the cost is reasonable. Any RASC member wishing to acquire a copy of Chant's book for whatever reason could do worse. The Archives' copy was acquired on the way to completing our set of all the editions of the book.



Committee Members' Activities

Dr. Roy Bishop, FRASC, reports on progress toward the establishment of a heritage centre for the seaside community of Hantsport, Nova Scotia (continuing the note in our June Report to NC 172). The “Dorie & Garnet McDade Heritage Centre” was officially opened on November 18 (hantsjournal.ca/community/preserving-hantsports-history-dorie-and-garnet-mcdade-heritage-centre-officially-opens-164328/). The opening ceremonies attracted a turnout of some 200 interested individuals from a community of 1500 on a cold November day. Models of 19th century sailing ships and a few navigation instruments are among the many displays at the Centre. Dr. Bishop is the Chair of the Heritage Centre Campaign (<https://tinyurl.com/yb5nbr6k>).

Dr. Chris Gainor addressed a banquet of the London Centre on November 6, on the topic of the history of the Hubble Space Telescope (readers will recall that Dr. Gainor heads the team tasked with forming the HST Archive for NASA, and writing the official NASA history of the epochal telescope in service. He continues as editor of *Quest: The History of Spaceflight*; spacehistory101.com).

Clark Muir continues leading the team organizing an exhibit of astro-images which will feature reproductions of historical examples from the RASC Archives, juxtaposed with modern examples by outstanding imagers from the Kitchener-Waterloo Centre. The exhibit will be at the Homer Watson House & Gallery (homerwatson.on.ca/), a major regional cultural institution, in 2018. It is an example of a "Cultural Connections" project (rasc.ca/cultural-connections-resources) to celebrate RASC 2018.

Heather Laird has been very busy producing and engineering the historical podcasts for RASC 2018 (rasc.ca/rasc-2018-podcasts). These will run throughout 2018, with new podcasts appearing in the middle of each month. The opening podcast will be released this month. Heather's ambition is to succeed in making the Archivist presentable for domestic podcast consumption.

The Archivist gave a presentation on "Music of the Spheres: Astronomers as Musicians, & Musicians as Astronomers", for *Stars of Autumn*, 2017 November 2, Chris Beckett's adult education class in Regina.

Publications

Clark Muir, "An Early Canadian Zodiacal Light Eyewitness Account", *JRASC* vol. 111, no. 6 (2017 December), 261, 264

Chris Gainor, "The Hubble Space Telescope in Cyberspace", *Quest: The History of Spaceflight Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2017), 4-12 (as noted in the History Committee Report NC172 2017 June 30, p. 6)

Chris Gainor, "Hubble Space Telescope and the Shuttle: Advancing Satellite Servicing", *Spaceflight*, vol. 59, no. 7 (2017 July), 262-268 (as noted in the History Committee Report NC172 2017 June 30, p. 6)



R.A. Rosenfeld & Clark Muir, "Earliest RASC Star Party Antecedents II: How Old is the Term?", *JRASC* vol. 111, no. 5 (2017 October), 228-232

Professor Robert Garrison (1936-2017)

Prof. Robert Garrison (1936-2017), a long-time member of the RASC, and member and chair of the Society's former national Library Committee, and latterly the History Committee (and its predecessor, the Historical Committee), passed away on 2017 August 13. Bob was RASC National President from 2000 to 2002, served as Honorary President of the Society from 2005 to 2009, and won the Service Award in 2005. Bob was a Charter Member of CASCA.

Bob was a professional astronomer specializing in spectral classification, with a long-standing didactic interest in astrobiology, and other areas of astronomy. He did his Ph.D. (1966) at the University of Chicago under William Morgan, one of the developers of the still influential Morgan-Keenan (MK) Process for spectral classification. Bob became one of the chief proponents of the MK Process, and passed it on to a new generation. Two of Bob's students, Richard O. Gray & Fr. Christopher J. Corbally, s.j., have produced the current outstanding summary of the classification (and others), in their monumental *Stellar Spectral Classification* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009; press.princeton.edu/titles/8963.html), a book which acknowledges Bob's formative role.

Bob spent the majority of his professional career on the faculty of the Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics of the University of Toronto (1968-2001). Bob served as Associate Director of the David Dunlap Observatory, Director of the University of Toronto Southern Observatory (Chile), and followed in the spirit of Jack Heard as editor of the *David Dunlap Doings* for several longish stints in the 1980s and 2000s (astro.utoronto.ca/AALibrary/dddoings.html). Bob served as President of the IAU's Commission 45 Stellar Classification (1985-1988), and was an active member of many other committees, divisions, and working groups within the IAU.

Bob was involved in the creation of two collaborative books on the MK Process, *The MK Process and Stellar Classification: Proceedings of the Workshop in Honor of W.W. Morgan and P.C. Keenan Held at the University of Toronto, Canada, June 1983*, ed. R.F. Garrison (Toronto: David Dunlap Observatory, 1984), and *The MK Process at 50 Years: a Powerful Tool for Astrophysical Insight: a Workshop of the Vatican Observatory, Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A., September 1993*, ed. C.J. Corbally, R.O. Gray, and R.F. Garrison (San Francisco: Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 1994). On the occasion of his retirement Bob was honoured with *The Garrison Festschrift: Held in Tucson, Arizona, at the Arizona Inn, June 10-11, 2002*, ed. R.O. Gray, C.J. Corbally and A.G. Davis (Schenectady, NY: L. Davis Press, 2003; readable online at tinyurl.com/ybvca9mg). Some idea of the range of Bob's contributions to astronomy can be seen in the variety of his publications: tinyurl.com/yd3n6g99. And Bob's long-time commitment to various editions of our *Observer's Handbook*, through *The Brightest Stars*, should be acknowledged.

Bob was a strong believer in pro-am collaboration in astronomy, and was always a very generous, friendly, and ready supporter of amateur astronomers.

Obituaries of Bob can be found at: legacy.com/obituaries/thestar/obituary.aspx?pid=186551047, and at vofoundation.org/blog/bob-garrison-1936-2017/.

Acknowledgments

We wish especially to thank Julia Neeser, Office Manager, Renata Koziol, Accounting Manager, and Randy Attwood, FRASC, Executive Director, for for their support and labour during the period covered by this report. Thanks are due as ever to Walter MacDonald (RASC Webmaster) for his efforts in continuing to make our material heritage successfully accessible.

Respectfully submitted,
R.A. Rosenfeld, Chair

Committee Members:

- *Randy Attwood, FRASC (ED)
- Chris Beckett (Unattached)
- Dr. Roy Bishop, FRASC (Halifax)
- Eric Briggs (Toronto)
- Peter Broughton, FRASC (Toronto)
- *Colin Haig (RASC National President, Hamilton)
- Dr. Karen Finstad (Ottawa Centre)
- Dr. Chris Gainor (Victoria)
- *Renata Koziol (Accounting Manager)
- Heather Laird (Calgary)
- *Barry Matthews (Ottawa Centre, observer)
- Clark Muir (Kitchener-Waterloo)
- Andrew Oakes (Unattached)
- Randall Rosenfeld (Unattached), Chair
- Dr. Mark Tovey (London)

*=non-voting members

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