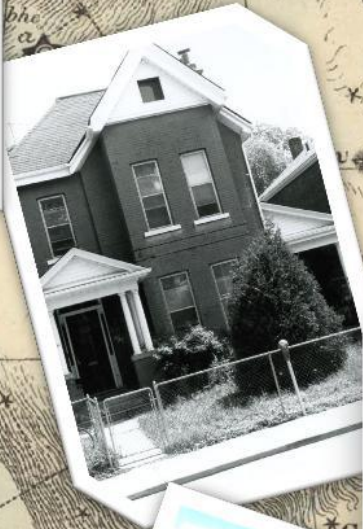


# NC162 HISTORY COMMITTEE REPORT

2016 May 20



*front-cover images:* Some locations of the RASC National Office through time: 1. 198 College St. Toronto, ON, 1905-1946 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 43); 2. 15 Ross St., 1953-1956 (R.P. Broughton, RASC Archives); 3. 252 College St., 1956-1976 (anon., RASC Archives); 4. 124 Merton St., 1976-1983 (Google<sup>®</sup> Street View); 5. 136 Dupont St., 1983-2009 (Jim Low<sup>®</sup>, [www.jimlow.com/home/astronomy/rascoffice/index.html](http://www.jimlow.com/home/astronomy/rascoffice/index.html)); 6. 4920 Dundas St. West, 2009- (Google<sup>®</sup> Street View). The background image is from Alexander Jamieson's *A Celestial Atlas...* (London: G. & W.B. Whittaker & N. Hailes, 1822), pl. VI, Ursa maior, a copy of which is in the Rare Books Collection of the Archives.

*This report details activities of the Committee, and initiatives of Committee members consonant with the spirit of the Committee, to further the RASC's Vision and Mission through pursuing our Mandate (<http://www.rasc.ca/society>).*

Due to the briefer than customary time span between Council meetings, there are fewer activities to communicate in this report.

#### ***ARCHIVES' MOVE***

As many readers of this report will know by now (*e.g.*, [www.rasc.ca/news/new-headquarters](http://www.rasc.ca/news/new-headquarters)), the Society's National Office has relocated to somewhat larger, more serviceable, and more appropriate quarters in the same office building (4920 Dundas St., West—the suite number, 203, remains unchanged). Hence the chief business falling under the mandate of the History Committee in the period of this report is the successful moving of the Society's Archives. Books are heavy freight, and rare books in fragile bindings require particular care, precisely ordered but loosely gathered documents risk being disordered when moved *en masse*, and items such as glass magic-lantern slides, framed and unframed artwork, meteorites, celestial globes, time pieces, and optical artifacts each bring their own transport issues, not to mention the laborious prefatory task of the conveyance of book presses, the cartage of four-drawer lateral filing cabinets, and the shifting of diverse oak furniture. I am happy to report that everything made the move unharmed. This was due to the unstinting efforts of volunteers from the Toronto, Kingston, and Mississauga Centres on March 19: Katrina Ince-Lum, Walter MacDonald, Ron MacNaughton, and Betty Robinson, aided by staff members Julia Neeser, Renata Koziol, and Randy Attwood. We are grateful to them for their efforts, particularly as the Archivist was away on RASC business. The staff also helped to move artifacts in the days before and after that Saturday.

Walter MacDonald acted *in loco archivista*, for which the Archivist is doubly grateful.

Work in setting the Archives in order was suspended for over a month due to illness, but the Archivist has resumed that slow work. Our new quarters provide us with a dedicated, lockable room, rather than just a space. It is pleasant to reflect that it is reminiscent of the former RASC National Library at 252 College St. (see image below).

In preparing for the move, the Archivist drew up a set of guidelines to aid in the responsible handling of the objects. This is reproduced here to aid any RASC Centres which may be contemplating a similar relocation (see appendix below).

Centres should not hesitate to contact us if they have any questions of any sort regarding their archival material.

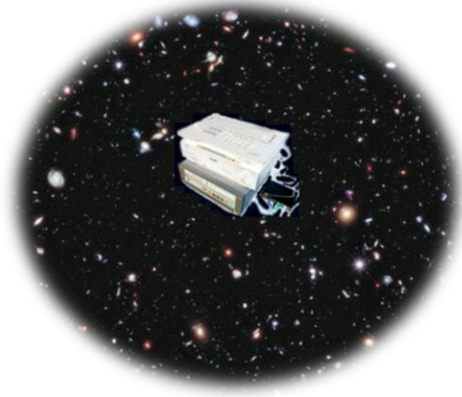


*Portion of the former RASC National Library at 252 College Street (Rev'd Norman Green, RASC Archives)*

### ***RASC ASTRONOMY VIDEOS***

The historic content on the Society's YouTube channel continues to increase ([www.youtube.com/user/RASCANADA](http://www.youtube.com/user/RASCANADA)). The two biggest donors of material are Randy Attwood, FRASC (*Astronomy Toronto*, 1981 - 1994) , and Robert Dick, FRASC. The views are also steadily, and gratifyingly increasing.

Expert digital conversion had already been done on a substantial number of the tapes by Bill Wagstaff (Ottawa Centre), for which he has our thanks. Walter MacDonald has recently collected Rob's original tapes, and has begun to convert the many tapes remaining to the standard established by Bill. Walter has managed to acquire the necessary specialized apparatus, and was greatly aided by a gift of equipment from RASC member Doug Clapp, and the loan of an Hi8 machine from Jon Buchanan via Rob (Ottawa Centre). Needless to say, we are grateful to Doug and Jon—and to the Society's Webmaster for the lengths to which he has gone to find the right gear.



## ***OTHER ACTIVITY***

Dr. Roy Bishop, FRASC, gave a talk entitled "A Matter of Some Gravity" to the Minas Astronomy Group (Wolfville area, NS) on 2016 March 12. The abstract is certainly worth quoting:

One hundred years ago Albert Einstein presented his General Theory of Relativity (GTR), a description of gravitation that replaced Newton's theory of 1687. The GTR is the foundation of modern cosmology, the study of the nature and structure of the Universe. Besides giving a revolutionary insight into the nature of gravity, and being essential for GPS navigation, the GTR predicts the existence of gravitational waves. Almost 40 years ago indirect evidence for gravitational waves was found in the orbital decay of a binary pulsar. About the same time, apparatus to possibly detect gravitational waves directly began to be built. These detectors have become increasingly more sensitive as designs and technology have advanced. Success occurred late last summer. After traveling for more than a billion years, on 2015 September 14 at 06:50:45 ADT a burst of gravitational waves passed through Earth. You did not feel them but two detectors in the USA did, opening a new branch of astronomy. That discovery was announced last month, on February 11. As the Canadian reporter Ivan Semeniuk put it: "After countless generations of living in silence on the shores of a vast and restless cosmic ocean, the human species can finally hear the surf."

Chris Gainor (Victoria Centre) continues his work writing the official NASA history of the epochal Hubble Space Telescope (HST) in operation, as well as leading the team compiling the HST historical archive. He appears to be happily thriving in the editorship of *Quest: the History of Spaceflight* ([www.spacehistory101.com/](http://www.spacehistory101.com/)).

Dr. Mark Tovey has been appointed (2016 April 11) as a postdoctoral fellow in the History Department of the University of Western Ontario, commencing 2016 May 2. Congratulations, Mark!

Chris Beckett has concluded his preliminary work of gathering primary and secondary sources, and making first-hand observations, to try to elucidate some early extra-solar system discoveries.

The Society's Archivist was invited, rather to his surprise, to be one of the Annual Peter Sim Lecturers for 2016 by the Calgary Centre (the other lecturer was Dr. Bob Thirsk). The Archivist's talk was on "Music of the Spheres: Astronomers as Musicians & Musicians as Astronomers", which was delivered to the Edmonton Centre on 2016 March 14, at the Telus World of Science, and to the Calgary Centre on 2016 March 17, at the Kirby Centre. He also gave a version of the talk to the Arts & Letters Club of Toronto (of Group of Seven fame), on 2016 May 4. Live music was involved; several Committee members appear to have survived the audience ordeal reasonably unscathed.

## ***PUBLICATIONS***

Lee Robbins & R.A. Rosenfeld, "The David Dunlap Observatory at 80", *JRASC* no. 110, vol. 2, 51-63

R.A. Rosenfeld, "The Long Road to the Dome", *JRASC* no. 110, vol. 2, 54-56

### *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

We wish to thank Julia Neeser, RASC Marketing Coordinator, Renata Koziol, Office Administrator, and Randy Attwood, FRAS, Executive Director, for advice, assistance, and administration during the period covered by this report. Particular thanks are due to Walter MacDonald (RASC Webmaster) for his care in continuing to make our material heritage accessible. And as James Edgar's reign as National President draws to a close we wish him the best, and acknowledge his support for this Committee's work.

Respectfully submitted,  
R.A. Rosenfeld, Chair

Committee Members:

- \*Randy Attwood, FRASC (ED)
- \*Chris Beckett (Unattached, consultant)
- Dr. Roy Bishop, FRASC (Halifax)
- Eric Briggs (Toronto)
- Peter Broughton, FRASC (Toronto)
- \*James Edgar ex officio (President, Regina)
- Dr. Karen Finstad (Ottawa Centre)
- Dr. Chris Gainor (Victoria)
- \*Dr. Robert Garrison (Toronto, consultant)
- \*Renata Koziol (Office Administrator)
- 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



### GUIDELINES FOR MOVING ARCHIVAL OBJECTS

The following is a brief list of pointers to help insure the smooth, efficient, and safe relocation of artifacts to a new location.

1. **BOOKS:** The most sensitive and fragile part of a binding is the spine (see ill. 1, feature 2).



On no account should books be placed in boxes "spine down". It is better that they rest in their proper orientation, on their lower edges (ill. 1, feature 7 & 12), or, second best, on their front or rear boards (ill. 1, features 1, or 24), or third best with their fore edges facing down (ill. 1, feature 6), and spines facing up. In packing the boxes try

to avoid overcrowding. If books are placed on their front or rear boards, ensure that the dimensions of the bottom of the box are large enough to allow the book to lie flat.

2. **ATLASES & FOLIO ITEMS:** Follow the guidelines above. Some atlases and folios will be too large to fit in the boxes. These ought to be carried by hand, and no more than two at a time. The items should be supported on the bottom with both hands. items appearing more fragile should be treated with greater care. *Special note:* the materials at the bottom of the narrow corner bookshelf between the two halves of the L-shaped broader bookshelves require some care in removal.
3. **FOLDERS, OR BOXES OF MANUSCRIPTS MATERIAL, PRINTED EPHEMERA, AND PHOTOGRAPHS.** It is important to insure that the contents of folders do not fall out, and that the contents of individual files do not become mixed or disturbed in transport.
4. **MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES (GLASS SLIDES):** These are kept in purpose-made boxes. Before attempting to move them, it is important to check that the clasps on the boxes are fully

- engaged. Do not carry the boxes upside down. Don't transport more than one box at a time.
5. **GLOBES:** There are three antique globes in the collection: i. the 18-inch celestial globe by W. & A.K. Johnson, on a floor stand; ii. the boxed Husun Star Globe; & iii. the "Rand"(?) terrestrial globe. Care must be taken when moving i., as its stand was designed with not fully adequate stability, and it is easy to tip it over. When moving ii, see that the clasps of the box are fully engaged. No special measures other than normal care need be taken when moving iii.
  6. **CLOCKS:** We have two antique clocks: i. a Seth Thomas wall-mount regulator in oak; & ii. the Bert Topham sidereal clock. It would be best if these weren't moved before the Archivist returns. If they have to be moved on the 19th, then the case for i. should be opened, and the weights (if present), and the pendulum and bob should be disengaged from the movement, removed from the case, and moved separately. Before dismounting the clock from the wall, remember to close and lock the case. For ii., transport it face up, and place a firm piece of cardboard, or a firm clipboard under it to support the movement & case, and to prevent any parts from accidentally escaping.
  7. **PIZZA & DRINKS:** Pizza & drinks are an integral and necessary part of any move. This is just a gentle reminder that a mark of a successful move is the absence of tomato-paste stains and soft-drink rings on the archival materials.

**If you have any doubts about how to move any artifact, talk to Walter and Randy first. Walter is acting as a supervisor on behalf of the Archivist, and you should follow his instructions, and advice.**

**The material heritage of the RASC has lasted thus far, and with care we should be able to pass it on to future RASC members.**

**And, finally, we *really* appreciate your help in volunteering your time on the 19th—many thanks!**

*ver. 1—R.A.R. 2016 March 15*