

## **Contribution for the WG Report**

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### **Introduction**

My official nomination to the WG as member for Latin America was on November 02, 2006.

Countries in this area affiliated to IAU in chronological order are:

- Mexico (1921)
- Brazil (1922)
- Argentina (1927)
- Chile (1947)
- Venezuela (1953)
- Uruguai (1970)
- Peru (1988)
- Bolívia (1998)
- Cuba (2001)

Precedence was given for the archival search in “IAU founder” countries. But considering the obvious advantages of starting soon this work everywhere, efforts were also made in other countries.

The contacts were by e-mail. The XII IAU Latin American Regional Meeting held in Isla de Margarita, Venezuela, from 22 to 26 October 2007 came about as a good opportunity to present the objectives of the WG at once to the Latin American astronomical community, and to make personal contacts with colleagues willing to collaborate. An application for participating of the Meeting, with recommendation letters from the WG chairperson and the Brazilian member of the Scientific Committee, was submitted to the committee of astronomy of two Brazilian funding institutions. But it was denied under the allegation that, among many demands for the same meeting, others were given higher priority.

### **Actions in founder countries**

#### **Mexico**

My contact with CONACYT failed. Then I contacted the Director of Instituto de Astronomia of Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México who put me in touch with Silvia Torres-Peimbert from the same Institute.

According to her, the Observatorio Astronomico Nacional from Tacubaya was participating of the international program of Carte du Ciel since 1887. Represented by Ministerio de Agricultura y Fomento to which the Observatory was subordinated, México adhered to IAU in 1921. In the I General Assembly of IAU in Rome, in 1922, Joaquín Gallo, director of the observatory was already enrolled as IAU member and presented the results obtained in Tacubaya for the astrographic atlas of Carte du Ciel taking part in the Committees of Carte du Ciel (23) and Heure (31).

In 1929 the observatory became part of Universidad Nacional de México. The archival documents from Tacubaya were left in boxes, without organization, at Observatorio Astronomico Nacional in Tonantzintla inaugurated in 1942. In 1990 they were moved to the Centro de Estudios sobre la Universidad de la UNAM (CESU). An inventory of the documents (only listed, nor organized) became available recently. Scrutinizing it Peimbert-Torres discovered the following documents:

1. Letter of January 1922 (date illegible) from Secretaria de Agricultura y Fomento pointing Gallo for representing Mexican astronomy in the I General Assembly of IAU
2. Letter from Gallo of January 12, 1922 to the General Secretary of IAU thanking the agenda for the next Assembly and promising the name of Mexican delegates and the communications for the meeting about meridian observations and the standard of time recently implanted in the Country
3. Letter from Gallo of January 21, 1922 to Secretaria de Agricultura y Fomento thanking the nomination as Mexican delegate for the I General Assembly of IAU
4. Letter of February 17, 1922 from the General Secretary of IAU to Gallo with information about the Assembly in Rome
5. Letter of March 3rd., 1923 from Secretaria de Agricultura y Fomento to the IAU General Secretary with the composition of the Mexican Committee of Astronomy
6. Letter of November 23, 1922 from IAU to Gallo and all members of Commission 31 (Heure) consulting about the acceptance of a new member
7. Letter of March 20, 1924 from IAU to Gallo and all members of Commission 23 (Carte du Ciel) consulting about the acceptance of a new member
8. Letter of March 11, 1925 from the IAU General Secretary to Gallo sending the agenda for the next General Assembly in Cambridge.

In addition I found reference to these books:

Gallo, J., *Panorama de la astronomía en México*, edición particular, México, 1960

Gallo Sarlat, J., *El ingeniero Joaquín Gallo Monterrubio, astrónomo, universitario y hombre cabal*, edición particular, Cerrada Presa Escolta 185, San Jerónimo, C. P. 10200, México, 1982

and to these archival sources:

Fondo Joaquín Gallo, Archivo Histórico, UNAM

Fondo Observatorio Astronómico Nacional, Archivo Histórico, AHUNAM-OAN.

## **Brazil**

The affiliation of Brazil to IAU was managed by Henrique Morize. He appears in the official photo of the I General Assembly (*Bulletin Société Astronomique France*, Sept 1922, p. 369). Morize was Director of the National Observatory in Rio de Janeiro from 1908 to 1930.

Certainly most of the important documents are kept in the Museum of Astronomy (MAST) in Rio de Janeiro. The Museum is settled in the former Observatory building

inaugurated in 1921. The Observatory itself is today in another building in the same campus. It is possible that some documents are still there. Another potential source of documents is the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC) as well as the National Archive and the National Library, all in Rio de Janeiro.

It was a natural decision to start the search in MAST. Most of documents there are still not organized, but the Museum Director was sensitive enough to the tasks of the WG and assigned Christina Helena da Motta Barboza, a Museum's researcher on history of science to assist me.

From the documents of Morize already collected by the Museum it was possible to find out the following ones:

1. original letter of February 22, 1922 from the Ministry of Agriculture nominating Morize to represent Brazil in the congress of IAU that year in Rome
2. typewritten copy of a communication by Morize on the calendar reform for the I General Assembly
3. typewritten copy of an excerpt of *Revista da Academia Brasileira de Ciencias*, n. 2, Janeiro de 1928 with record of the ABC session of May 3rd., 1926, proposing Morize to the Brazilian Government as delegate for the extraordinary congress of the International Research Council in Bruxel that year
4. typewritten copy of the original report by Morize of October 16, 1926 on his participation in the meeting in Bruxel.

After these preliminary results, the WG task became part of a research plan of MAST on the Brazilian cooperation in international programs from 1919 to 1938 (in 1938 Brazil was purged from IAU returning in 1961). Since December 2007 a young historian, with previous experience in history of science, is doing this research with a two-year fellowship.

### **Actions in other countries**

#### **Argentina**

The first contact with Asociación Argentina de Astronomía failed. Then I contacted Jorge Sahade, IAU President from 1985 to 1988. He advised to contact CONICET that currently accounts for the adhesion. CONICET informed that keeps only the records after 1998. Due to financial problems the annual fee of 2001 and 2004 was not paid. About older documents I was oriented to contact the Secretary of Comité Nacional de Astronomía. In spite of several attempts from May to September 2007, I could not contact the committee.

Hearing a recent suggestion from the WG Chairperson, I invited an astronomer from Museo Astronómico of Universidad Nacional de Córdoba to collaborate with the WG. He gladly accepted the invitation in June 3rd., 2008.

#### **Chile**

In April 2007 I contacted an astronomer from Universidad de Chile. He pointed out a colleague from his department who, in spite of my several attempts until November 2007, did not reply.

## Venezuela

The Director of CIDA (Centro de Investigaciones de Astronomía) in Mérida pointed out the historian Pedro Chalbaud Cardona to collaborate with me. In one chapter of his thesis for obtaining the teaching degree, he discoursed briefly on the affiliation of Venezuela to IAU.

Chalbaud kindly made available a copy of his thesis: “Inicios de la astronomía moderna en Venezuela: El Proyecto de Eduardo Röhl. Aportes para su estudio”, Escuela de Historia, Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela, Septiembre de 1990.

He stated that Venezuela adhered to IAU in 1953, but there are no documents testifying who and which institution did it. In fact, instead of the Observatorio Cagigal in Caracas, the most important in Venezuela at that time, the Academia de Ciencias Físicas e Matemáticas y Naturales appears as the institution representing Venezuela before IAU. Röhl was director of Cagigal, but he was also a member of the Academia.

At any rate 1953 was also the year Röhl started the instrumental modernization of Cagigal, a project that thrived until the fall of president Pérez Jiménez in 1958, facing henceforth serious drawbacks and delays. The observatory modernization was the subject of a communication in the session of Committee 9 (Astronomical Instruments) during the General Assembly of IAU in 1955, in Dublin.

Chalbaud assured that all documents from Cagigal were destroyed. In April 2008 I suggested him to visit the Academia de Ciencias and family archives from Röhl and Abdala. To my joy, he said to be doing that. Abdala is still alive and was interviewed.

There is another article "El Doctor Eduardo Röhl y el Proyecto de Modernización del Observatorio Cagigal de Caracas (1952-1958)" by Chalbaud in the magazine *Tierra Firme*.

## Uruguay

The first contact in March 2007 was with astronomers from Departamento de Astronomía from Instituto de Física of Facultad de Ciencias, in Montevideo. I was informed that the affiliation was made by Gladys Vergara, professor from Instituto de Agrimensura from Facultad de Ingeniería.

Vergara confirmed that herself accomplished the affiliation. With a work on the variation of geographical coordinates in the southern hemisphere, she was participating of a meeting on spatial geodesy in Córdoba and then in La Plata Observatory, both in Argentina. Among the participants was Otto Heckmann, then President of IAU. Under his guidance she accomplished the adhesion to IAU. To this end she wrote a document on the astronomical activities from the beginning of the 20th. century (epoch of Enrique Legrand) to the 70s. She reported the installation in 1928 by Alberto Reyes Thebené of an astrographic camera at the Astronomical Observatory of Montevideo which stood as center of astronomical activities until the creation of Departamento de Astronomía from Facultad de Ciencias. The astronomical works that warranted the acceptance by IAU consisted on calculation of orbits of comets and asteroids with results published by Heidelberg (*Astronomisches Jahrbuch*), Harvard and other observatories.

This testimony is very important in itself. Then I asked about the archival documents. In spite of my insistence until July 2007 I did not get a reply.

### **Peru**

I tried a first contact in July 2007 with the President of CONCYTEC but I did not get a reply. The e-mail transmitted again was equally unsuccessful.

### **Bolivia**

The first contact was in July 2007 with the Viceministro de Ciencia y Tecnologia from CONACYT. He oriented me to obtain the information from the Director of the Planetary Max Schraider from Universidad Mayor de San Andres in La Paz. In September 2007 the Director informed the reply should be transmitted soon. In spite of my repeated requests, so far I did not get it.

### **Cuba**

In July 2007 I contacted the Director from Instituto de Geofísica y Astronomía in La Habana. She oriented me to contact Jorge Pérez Doval, head of Department of Astronomy from that institute. He prepared a note based on his memoirs entitled "Informe sobre la participación de Cuba en la Unión Astronómica Internacional (IAU)". He informs that Cuba adhered to IAU in 1988 with one sole member, and that the adherent institutions were the Instituto de Geofísica y Astronomía and the Academia de Ciencias. In 1997 the affiliation was cancelled because of fee debts. In 2001 was readmitted as provisional member.

No documents about the affiliation are kept in the Department or Institute. The Academia de Ciencias in Capitolio Nacional in La Habana may keep some papers. I tried to contact the Academia in September and again in October 2007, but I did not succeed.

### **Conclusion**

The finding of archival documents of type B (cfr. WG Working Plan) in founder countries is advancing. Embedding the WG tasks in a research program of history of astronomy, as in MAST, Brazil, seems to be a good model to be reproduced elsewhere.

In the non-founder countries the works progressed in Venezuela, Cuba and Uruguay. In Argentina a contact was established recently. A contact is still needed in Chile, Peru and Bolivia.