

years of the IAU were collected. During my time as General Secretary I had correspondence with Prof. Velghe in Brussels (Belgium) and Prof. Brumba at Ondrejov (Czechoslovakia) concerning the IAU archives which were deposited in these two observatories. When at the end of 1979 the permanent secretariat of the IAU was settled at the Observatoire de Paris the archives of the IAU were shipped from Brussels, Ondrejov and Lausanne/Geneva to Paris where they were stored at the little house near the entrance of the Paris Observatory. In later years, when the IAU secretariat was moved to the "Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris" (IAP), the IAU archives were also moved to the Institute where they are probably still be stored.

P. Wayman : In 1979-1982 the IAU Archives were in reasonable order and could be consulted. They were still in the same order in the basement of the IAU house when I left.

S. Débarbat : I went recently to the basement of the little house and I can insure that it is empty, which is normal after the IAU secretariat was moved to the IAP building.

## EARLY GENERAL SECRETARIES AND THE IAU HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

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**First General Secretaries.** The Union's first General Secretary (1919-1925) was Alfred Fowler of Imperial College, London, the second one (1925-1935) was F.J.M. Stratton of Cambridge, the third one (1935-1948) J.H. Oort of Leiden, the fourth one (1948-1952) B.G.D. Strömgren, first at Copenhagen, then at Yerkes Observatory, Williams Bay, USA, and the fifth one P.Th. Oosterhoff (1952-1958) of Leiden. All of them served the Union with great devotion. Important archival data for historical research has been preserved from all of them except from Stratton, whose highly efficient handling of the IAU affairs is reported to have implied strong preference for the waste basket. Among the most interesting items left is Fowler's Notebook, which contains his minutes of the first meeting of the IAU Executive Committee, of July 28, 1919.

**The IAU Historical Archives.** IAU Historical Archives as such, separate from the Secretarial files and properly inventoried, did not exist when the author undertook writing his "History of the IAU" published in July 1994, but a rich body of documents had been accumulated at the General Secretariat, including also some archives left by IAU Presidents. Up to the year 1980, when the Bureau at Paris was established, these archives had a somewhat nomadic existence, moving with the domicile of the Secretary, except for a part of the collection temporarily stored at Uccle Observatory. (We are indebted to former General Secretary Edith Müller for clarification on this latter point.) Most of the material pertaining to the first three decades, up to and including Gen. Secr. Strömgren, and part of the fourth and fifth one (Secretaries Oosterhoff, Sadler and Pecker) have now been incorporated into provisional, ordered, IAU Archives and an Inventory has been made, sufficient for global referencing, as described in the "History". Steps to be taken now are: a) Arrangements with a suitable host for the Archives, ensuring adequate supervision and protection by storage under proper conditions of

temperature and humidity. b) Compilation of a more detailed Inventory and making this available for students of the IAU history.

## **THE GENERAL SECRETARIES OF THE IAU**

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Since its foundation in 1919 there have been 16 general Secretaries (GS) of the Union, including the present incumbent ; nine are still alive, 6 past GS are here at this General Assembly (GA). During the period of World War II W.S. Adams held J.H.Oort's power of attorney to act as GS. All have been unpaid, supported through their terms of office by their own institutions. Their task is to act for the Union in all its business -between GAs and between Meetings of the Executive Committee (EC) ; to report on actions taken to the EC and to act within the framework of policy decided by the GA and interpreted by the EC. Because of the wide geographical spread of the EC and, more generally, that of the Union members, GSs have enjoyed considerable freedom of action to support international astronomy. The steady growth in the membership of the Union since 1919 and the standing of the Union reflects the integrity of purpose of those who have discharged the office.

The membership of the Union in 1922 was 207 of whom 83 participated in the first GA in Rome. At the XXIst GA in Buenos Aires (1991) membership had increased to 7301 with a participation of about 1400. Given a growth in membership by a factor of just over 35, it is clear that the working practice of the Union have had to be revised over the intervening years. For example, some of the early GSs served multiple trienna - Stratton served three. The late D.H. Sadler (who served for two trienna) instituted the office of Assistant General Secretary (AGS) to ease the burden on the GS. By tradition the AGS now takes responsibility for Symposia, Colloquia and other IAU Scientific Meetings apart from the GA. E.A. Müller negotiated the establishment of a permanent location for the Union Secretariat. Previously the Secretariat (i.e. after the establishment of such support at Union expense) and the Union records moved triennially to the home institution of the newly incumbent GS -clearly a move of growing disruption as Union records of membership grew. The Observatoire de Paris housed the Union in one of its Gatehouses - historic and gracious if increasingly overcrowded accomodation. The Secretariat remains in Paris where it is now housed in the same building as the Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris and the Union owes a considerable debt of gratitude to CNRS through INSU and the French astronomical community for this generous support.

Traditionally GS have been European -in recent years to keep to a minimum, costs and time of travel to Paris. Four GS have come from the UK, three from the Netherlands, two each from Denmark and France, one each from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Ireland and Switzerland. Soon there will be the first from Germany if I may anticipate an election. I hesitate to comment on the deep significance of the GS qualities of the UK, Netherlands, Denmark and France. The office is demanding and that demand grows no less onerous with the passage of time. The GS of the Union is central to maintaining