

DIVISION XII / COMMISSION 41 / WORKING GROUP HISTORICAL INSTRUMENTS

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1. IYA2009 initiative

The *Historical Instruments* Working Group (WG-HI) and Commission 41 started planning an interdisciplinary conference titled *Astronomy and its instruments before and after Galileo* since January 2007. This conference, as an IYA2009 initiative, aims “to highlight mankind’s path toward an improved knowledge of the sky using mathematical and mechanical tools as well as monuments and buildings, giving rise, in doing so, to scientific astronomy”. Commission 46 and Commission 55 also support this conference, to be held on the Isle of San Servolo, Venice (Italy), 27 September – 3 October 2009. As a fact of history, it was in Venice that Galileo was advised and got material (glass) to make his telescope, and in Venice he presented an working instrument to Venetian Doge in August 1609. The conference is co-sponsored by IAU as a Joint Symposium with the INAF - Astronomical Observatory of Padova, Italy.

2. The thesaurus of historical instruments

The WG-HI thesaurus is now better defined as far as its structure and content are concerned. Like a dictionary, it will be a list of terms – single-word or multi-word nouns plus adjectives and adverbs when useful – to give a correct identification of historical instruments and their use. Terms, including variants and synonyms from each country, have to be introduced to identify instruments and parts of them. Etymology, general definition, particular definition related to adjectives or adverbs, of all listed terms have to be given in a synthetic way, as well as a bibliography related to earliest written sources (primary sources), and images when available to show a prototype of each instrument and parts of it. A first list is now circulating among the WG-HI members as a starting point in compiling the thesaurus. The WG-HI thesaurus aims to provide interested people with correct information about historical instruments, their names and use in astronomy and related disciplines as well as their inventors, in each country. It aims to help with the identification of astronomical heritage in line with ‘The Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative’.

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chair of the Working Group