

70 YEARS OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY “RUDJER BOŠKOVIĆ” – AN INTERESTING EXPERIENCE IN ASTRONOMICAL EDUCATION, POPULARIZATION AND ORGANIZATION OF ASTRONOMER AMATEURS

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Abstract. The oldest organization of astronomers amateurs in Serbia is the Astronomical society “Rudjer Bošković” which in 2004. celebrates the 70th anniversary. The Society has People’s observatory which in 2004 celebrates 40th jubilly, planetarium and publish the journal for astronomy “Vasiona” (Universe), which 50th anniversary has been celebrated in 2003. Here is given a review of the history and development of Society and an overview of its activities.

1 Foundation and First Years

The largest and the oldest organization of amateur-astronomers in Serbia is the Astronomical Society “Rudjer Bošković” in Belgrade (Kalemegdan, Gornji Grad 16, 11 000 Belgrade), which in the course of 70 years of its existence was spreading astronomical knowledge in our country. The founding meeting was held on 22 April 1934. The first Society’s President was Djordje Nikolić (1934–1936) and the second Vojin Djuričić (1936–1941), the governer of the State Mortgage Bank.

In 1935 Society started publishing the first periodical for the popularization of science in Serbia “Saturn”, “the periodical for astronomy, meteorology, geophysics and geodesy which purpose is to be useful to national culture”, published in 12 issues per year up to the end of 1940. Editors in chief were Djordje Nikolić (1935), Vojislav Grujić (1936–1939) and Nenad Janković (1940).

Activity of the Society during this period was the organizing of a large number of popular lectures, with the aim to contribute to education and cultural life in our midst. Also Society organized occasional observational expeditions and observations for citizens.

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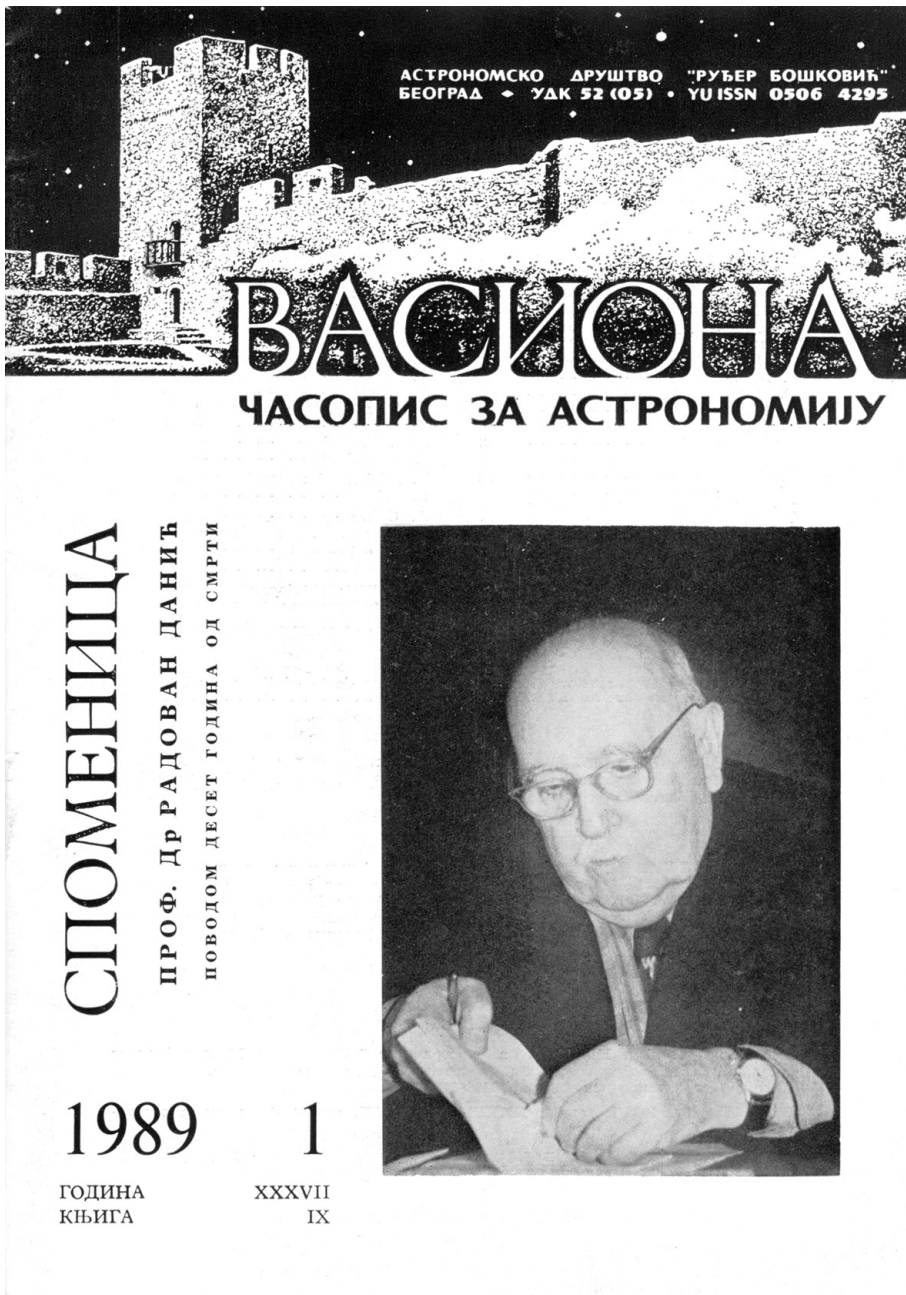


Fig. 1. Special issue of the astronomical journal “Vasiona” (Universe,) dedicated to Radovan Danić, president of Astronomical society “Rudjer Bošković (1952–1966), published to mark 10 years since he passed away.

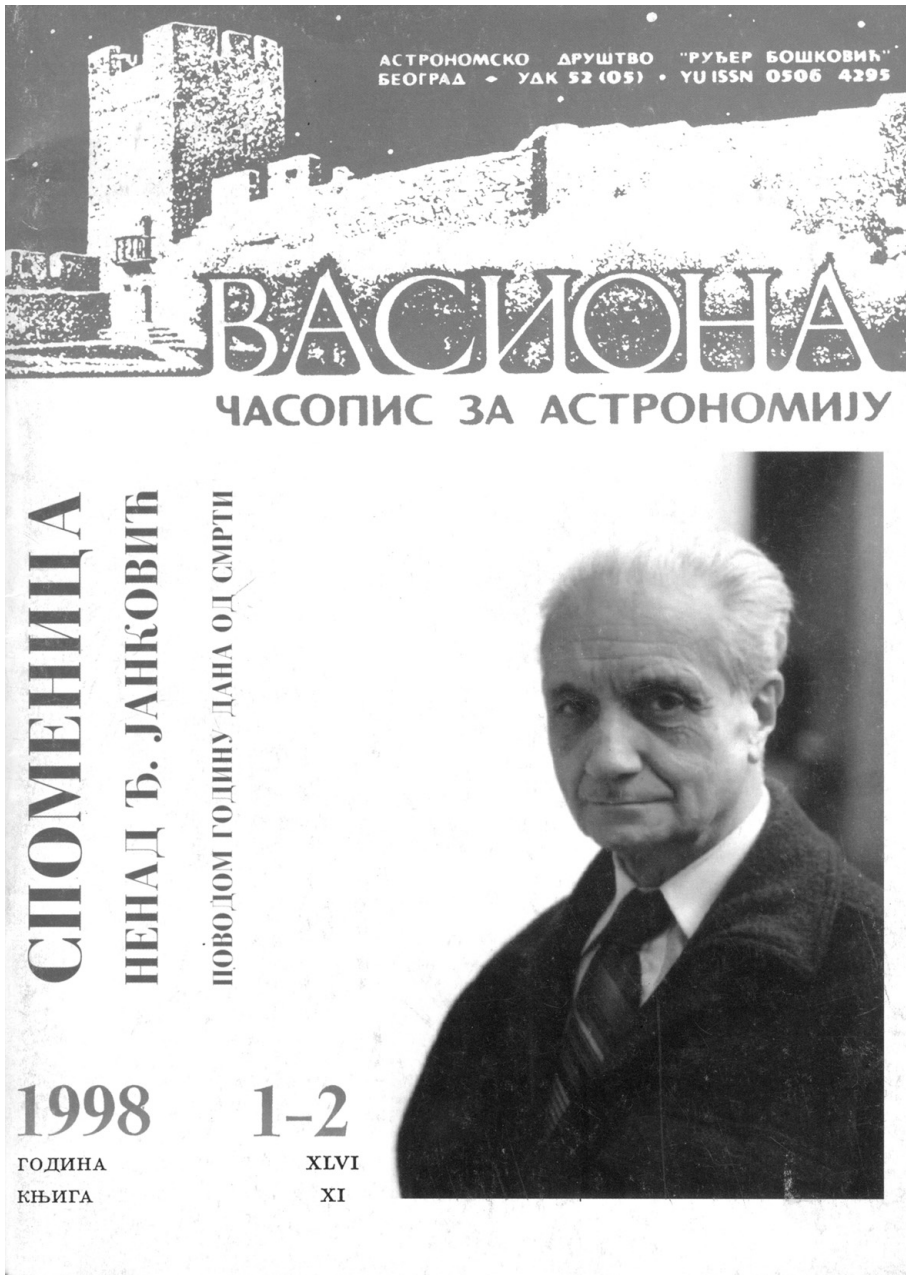


Fig. 2. Special issue of the astronomical journal “Vasiona” (Universe,) dedicated to Nenad Janković, its first Editor in chief (1953–1972), published to mark one years since he passed away.



Fig. 3. People's Observatory of the Astronomical Society "Rudjer Bošković, in Belgrade fortress on Kalemegdan, in the tower built by despot Stefan Lazarević in XV century.

2 The New Beginning after the World War II

After the War, on 9th December 1951 was held the founding meeting of the Belgrade Astronomical Club "Rudjer Bošković", re-registered next year into Astronomical Society "Rudjer Bošković". The founding meeting of the Society was held on 18 May 1952, Radovan Danić having been elected its President (1952–1966). Following him the Society's Presidents have been: Branislav Ševarlić (1966–1970), Pero Djurković (1970–1972), Nenad Janković (1972–1974), Božidar Popović (1974–1979), Zoran Knežević (1979–1982) Milan S. Dimitrijević (1982–2004) and from the 25th April 2004, Jelena Milogradov-Turin (Dimitrijević 2004a).

3 The Journal for Astronomy "Vasiona" (Universe)

In 1953 the Society, jointly with the Aeronautical Association of Yugoslavia, started publishing the periodical for astronomy and aeronautics (currently for astronomy) "Vasiona" (Universe). The first editor in chief of "Vasiona", was Nenad Dj. Janković (1953–1972). After him, the periodical's editors in chief were: Nenad Dj. Janković (1953–1972), Pero Djurković (1973–1974), Jelena Milogradov-Turin (1975–1982), Branislav Ševarlić (1983–1984) and Milan S. Dimitrijević (1985–2004), while Aleksandar Tomić is elected to be Editor in chief from the No. 1 for 2005. An analysis of the volumes issued during 50 years until the end of 2002 (Dimitrijević 2003) showed that within this period 5558 pages were published.



Fig. 4. After the session of the Editorial board of the “Vasiona” (Universe) journal, on 12th February 1992. *From the left:* Milan Vuletić, Milan Jeličić, Milan S. Dimitrijević, Jelena Milogradov-Turin, Luka Č. Popović, Aleksandar Tomić, Božidar Popović and Nenad Janković. Photo: Ljubiša Jovanović.

Impressive is also the number of 382 authors which published articles and larger contributions. If we add as well authors of smaller contributions, the total number of authors is 571. The complete of this journal represent a treasury, enabling the investigation of the history of astronomy in the past period, and particularly the study of the history and development of the Astronomical Society “Rudjer Bošković”, as well as a very useful astronomical “library” and a real encyclopedia of the science approaching us to the stars.

4 People’s Observatory and Planetarium

Thanks to the exertion of Pero Djurković, Radovan Danić and Nenad Janković with the authorities concerned, the Society obtained for itself the Despot Tower at Kalemegdan where, on 20 December 1964 was solemnly opened the People’s Observatory, whose regular activity started in June 1965. At the head of People’s Observatory were Pero Djurković (1. VI 1965 – 1. XII 1965), Radovan Danić (1. XII 1965 – 6. X 1977), Aleksandar Tomić (6. X 1977 – 31. I 1991), Luka Č. Popović (1. IV 1991 – 31. V 1995), Jelena Milogradov - Turin (1. VI 1995 – 1. VI 1999) and again Luka Č. Popović (1. VI 1999 – 2004).

With the foundation of People’s Observatory, Society obtained permanent offices and an observational post and also permanently employed staff, which largely



Fig. 5. Two telescopes on the terrace of People's Observatory. In the front is the older one refractor Zeiss (110/2040) and behind the newer one, the reflector TAL-200 K (200/2000). Photo by Vladimir Nenezić.



Fig. 6. Terrace of People's Observatory with four panoramic telescopes. Photo by Vladimir Nenezić.



Fig. 7. Projection of starry sky in the Planetarium of Astronomical Society “Rudjer Bošković” in Belgrade. Photo by Vladimir Nenezić.

improved conditions for its activities. Permanent offices enabled to start a regular astronomical seminar for the beginners and to organize a library.

For example LXXII spring seminar started on 7th March and terminated on 7th June 2003, and the LXXIII autumn seminar started on 26th September and

terminated on 13th December 003. On lectures were 79 attendants in average (Dimitrijević 2004b).

The Society managed also to procure a Zeiss planetarium, which was installed in an old spacious steam bath-house – Turkish Hamam – in the Kalemegdan Donji Grad. The Planetarium started operating in 1969, being formally opened on 27 February 1970. It is included in the educational system and around 15 000 pupils, students and other visitors per year, attend lectures and projections in it. The highest number of visitors was in 1982 – 18 297. May 2002 with 2046 visitors is also a record and the lecture with largest number of attendants is the lecture *Constelations* by Dragana Okolić, held on 15th March 1997 with 280 attendants (Stanić 2005).

5 Other Activities and Conclusion

The Society organized also VII National Conference of Yugoslav Astronomers on the occasion of its 50 years anniversary 1984, dedicated to the history of astronomy and astronomy in culture, the conference “Astronomy at Serbs” III 2004, and was the co-organizer of the IV Serbian-Bulgarian astronomical conference 2004.

It is worth to note the organization of the astronomical-astronautical exhibition in 1954, which after Belgrade was also in other cities and for example in Sombor was visited by around 7000 persons. This exhibition initiated the foundation of branches of the Society in other towns, and the most successful became in 1974 the Astronomical Society “Novi Sad”, ADNOS.

In order to contribute to the education and to popularization of astronomy the Society organizes every year manifestations “The Belgrade astronomical weekend” in June and “The summer astronomical meetings” in August-September, occasional lectures on astronomy, observations of celestial objects and events, and special observational excursions out of Belgrade. Also People’s Observatory is open for citizens on working days from 9 to 19 h, and during the weekend 12–22:30 h. For example in 2003, 29 010 visitors took a ticket. Staff provides informations to media and citizens on astronomical events. For the journal “Politika”, our Society daily provides data on the raise up and raise down of the Sun and Moon.

Enthusiasm always was the moving force of our astronomical society, unique from many aspects. All successes Society achieves by voluntary work of his members. Djordje Nikolić, Radovan Danić, Nenad Janković, Pero Djurković, Jelena Milogradov-Turin, Aleksandar Kubičela, Djordje Teleki, Aleksandar Tomić, Milan Jeličić, Milan Vuletić, Ninoslav Čabrić, Dušan Slavić, Ljubiša Jovanović, Sofija Sadžakov, Zoran Ivanović, Jovan Grujić and many others make a chain of enthusiasts without end, renewing permanently enabling to Society to be more than 70 years a source of knowledges on Universe, being for many young men the first step to the highest scientific achievements.

References

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Question by Magda Stavinschi (Bucharest):

As I know, you are not amateur astronomer, you was even director of the Belgrade Observatory. Which is the official link between professional and amateur astronomy in your country?

The answer: as in other countries, in Serbia besides professional astronomers there is a much larger number of astronomers amateurs, which can help very much to professionals not only in work but also to spread astronomical knowledge in our midst and contribute that the public opinion is favorable for astronomical science. Amateurs are in Serbia organized in several societies. Besides two mentioned here in Belgrade and Novi Sad, such societies exist in Niš, Kragujevac, Valjevo, Zrenjanin, Prokuplje, Knjaževac, Novi Pazar and Leskovac. There are no official legal links with professionals, but in Belgrade practically all professional astronomers are also members of the Astronomical Society “Rudjer Bošković” and they dominate in all governing bodies, trying to organize the education of amateurs and direct their work to be useful for astronomy, education and cultural life in our country.