

THE TALLINN PUBLIC OBSERVATORY IN CHANGING CONDITIONS

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ABSTRACT. The history of development of the Tallinn Public Observatory is described.

Key words: Observatories : Public Observatory.

In Estonia, as well as in whole Europe, after the World War II devastation, few amateur astronomical data have saved. Since Estonia has lost in this war 10-20 per cent of its population, the amateur astronomy needed rebirth. The period just after 1953 may be considered being a time of renaissance. Life conditions improved, and the ÜAGÜ Tartu Branch (All Union Astronomical and Geodetical Society) was established. Later on its base the Estonian Branch was created (Estonian Branch of the All Union Astronomical and Geodetical Society).

The triumph of astronomy began at the times when the first human-made satellite was launched. Being a really remarkable achievement, it caused space-related euphoria, so the popularity of astronomy also increased. A building at Estonia pst 15 (earlier a private observatory) was conferred to amateurs in 1954, and in 1959 (Villmann(1961)) the decision was made to establish a new Tallinn Observatory in Hiiu suburb. As strange as it may seem, the best period in the history of the Observatory was in 1970-1980. At that time, five research associate positions were available, the time suitable for observations was used effectively, and a sufficient number of publications was provided. Amateur astronomy was also quite popular, and amateurs were participating actively in research work (Aas and Harvig(2006)).

After desintegration of the Soviet Union and re-establishment of the Estonian Republic, financial support of fundamental studies decreased, as well as the personnel of the Observatory. At the same time the value system in the society changed, especially among the younger people, who's interests shifted away from natural sciences. At present moment situation has become more stable and the interest towards astronomy revives. It is mostly noticeable by organization of public astronomical events. Simultaneously, due to economical successes of the country, the possibilities to

acquire new equipment are much better now.

Since the need for qualified personnel in exact sciences increases rapidly, the situation in the public observatory of Tallinn (which is the Educational Observatory of the Tallinn University of Technology) has significantly improved. For example this year (2007) the university budget for the repair of the building of the observatory is 300 000 €.



Figure 1: Former Edgar Höppener's private observatory as the public observatory in 1955



Figure 2: Ch. Villmann's lecture on space exploration in 1959



Figure 3: Observatory in 2007

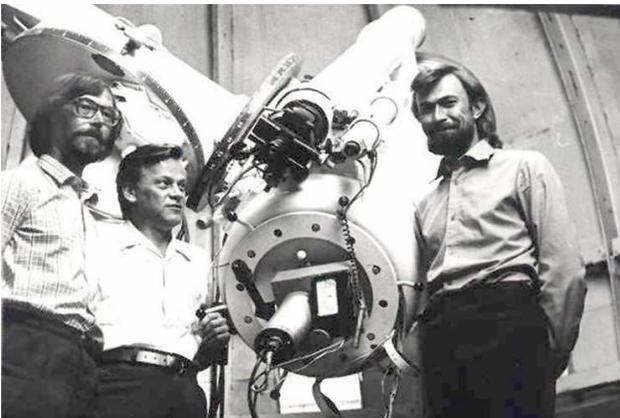


Figure 4: Observers in 1980

References

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Figure 5: The last picture before reduction of the staff 1992



Figure 6: Public demonstration of Mars 2004



Figure 7: Educational observation 2007