

Armenian Astronomical Society: report of 25-years activities

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Abstract

The history of the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS) foundation and its goals and a summary of ArAS activities during 1999-2024 is presented. The following have been among the most important activities: ArAS formation, increase of ArAS membership, consolidation of foreign Armenian astronomers, ArAS webpage with full of useful information, creating a Database of Armenian Astronomers, ArAS Electronic Newsletters (ArASNews), ArAS Annual Meetings, Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS) and other events for young astronomers and students, ArAS School Lectures series, Byurakan Science Camps (BSC) and other events for school pupils, ArAS Annual Prize for Young Astronomers (Yervant Terzian Prize), award of Galileo Teacher Training Program (GTTP) International Certificates and other teacher training programs, Armenian Archaeoastronomy webpage, initiation and development of Scientific (Astro) Journalism and its Annual Awards, initiation and development of Scientific (Astro) Tourism, as well as UNESCO/IAU International Year of Astronomy (IYA-2009) activities and others.

Introduction: Foundation, Main Goals, etc.

The Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that works on the development of astronomy in Armenia, promotion of collaboration between the Armenian and foreign astronomical institutions, strengthening contacts and collaboration between the Armenian and other astronomers, support of astronomical education and popularization of science in Armenia. ArAS was created in 1999 and officially registered in 2001. Since the same year, it is one of the Affiliated Societies of the European Astronomical Society (EAS). ArAS has 104 members both from Armenia and a number of other countries and may in fact be considered as an international organization.

The idea to establish an Armenian Astronomical Society was born in early 1980s when it was known already that a number of Armenian astronomers were working out of Armenia and a need to keep contacts between them and for collaboration was obvious. Vahé Petrosian and Yervant Terzian were among the initiators of this idea. However, the real society was not created. Later on, in the middle of 1990s, Areg Mickaelian in Byurakan started to collect information on all Armenian astronomers all over the world to prepare the foundation of the society. A few years later, after discussions with many people, including the IAU officials, a meeting was held to discuss this initiative. The decision to found the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS) was made on June 22, 1999 in Byurakan at the meeting of 16 astronomers. An initiative group was elected to prepare suggestions on the ArAS activities, work out its By-Laws, membership form, etc. Areg Mickaelian, Haik Harutyunian, Elena Nikoghossian, Susanna Hakopian, and Tigran Magakian made up this group. Y. Terzian took an active part in this process: the main principles of the Society were discussed during the visit of A. Mickaelian to Cornell University in September 1999. However, the official registration of the Society came 2 years later. The Ministry of Justice of Armenia approved the By-Laws and registered ArAS as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) on August 29, 2001 (registration document No. 03A 051334).

On September 13, 2001 at the European Astronomical Society (EAS) Council Meeting, ArAS was officially recognized by the EAS, becoming one of its at that time 21 Affiliated Society Members (at present there are 32 affiliated societies). Thus, we also have international recognition.

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The **main goals** of ArAS, according to its By-Laws, are:

- promotion of astronomy,
- promotion of collaboration between all astronomy-related institutions in Armenia,
- promotion of contacts and collaboration between the Armenian and other astronomers all over the world,
- development of the astronomical education and knowledge in Armenia.

The **main activities** of ArAS are:

- Providing detailed information on Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO), Armenian and world astronomy through its webpage,
- Enlargement of the membership so that ArAS becomes a really All-Armenian organization. Astronomers of any nationality may enter ArAS. There is also a status of Honorary members, people who have made great contribution to science and to Armenian astronomy;
- Creation and maintenance of a Database of Armenian Astronomers;
- Establishment of several ArAS branches (beside the Armenian branch itself), particularly in North America, Europe, and the FSU (former Soviet Union), where most of the Armenian astronomers live and work (10-20 in each). This is not done yet, though planned at ArAS creation;
- Publication of an Electronic Newsletter (1 issue per 3 months, then much often) starting with 2002. They give information on different Armenian scientists, Armenia itself, as well as publish some scientific abstracts and short papers;
- Publication of an annual Calendar of Astronomical Events;
- Organization of Annual Meetings in Armenia with participation of as many Armenian astronomers as possible. The scientific program is open to all subjects;
- Organization of Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS) for Young Astronomers;
- Organization of the European Annual Astronomical Meeting (JENAM-2007), the largest scientific event ever held in Armenia;
- Collaboration with other Armenian and International organizations (IAU, EAS, EAAS, Armenian Physical Society, All-Armenian Scientific Society, Society of Armenian Scientists and Engineers, etc.);
- Award of the ArAS Annual Prize for Young Astronomers (Yervant Terzian Prize) and establishment of Annual Prizes for outstanding astronomers: one for work in theoretical astrophysics (Ambartsumian Prize), and one for work in observational astrophysics (Markarian Prize).
- Various educational activities;
- Promotional / public outreach activities, including Scientific Journalism in Armenia through its regular press-releases.
- Current work of ArAS Administration.

ArAS Membership

As for 31.05.2024, altogether there are 104 ArAS members from 21 countries, including 11 founding members, 1 honorary, 72 full, and 20 junior ones. Among the 50 foreign members, we have:

Canada (1) – Arsen R. Hajian

France (5) – Isabelle Baraffe, Daniel Kunth, Mustapha Meftah, Alain Sarkissian, Parandzem K. Sinamyan

Germany (6) – Tigran G. Arshakian, Dieter Engels, Gohar Harutyunyan, Tigran V. Khanzadian, Razmik Mirzoyan, Armen D. Sedrakian

Greece (1) – Vassilis Charmandaris

Hungary (1) – Ishtvan Jankovich

India (1) – Arun Kumar Singh
 Iran (3) – Shant Baghrum, Habib Khosroshahi, Sohrab Rahvar
 Ireland (1) – Felix A. Aharonian
 Italy (2) – Hripsime Kh. Navasardian, Massimo Turatto
 Mexico (2) – Vahram H. Chavushyan, Gagik H. Tovmassian
 Netherlands (1) – Bernhard Brandl
 Portugal (1) – Vardan Zh. Adibekyan
 Romania (1) – Magda Stavinschi
 Russia (3) – Anatol M. Cherepashchuk, Vardan G. Elbakyan, Igor D. Karachentsev
 Spain (2) – Garik Israelian, Vakhtang S. Tamazian
 Switzerland (1) – Michel Mayor
 Thailand (1) – David E. Mkrtichian
 UK (1) – Mihran Vardanyan
 USA (16) – Vladimir S. Airapetian, Noretta K. Andreassian-Thomas, Timothy C. Arlen, Smbat K. Balayan, Donald Barry, Richard D. Belian, Adam Burrows, Igor V. Chilingarian, Varoujan Gorjian, Marietta V. Gyulzadian, Lilit R. Hovhannisyan, Emmanuel Momjian, R. Brent Tully, Daniel W. Weedman, Artashes R. Petrosian, Vahe Petrosian

There are many ArAS membership benefits:

- ArAS has created and maintains an up-to-date website providing society’s general information, information on Meetings, Prizes, Grants, Summer/Winter Schools, Members, Publications, etc.;
- ArAS maintains a database of its membership, available on the web, as well as a database of all Armenian astronomers;
- ArAS publishes its monthly electronic newsletter ArASNews that is distributed to its members and other interested scientists and societies;
- ArAS awards yearly prizes to young astronomers;
- ArAS individual members participate to the election of ArAS Council, they may nominate candidates for the ArAS Annual Prize and other ArAS awards and have a right to vote at the Annual meetings;
- ArAS holds yearly ArAS meetings. These meetings bring together the Armenian astronomical community, they include typically various scientific topics and organizational matters. ArAS members are granted discounts for participation in these meetings and other ArAS events;
- ArAS publishes the Proceedings of its meetings and some other books, and ArAS members have discounts on them (often ArAS provides these books free of charge to its members);
- ArAS provides free space for personal webpage for all members;
- ArAS maintains close professional relationships with most of the European national astronomy societies, and gives possibility to exchange practice and develop collaboration;
- ArAS members can participate in ArAS projects, as ArAS School Lectures, etc.;
- ArAS runs a number of educational and public outreach activities.

ArAS Webpage

ArAS has a very rich webpage with a lot of information on the Armenian and world astronomy, a detailed webpage on the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO), A Database of all Armenian astronomers in the world, a page for Famous Armenian astronomers, ArAS activities, including the ArASNews, Annual Meetings, Annual Prizes, etc., the Digitized First Byurakan Survey (DFBS), the Armenian Virtual Observatory (ArVO), BAO Plate Archive Project, webpages for the journals “Astrophysics” and “Communications of BAO”.



Figure 1. ArAS webpage home and BAO webpage created at ArAS with some more information that is available on BAO official webpage.

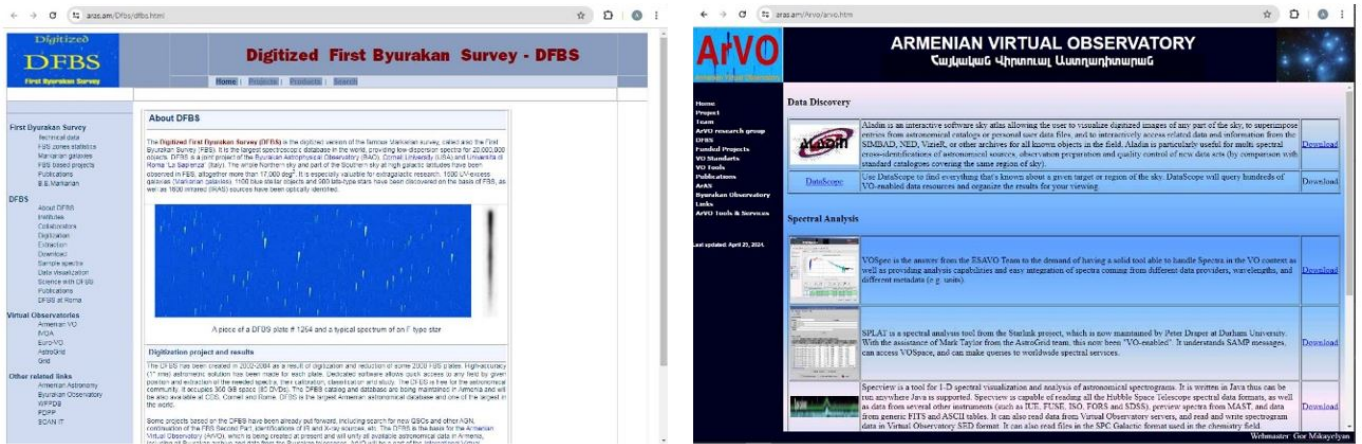


Figure 2. Webpages of the Digitized First Byurakan Survey (DFBS) and the Armenian Virtual Observatory (ArVO).

ArAS Electronic Newsletters

ArAS Electronic Newsletters ArASNews have been created and are being released since 2002. All details are given in another paper of this Issue (Asryan et al., 2024).

ArAS Annual Meetings

ArAS Annual Meetings were started in 2002. We maintain webpages for each such meeting individually. Many Annual Meetings were combined with some important events held in BAO, ex. ArAS Annual Meeting VI in 2007 was combined with the European Astronomical Society (EAS) Annual Meeting (JENAM: Joint European and National Astronomical Meeting; this one was held in Yerevan at the Yerevan State University), ArAS Annual Meeting XIV in 2015 was combined with the Armenian-Iranian Astronomical Workshop (AIAW), ArAS Annual Meeting XVI in 2017 was combined with the UNESCO Regional Conference, etc.

We give in Table 1 the list of all ArAS Annual Meetings with their details.

Meeting #	Year & Dates	Place	Meeting title/topic	Combined with	Dedicated to
I	2002.07.25	BAO	<i>Achievements of the Armenian Astronomy</i>		
II	2003.06.11-13	BAO		XIII Joint Colloquium of the Byurakan and Abastumani Astrophysical Observatories	L. V. Mirzoyan's 80 th anniversary

III	2004.08.30-31	BAO			
IV	2005.08.29-30	BAO			
V	2006.09.01-03	BAO	<i>Active Universe</i>	International Conference	60 th anniversary of BAO
VI	2007.08.20-25	YSU	<i>Our Non-Stable Universe</i>	Joint European and National Astronomy Meeting (JENAM) – 2007	
VII	2008.09.15-18	BAO	<i>Evolution of Cosmic Objects through their Physical Activity</i>	International Conference	V. A. Ambartsumian's 100 th anniversary
VIII	2009.07.06-08	BAO			
IX	2010.11.26	BAO			
X	2011.12.19	BAO			
XI	2012.09.25-26	BAO	<i>Astronomical Heritage in the National Culture</i>	Archaeoastronomical Meeting	Anania Shirakatsi's 1400 th anniversary
XII	2013.08.26-28	BAO	<i>Instability and Evolution of Stars</i>	XIV Joint Colloquium of the Byurakan and Abastumani Astrophysical Observatories	L. V. Mirzoyan's 90 th anniversary
XIII	2014.10.07-10	BAO	<i>Relation of Astronomy to other Sciences, Culture and Society</i>	Conference on Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Sciences	
XIV	2015.10.13-16	BAO		Armenian-Iranian Astronomical Workshop	Opening of the IAU SWA ROAD
XV	2016.12.21	NAS RA	<i>Non-Stable Universe: Energetic Resources, Activity Phenomena and Evolutionary Processes</i>	International Symposium	70 th anniversary of BAO
XVI	2017.11.13-17	NAS RA	<i>Astronomical Heritage of the Middle East</i>	UNESCO Regional Conference	
XVII	2018.09.20	BAO		IAU SWCA 2 nd Regional Astronomical Workshop	
XVIII	2019.09.11-13	BAO		IAU SWCA 3 rd Regional Astronomical Workshop	
XIX	2020.09.14-18	BAO	<i>Astronomical Surveys and Big Data 2</i>	International Symposium	
XX	2021.09.22-25	BAO	<i>Astronomy in the Crossroads of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Sciences</i>	International Conference	75 th anniversary of BAO
XXI	2022.09.19-23	BAO	<i>Space Sciences and Technologies</i>	International Conference	
XXII	2023.05.01-05	BAO	<i>XV Joint Colloquium of the Byurakan and Abastumani Astrophysical Observatories</i>		L. V. Mirzoyan's 100 th anniversary
XXIII	2024.05.06-08	BAO	<i>Relation of Astronomy to Other Sciences, Culture and Society</i>	Symposium	25 th anniversary of ArAS foundation

Table 1: The list of ArAS Annual Meetings 2002-2024.

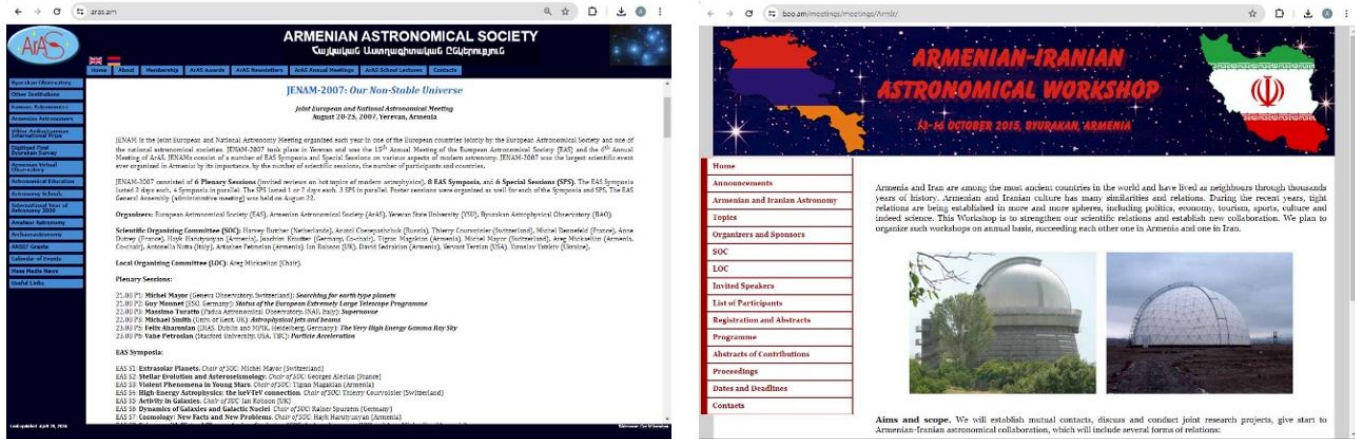


Figure 3. Webpages of individual ArAS Annual Meetings: ArAS Annual Meeting VI in 2007 combined with the EAS Annual Meeting (JENAM: Joint European and National Astronomical Meeting) and ArAS Annual Meeting XIV in 2015 combined with the Armenian-Iranian Astronomical Workshop.

ArAS Annual Prize for Young Astronomers

ArAS Annual Prize for Young Astronomers was established in 2004 by Areg Mickaelian and was supported by *Prof. Yervant Terzian* (Cornell University, N.Y., USA), who donated USD 100, then USD 200 and later on, USD 500 yearly. The prize is being awarded to a young scientist under 35 working in astronomy or related field and showing significant results in research and/or other scientific activities connected anyhow with the Armenian astronomy. Nominations may be made by ArAS members or any research organization from Armenia or elsewhere and should be sent to one of the ArAS Co-Presidents. They should include personal data for the nominee and a brief description of his/her achievements during the year, including important scientific results, all published papers, participation in meetings, given talks, etc., whatever is considered to be important. The deadline for applications is December 1 each year. A special committee (typically, the ArAS Council) makes the selection and the results are being announced in the last issue of ArAS Newsletter at the end of each year. A diploma and sum of \$500 are being awarded to the winner. Since 2009, the Prize is named after Yervant Terzian.

Here we give the list of all ArAS Annual Prize Winners:

- 2023** – Arus HARUTYUNYAN
- 2022** – Naira AZATYAN
- 2021** – Gor MIKAYELYAN
- 2020** – Hasmik ANDREASYAN, Gor MIKAYELYAN
- 2019** – Naira AZATYAN
- 2018** – Sona FARMANYAN
- 2017** – Naira AZATYAN
- 2016** – Anahit SAMSONYAN
- 2015** – Artur HAKOBYAN
- 2014** – Gurgen PARONYAN
- 2013** – Hayk ABRAHAMYAN, Avet HARUTYUNYAN (Italy)
- 2012** – Vardan ADIBEKYAN (Portugal)
- 2011** – Marine AVTANDILYAN
- 2010** – Parandzem SINAMYAN
- 2009** – Lusine SARGSYAN
- 2008** – Vardan ADIBEKYAN, Artur HAKOBYAN

2007 – Igor CHILINGARIAN (USA)

2006 – Lilit HOVHANNISYAN, Parandzem SINAMYAN

2005 – Artak HARUTYUNYAN, Elena HOVHANNESSIAN

2004 – Lusine SARGSYAN

In 2004-2023, there have been 20 awards; 5 times shared between 2 winners; totaling 25 recipients. There have been in total 18 young astronomers, ArAS Annual Prize Winners, some of them have received the Prize twice and one of them, Naira Azatyan, even 3 times (asterisk is given when the Prize was shared). We give in Table 2 ArAS Annual Prize Winners with the number of awards and the years.

Number of Awards	ArAS Annual Prize Winners	Awards Years
3	Naira AZATYAN	2017, 2019, 2022
2	Lusine SARGSYAN	2004, 2009
2	Parandzem SINAMYAN	2006*, 2010
2	Vardan ADIBEKYAN	2008*, 2012
2	Artur HAKOBYAN	2008*, 2015
2	Gor MIKAYELYAN	2020*, 2021
1	Igor CHILINGARIAN	2007
1	Marine AVTANDILYAN	2011
1	Gurgen PARONYAN	2014
1	Anahit SAMSONYAN	2016
1	Sona FARMANYAN	2018
1	Arus HARUTYUNYAN	2023
1	Artak HARUTYUNYAN	2005*
1	Elena HOVHANNESSIAN	2005*
1	Lilit HOVHANNISYAN	2006*
1	Hayk ABRAHAMYAN	2013*
1	Avet HARUTYUNYAN	2013*
1	Hasmik ANDREASYAN	2020*

Table 2: The list of ArAS Annual Prize Winners 2004-2023.

The distribution by countries is the following: Armenia – 22, Italy – 1, Portugal – 1, USA – 1. Gender distribution is such: Male – 8, Female – 10.

ArAS Educational Programs

ArAS runs many educational activities, including those for university students, school pupils and for the general public. Among them most active ones are:

- Byurakan Summer Schools (BSS) for YSU students, since 1995, 5 schools organized
- Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS), since 2006, 9 schools organized
- ArAS School Lectures “From School to Space”, since 2012, 11 events held
- Byurakan Science Camps (BSC), since 2014, 10 camps organized
- Teacher Training Programs (TTP), since 2010, 8 events organized

All details related to ArAS Educational Activities are given in another paper of this Issue (Baleyan et al., 2024).

ArAS Outreach Programmes

Many public outreach activities have been accomplished by ArAS mainly since 2009, starting with the UNESCO/IAU International Year of Astronomy (IYA-2009). Among the projects and activities, one could mention:

- Scientific (Astro) Tourism, since 2009. All details are given in another paper of this Issue (Farmanyan et al. 2024);
- Scientific (Astro) Journalism since 2010. A Facebook group was created and maintains network of scientists (mainly young researchers) and journalists. Scientific Journalism seminars have been organized and Scientific Journalism Annual Prizes have been established;
- Database of Famous Armenian Astronomers with biographies in Eng and Arm for 21 most important Armenian astronomers/astrophysicists and astronomy related physicists, among them Anania Shirakatsi (612-685 A.D.), 10 former BAO researchers, 2 from Yerevan State University (YSU) and 8 foreign Armenians. Especially detailed pages are built for Viktor Ambartsumian, Benjamin Markarian and Anania Shirakatsi;
- Database of Armenian astronomers, containing data for 257 Armenians from BAO, other Armenian research institutions and foreign researchers;
- Annual Calendars of Astronomical Events since 2012 (including Sky Events, International Events and Armenian Astronomy Events); in addition, all Solar and Lunar eclipses, Triple Conjunctions and Periodic Comets for 2001-2050 are given;
- A database of all our astronomical books (books published either by BAO and/or BAO researchers and related to BAO and/or BAO researchers, the latter mostly related to V. A. Ambartsumian);
- Online Journal “Astghagitak” (“Star Expert”), where all available astronomy-related articles in Armenian are given and which is being systematically updated.
- Armenian Archaeoastronomy webpage;
- Mass Media news webpage;
- Popular Astronomical TV program (Armenia TV) in 2003-2004.

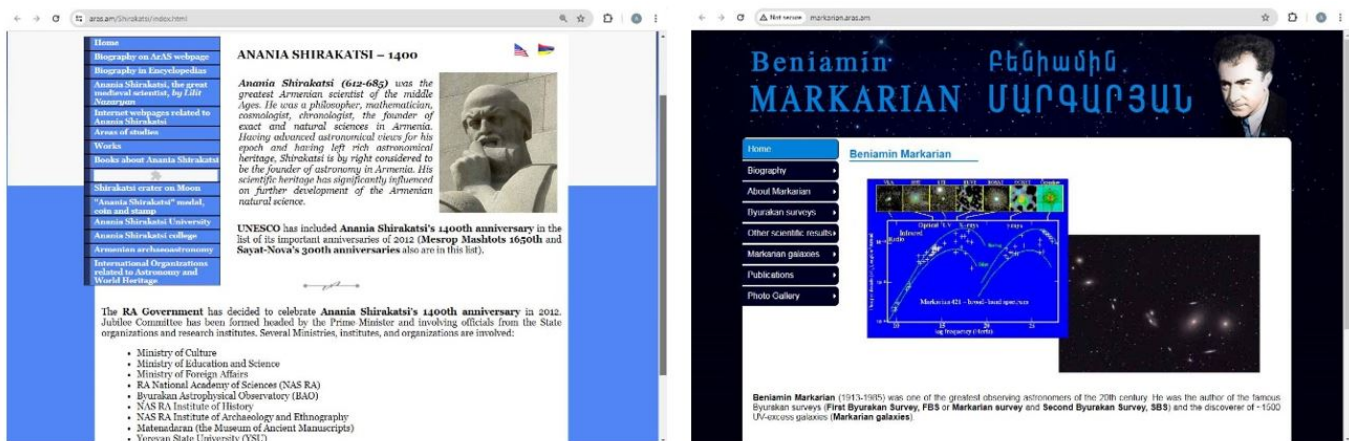


Figure 4. Anania Shirakatsi webpage created on the occasion of Shirakatsi's 1400th anniversary and Benjamin Markarian webpage created on the occasion of Markarian's 100th anniversary.

ArAS Finances

Though ArAS membership fees are not large (for Armenian residents it is USD 10 for Regular Members and USD 5 for Junior Members), anyway ArAS could find various sources and ran many activities requiring a lot of funds. We have a very nice collaboration with the EAS, due to which ArAS members do not pay EAS membership fees. Among the sponsors and supporters, one should mention the following individuals:

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- *Prof. Yervant Terzian*: ArAS Annual Prize, ArAS School Lectures
- Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR): ArAS School Lectures, BSC
- *Prof. Radik Martirosyan*: ArAS meetings and events at NAS RA
- *Prof. Daniel Weedman*: partial support of 1BISS in 2006
- *Mr. David Nelson* (Jinishyan found.): partial support of ArAS events
- *Prof. Michel Mayor*, *Prof. Garik Israelian*, *Prof. Nuno Santos*: partial support of 3BISS/ISYA-2010
- *Dr. Mihran Vardanyan*: support of ArAS/OxArm Prizes in 2011
- *Dr. Marietta Gyulzadyan*: organization of many educational events
- *Dr. Lusine Sargsyan*: organization and release of ArAS TV programmes
- *Gor Mikayelyan*: creation and maintenance of ArAS webpage since 2009
- *Sona Farmanyany*: ArAS Newsletters and organization of many other events
- *Meline Asryan*: ArAS Newsletters, public outreach activities

ArAS expenses during all these years included and at present include the following:

- Internet Domain and Hosting at web.am
- Office and Postal expenses
- Publication of promotional materials (ArAS pens, certificates, medals, etc.)
- Production of Astronomy for Schools and other DVDs, etc.
- Purchase of 100 Celestron FirstScope telescopes in frame of IYA-2009
- Organization of ArAS Annual Meetings, since 2002
- ArAS Annual Prize for Young Astronomers; 100-200-500 USD
- ArAS School Lectures 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016 (the others were supported by sponsors)
- Byurakan Summer Schools (BSS, BISS, RASS) and Camps (BSC)
- Other events: Olympiads, GTTP courses, etc.
- EAS membership fees 2002-2011 (ArAS payed for all its members)
- IYA-2009 activities: visits, promotional materials, etc.
- Celebrations of anniversaries, etc.
- Fiscal office expenses; Bank account service expenses
- A lot of activities are done for free (webpage, Database, ArASNews, Calendar of Events, etc.)

Summary and Conclusion

During its 25 years of existence, the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS) has conducted and accomplished a huge number of various activities; scientific, organizational, networking, educational and public outreach. Here we list the most important ones:

ArAS Membership: Armenia (54) and other countries (50)

ArAS webpage (since 2002)

Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO): detailed info (at present also available on BAO webpage)

ArAS Electronic Newsletters (ArASNews) (since 2002)

ArAS Annual Meetings (since 2002)

Byurakan Summer Schools (BSS) for YSU students (since 2005)

Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS) for young astronomers (since 2006)

ArAS School Lectures (since 2012)

Byurakan Science Camps (BSC) (since 2014)

ArAS Prize for Young Astronomers (Yervant Terzian Prize) (since 2004)

ArAS Prizes for Outstanding Astronomers (2009)

ArAS certificates and medals (2009-2019, 2024)

EAS affiliation (2001), other international organizations (IAO, IPDA, etc.)

Database of Armenian Astronomers (257 individuals)

Biographies of the **Famous Armenian Astronomers** (21 individuals)

Popular Astronomical TV program (Armenia TV) (2003-2004)

Calendar of Astronomical Events (since 2012)

“Astghagitak” online journal

International Year of Astronomy (IYA-2009) activities

Scientific (Astro) Tourism (since 2009)

Scientific (Astro) Journalism (since 2009)

section*Acknowledgements The author is thankful to the Armenian Astronomical Society (ArAS), Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO), RA National Academy of Sciences (NAS RA) and the IAU South West and Central Asian Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (IAU SWCA ROAD).

Related Links

ArAS Webpage: <https://www.aras.am/>

ArAS Membership: <https://www.aras.am/Members/members.html>

ArASNews: <https://www.aras.am/ArasNews/arasnews.html>

ArAS Annual Meetings: <https://www.bao.am/meetings/meetings.php>

ArAS Annual Prize: <https://www.aras.am/Prize/prize.htm>

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