

50th IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)
50th Anniversary of IAA History Symposium (3B)

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FIFTY YEARS OF IAA HISTORY SYMPOSIA (1967 - 2016)

Abstract

The International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) Symposia on the History of Rocketry and Astronautics have been held annually at the International Astronautical Congresses since 1967. During these past 50 years almost 800 papers have been presented and subsequently published in the proceedings. With the 20-year rule imposed for historical presentations, the first 10 symposia concentrated on pre-World War II and early 1950s activities. A surprisingly large number of papers on early, less well-known Soviet-Russian contributions to rocketry and astronautics were presented in the first symposia, despite the ongoing Space Race between the U.S and USSR. Another important element in these symposia involved memoir papers offered by pre- and post-war rocket and astronautics pioneers from many countries, and the participation of many of these pioneers in person. In sum, the history of national space and rocket projects from some 40 countries were presented over the years in IAA History Symposia. These 50 symposia provided a platform for scholars and professional and non-professional historians to meet and discuss the history of rocketry and astronautics, and to personally interview many space pioneers, most of whom today are deceased. Their personal recollections have since been shared with a large audience. This paper presents an overview of the IAA History Symposia. The 20-year rule, negotiated at the outset between U.S. and Soviet representatives, restricted all IAA history papers to events that took place at least 20 years before the symposium convened. Over time, IAA history papers divided into recognizable periods: ancient times through the 19th century; the 20th and 21st centuries, broken down among events that took place before 1945, after 1945 to 1957, and after 1957 (which marked the beginning of the space age). Proceedings of the IAA history symposia have been published in English, the first two by the National Air and Space Museum, the next four by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and all that followed in the History Series of the American Astronautical Society (AAS) and its publishing arm, Univelt Inc., under an agreement secured with the IAA. Today, only a few session chairs and authors from the very first symposia remain alive and can provide a personal description of these symposia.