

Astronomy and public outreach in Serbia (1934-2009)

Natasa Stanic

Public Observatory and Planetarium – Astronomical Society “Rudjer Boskovic” (stanic.natasa@gmail.com)

Abstract

The astronomical community in Serbia has grown significantly over the last few decades, despite the departure overseas of much home-grown talent. Serbia celebrates three important anniversaries in 2007 — 150 years since the birth of Milan Nedeljkovic, who introduced the first astronomical subjects to the Faculty of Mathematics in 1884, and founded the Astronomical Observatory in Belgrade in 1887; 120 years of the Belgrade Astronomical Observatory and 75 years since the construction of the complex of buildings and telescopes at the Astronomical Observatory in Belgrade. The Astronomy Department at the Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade has produced many excellent scientists working today at telescopes (Arecibo, Sidney, VLA, Hawaii etc.) and universities (California, Toronto, Sidney, Illinois, MIT etc.) around the world. Since 2005, students have also been able to study astronomy at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia (Faculty of Physics). Today there are more than 20 amateur astronomical societies in Serbia, two magazines of popular astronomy, one Youth Science Centre (Petnica), two Public Observatories and two Planetariums.

If the social and media network formed in October 2007 can deliver even the minimum of the expected results, six million people in Serbia should easily be familiar with IYA2009 goals, related Cornerstone Projects and particular goals in Serbia for 2009.

Astronomical community in Serbia

The astronomical community in Serbia has never worked on a project such as IYA2009 before and it presents a great challenge for professional astronomers, amateur astronomers and science communicators. This is a fantastic opportunity to establish a strong network of astronomical organisations as well as a social and media network that will be a useful base for all activities and programmes in the future and not only in 2009. Public outreach programmes in Serbia (for example, programmes at the Astronomical Society “Rudjer Boskovic” and in other astronomical societies) should be considered as serious as hard science at the Astronomical Observatory in Belgrade or at the Faculty of Mathematics (Astronomy Department) and Physics. Needless to say, if public outreach works well, many more students will choose to study astronomy and astrophysics, and the Astronomical Observatory will have many more excellent scientists, giving us a base to work from on future projects as a member of International Astronomical Union.

The National Committee for Astronomy (NCA) is made up of the most eminent astronomers in Serbia (Prof. Olga Atanackovic-Vukmanovic, president, Prof. Nada Pejovic, Dr Zorica Cvetkovic,

Dr Gojko Djurasevic and Prof. Ilija Savic), and has set up a National Node (NN) that includes, besides all the members of the NCA, the Director of the Astronomical Observatory, Belgrade, Dr Zoran Knezevic, the head of the Astronomy Department at the Faculty of Mathematics (University of Belgrade), Dr Dejan Urosevic, Coordinator of the Astronomy Programme at Petnica Science Centre, Nikola Bozic and Director of Public Observatory and Planetarium, MSc Natasa Stanic (NN chair and SPoC in Serbia).

Astronomical organisations in Serbia

- National Committee for Astronomy
- Astronomical Society “Rudjer Boskovic”¹
- Serbian Astronomical Society²
- Astronomical Observatory, Belgrade³
- Faculty of Mathematics, Astronomy Department, University of Belgrade⁴
- Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade⁵
- Faculty of Physics, University of Novi Sad⁶
- Petnica Science Centre, Petnica⁷
- Astronomical Magazine⁸
- Astronomical Society (and Planetarium) Novi Sad, Novi Sad⁹
- “Vladimir Mandic-Manda” –Astronomy group, Valjevo¹⁰
- Astronomical Society “Belerofront”, Kragujevac
- Astronomical Society “Milutin Milankovic”, Zrenjanin
- Astronomical Society “LIRA”, Novi Sad¹¹
- Astronomical Society “Andromeda”, Knjazevac
- Astronomical Society “Loznica”, Loznica¹²
- Astronomical Society “Magellan Cloud”, Prokuplje
- Astronomical Society “Alfa”, Nis
- Society for Natural Sciences “GEA”, Vrsac
- Centre for Radio Astronomy “Tesla”, Belgrade
- Society for Radio Astronomy, Bor
- Astronomical Society “OMEGA”, Gymnasium Becej, Becej
- Primary School “Vasa Zivkovic”, Pancevo

¹ <http://www.adrb.org>

² <http://www.das.org.yu>

³ <http://www.aob.bg.ac.yu>

⁴ <http://www.matf.bg.ac.yu>

⁵ <http://www.gef.bg.ac.yu>

⁶ <http://www.if.ns.ac.yu>

⁷ <http://www.psc.ac.yu>

⁸ <http://www.astronomija.co.yu>

⁹ <http://www.adnos.edu.yu>; <http://www.members.tripod.com/adnos/planetarijum>

¹⁰ <http://www.astrova.cjb.net>

¹¹ <http://www.astronomija.co.yu/lira>

¹² <http://www.ad-loznica.org.yu>

Social networking for IYA2009

- University of Art, Belgrade¹³
- Mathematical Gymnasium, Belgrade
- Secondary School of Design, Belgrade
- Primary School “Knez Sima Markovic”, Barajevo, Belgrade
- Primary School “Sveti Sava”, Belgrade
- Student’s Dormitory “Jelica Milovanovic”, Belgrade
- Science Fiction Society “Lazar Komarcic”, Belgrade
- Ecological Society of Serbia, Belgrade
- Association of Serbian Artists, Belgrade
- Children’s Cultural Center, Belgrade
- Cultural Centre of Belgrade, Belgrade
- The British Council, Belgrade

Media network for IYA2009

- Broadcasting Programme “One step to science” (once a week), the First Programme of Radio Belgrade;
- Broadcasting Programme “Respectful Children” (once a week), the First Programme of Radio Belgrade;
- Broadcasting Programme “Digital Icons” (once a week), the Second Programme of Radio Belgrade;
- Broadcasting Programme “Premeditation Radio” (daily programme), Radio Studio B;
- Broadcasting Programme “Words and pictures” (daily programme), Radio Studio B;
- Broadcasting Programme “On Saturday with you” (once a week), Radio Novi Sad;
- Broadcasting Programme “Good Morning” (daily programme), YU Radio;
- TV Programme “Kontext 21” (once a week), Scientific Editorial Team, Radio Television of Serbia;
- TV Metropolis: “Star Detectives” (once a week) and “The Morning Start” (twice a week);
- TV Programme “The City News”, TV Studio B;
- TV Programme “Searching for...”, Pink Kids Programme, TV PINK;
- TV Pancevo, Local TV;
- TV Knjazevac, Local TV;
- TV Vrsac, Local TV.

Magazines and books for the popularisation of astronomy

There are two astronomical magazines in Serbia: “VASIONA” (first published in 1953 by the Astronomical Society “Rudjer Boskovic” in Belgrade) and “ASTRONOMIJA” (first published 2003 by Studio SPREMO, Novi Sad)¹⁴. These two magazines will be significant promoters of IYA2009 preparations and activities, as well as several new special editions that will appear in 2009 (picture book collections for children, books of popular astronomy for the general public etc.).

¹³ <http://www.arts.bg.ac.yu>

¹⁴ <http://www.astronomija.co.yu>

Vision and goals of IYA2009 in Serbia

Visions and goals have been established by the National Node and National Committee for Astronomy (September 2007):

- New planetarium projector (fulldome, lasers and additional equipment) for the Planetarium in Belgrade (Astronomical Society “Rudjer Boskovic” initiative), including possibly a new building.
- Establishing astronomy as an official subject in secondary schools and gymnasiums (Serbian Astronomical Society initiative).
- Opening the new telescope (65 cm) at the Observational Station of the Astronomical Observatory Belgrade on the mountain Vidojevica. Building for the New Observational Station and for the telescope is already complete.
- New Public Observatory in Prokuplje (the Astronomical Society “Magellanic Cloud”, Prokuplje).



Figure 1 – ASTRONOMIJA magazine.



Figure 2 – VASIONA magazine

***Star Detectives* – a weekly TV show on TV Metropolis**

This is the first Serbian language TV show about astronomy. The show goes out weekly, lasts 30 minutes and presents the latest astronomy news, important internet addresses, institutions and planetariums. Each show has a guest who is an eminent astronomer, writer, philosopher or artist. The guest will discuss the topic where he or she makes the greatest contribution to astronomy research, inspiration or art. Since the author of the show is also the IYA2009 SPoC, it will be the main vehicle for IYA2009 promotion in Serbia — including visions, goals, global Cornerstone Projects as well as main goals for 2009 (established by National Node). Interviews from the CAP2007 Conference (30 interviews with CAP2007 participants, including those with the IAU President, Catherine Cesarsky, the President of the IAU Commission 55, Ian Robson, IYA2009 Secretary, Pedro Russo, Director of the Planetarium in Athens, Dionysios Simopoulos and the author of *The Planets* movies, Jose Francisco Salgado) will be included in the show.



Figure 3 – Public Observatory, Belgrade

Photo by Ivan Stanić