

HISTORICAL NOTE

The first issue of Boletín de los Observatorios de Tonantzintla y Tacubaya (BOTT) appeared on the 1st of January of 1952. It was founded by Guillermo Haro who at that time was director of the two astronomical institutions in Mexico, the Observatorio Astrofísico Nacional (in Tonantzintla), dependent on Secretaría de Educación Pública, and the Observatorio Astronómico Nacional (in Tacubaya), later to become Instituto de Astronomía, that was part of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. The name of the publication indicates that it represented a collaboration between the two organizations.

From its inception the Boletín published only the results of original astronomical research, which were not being published elsewhere. The first number of the Boletín was an article by Haro on the discovery of planetary nebulae with the Schmidt Camera in Tonantzintla. This first issue was mimeographed. In this process the image transfer medium is a stencil made from waxed mulberry paper, where this flexible waxed sheet is backed by a sheet of stiff card stock; the stencils are “cut” with a mechanical typewriter, through the impact of the type that displaces the wax, and allows the oil-based ink to penetrate. This process was very inexpensive and the quality of the printing was terrible!

In its early epoch of the BOTT the articles were written in Spanish, however it was soon recognized that the papers should be addressed to the international astronomical community and therefore it started including abstracts in English; eventually the articles were written in English with Spanish abstracts. To reach the astronomers throughout the world, the issues were distributed to most of the astronomical institutions. Although the Boletín was not refereed, it gained respect and appreciation in the international community for the quality of the work that was reported on its pages. For example, Bart Bok recognized that on the first issue of the Boletín, Haro nearly doubled the number of known planetary nebulae.

Guillermo Haro was the main driver of the Boletín, being its editor for the entire duration of the publication. Arising from the need of more formal reviewing, better forms of expression, and an enlarged mailing list, starting in 1969 Paris Pishmish became co-editor, and afterwards in 1970 Silvia Torres-Peimbert also collaborated in this capacity.

In 1968 Haro finished his period as director of Instituto de Astronomía, and very shortly in 1971, through his efforts, the Observatorio Astrofísico de Tonantzintla was transformed radically into the Instituto Nacional de Astrofísica, Óptica y Electrónica (INAOE) and he became the first director of this new institution. In 1973 Haro decided to create a new scientific journal called Boletín de Tonantzintla as the means of publication of INAOE. Under these conditions the astronomers of Instituto de Astronomía, UNAM started a new publication called Revista Mexicana de Astronomía y Astrofísica.

BOTT was the main outlet where Mexican astronomers reported their research results and discoveries. New lists of planetary nebulae, star clusters, emission line objects, flare stars, supernovae, chemically peculiar stars, blue compact objects, and comets were presented in the BOTT. Theoretical investigations were also included, we can mention the following results as representative examples: a new methodology to calculate the physical parameters in gaseous nebulae, the development of formulae to compute the masses of spherical galaxies by application of the Virial Theorem, the numerical integration of dynamical models and stellar structure models.

The lifetime of BOTT was from 1952 to 1972. During this period 6 volumes were published in the 38 numbers, which contained 178 articles. According to the SAO/NASA Astrophysics Data System (ADS), up to February 2011, these articles had received 2025 citations. Some of the articles were highly cited (particularly

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considering this epoch where the number of astronomers was very limited). The individual authors with most citations in BOTT are M. Peimbert (646), R. Costero (383), E. E. Mendoza V. (381), H. L. Johnson (291), G. Haro (254), A. Poveda (194), B. Iriarte (168), S. Torres-Peimbert (157), C. Allen (102), J. Ruiz (102), R. I. Mitchell (98), D. Steinmetz (98), E. Chavira (91), and W. Luyten (82).

Today, Mexican astronomers are very proud of their scientific heritage. The Boletín de los Observatorios de Tonantzintla y Tacubaya has become a landmark in scientific publishing in Mexico and Latin America. We wish to acknowledge the great opportunity that it has represented for us all.

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