

CHAIR OF ASTRONOMY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

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Abstract. The development of the Chair of Astronomy of the University of Belgrade is briefly described.

The University of Beograd is the only University in Yugoslavia with a Chair of Astronomy.

The beginning of the university education in Serbia can be traced up to 1838, when "Licej" was founded in Kragujevac. Licej separated from "Gimnazija" in 1939 and was transferred to Belgrade in 1841.

Judging by the content of the textbooks elements of astronomy were lectured at the Licej. The first traces of teaching "physical" astronomy in the plans of Licej can be found for the year 1854/55.

The law about transformation of the Licej into the Great School, from 1963, did not include teaching of astronomy. This was corrected by the law about changes and additions from 1880, where it was regulated that astronomy was to be taught together with meteorology. Nevertheless, lectures did not started untill 1884, when Milan Nedeljković was elected to be the "suplent" - lecturer for these subjects. He became a professor in 1886. Therefore, 1880 is assumed to mark the foundation of the Chair of Astronomy in Belgrade, although jointly with meteorology untill 1924. When the University was founded in 1905, the Chair of Astronomy and Meteorology stayed within the Philosophical Faculty.

A great advance occured when Milutin Milanković was elected to be the professor of the University of Belgrade in 1909. He became the most famous serbian astronomer of the XX century. His best works concern the theory of climate and the celestial mechanics. He stayed a professor untill retirement in 1955.

The new regulation of the Philosophical Faculty introduced in 1925 for the first time treats astronomy as a separate teaching subject. The final educational sheme in 1927 established a separate study group for astronomy. It was named the III group of sciences and contained: Practical and Theoretical Astronomy; Celestial Mechanics, Theoretical Mathematics, Rational Mechanics, Physics and Meteorology. Vojislav Mišković who became the professor of the University of Beograd in 1925 lectured the Practical and Theoretical Astronomy. He was the director of the new Astronomical observatory in Belgrade, supervised its building and organized its work. He retired in 1962.

After the foundation of the Faculty of Sciences in 1947, the Chair of Celestial Mechanics and Astronomy was formed. Soon it changed the name into the Chair of Mechanics and Astronomy. The separation started in 1960 and ended in 1962; therefore this period can be taken as the time when an independent Chair of Astronomy is mentioned for the first time. Following the reorganization of the Faculty of Sciences, the Chair of Astronomy became the Institute of Astronomy in 1971 and the Chair of Astronomy again in 1995. Within the last change it stayed within the Mathematical Faculty.

Astrophysics was introduced for the first time as an obligatory course at the Chair of Astronomy in 1958. Since then it developed into several courses.

Important changes in teaching plans were introduced in 1961 when two separate study groups were formed: astrophysical and astronomical one. At the present time the Chair of Astronomy has ten full time members of staff, teaching fifteen astronomical courses. They are: General Astronomy, General Astrophysics, Reduction of Astronomical Data, for both groups; Theoretical Astrophysics, Practical Astrophysics, Stellar Structure and Evolution, Stellar Astronomy, Radio Astronomy, History and Teaching of Astronomy for students of the astrophysical branch; Theoretical Astronomy, Practical Astronomy, Positional Astronomy, Celestial Mechanics and Theory of the Motion of Artificial Earth Satellites, Ephemeridal Astronomy, Stellar Systems, for students of the astronomical branch.

At the present time the members of staff are:

STAFF

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meridal Astronomy, Practical Astronomy)

Mirko G. Nagl, part time junior teaching assistant - postgraduate student
(exercises for: General Astrophysics, History and Teaching of Astronomy)

Starting from the foundation of the Chair of Astronomy 34 persons were engaged at undergraduate studies. The Chair of Astronomy educated 159 graduated students, 36 leded to M.Sc. and 23 to Ph.D degrees. The first astronomy student graduated in 1936, the first M.Sc. degree was obtained in 1968 and the first Ph.D. degree in 1958.

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