

**IM 2016**  
**International Oughtred Society Meeting Report**  
**By Ed Chamberlain**

**International Meeting of Historical Calculating Instruments – IM 2016.....**



**Organization:**

Nicola Marras – Wolfgang Irler

I recently had the pleasure of attending the IM2016 meeting in Trento, Italy. Themed “Someone’s Trash is Our Treasure, The Collector as a Preserver of Material Culture,” this was an outstanding gathering of collectors of historic calculating instruments. The meeting, organized by Nicola Marras and Wolfgang Irler, was held in a beautiful setting of modern buildings with a backdrop of alpine scenery. The meeting, itself, was held in a spectacularly modern glass building, the MUSE Science Museum (see picture below-right). Within walking distance was the ancient city center of Trento and its 16th century cathedral, the place where the Third Council of Trent, sometimes referred to as the Counter-Reformation, was held.

IM2016 was truly an international gathering, with 37 participants from 12 countries. OS stalwart, Bob Adams, even traveled all the way from Australia. The technical program included 15 presentations with diverse topics such as 1) a PhD thesis on the history of the slide rule and its impact on society, its people and institutions; 2) Armand Hammer’s, (the American industrialist) contribution to Russian slide rules; 3) Our Treasure is a World Treasure; and 4) Collectanea de Logarithmis. There was even a paper by the Italian slide rule designer Cesare Baj. He has been making special slide rules for the Italian market for more than 40 years.



Of course, we all had the opportunity to display some of our treasures and also engage in some trading, buying and selling. I know of a scarce Meyrat & Perdrizet pocket watch style circular slide rule that changed hands. I brought with me an early Billeter 4-meter cylindrical slide rule dating to c1895 to show and then to pass on to Werner Rudowski for a special exhibition of early German slide rules at the Arithmeum museum in Bonn.



We also had the opportunity to visit Wolfgang’s collection of slide rules and old calculators at his business office in Trento and at a permanent display (amongst dinosaur bones) in the MUSE.



Karl Kline took the opportunity to announce the Oughtred Society awards for 2016. The **OS Award** for outstanding contributions to the world community of slide rule and historical calculating instrument collecting was awarded to **Günter Kugel**. **OS Fellowships** were awarded to **Herbert Bruderer, Jose Fernández, David Walker** and **David Siminovitch**. Details of these awards are included in the September/October issue of the OS Newsletter.

The formal meeting concluded with a passing of the IM trophy from Nicola (right) and Wolfgang (left) to Karl Kline (center), who will be leading the German organizing team for IM2017 in Bonn, Germany. It was all topped off with a banquet to be remembered and savored, at the historic Villa Madruzzo, formerly a 15th century residence of a noble Italian family.

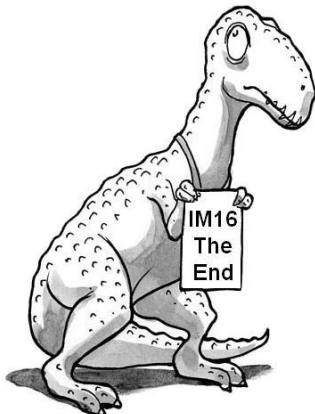
Nicola and Wolfgang should be commended for organizing and presenting the excellent program. There was never a dull moment or a glitch. Our friend, Nathan Zeldes, from Israel, had this to say about the meeting: *“Nicola and Wolfgang really pulled a miracle. The thought that we’d have an IM meet in Italy was quite far-fetched. This is not just cool – it may mark the launch of a local OS chapter and encourage a greater Italian presence in our world.”*

As usual, I recommend attending the IM meetings. They are a unique opportunity to gather with friends (and to make new friends) and talk about our slide rule/calculator collecting hobbies. IM2016 in Trento, Italy was a memorable event. The Oughtred Society is ever grateful to our Italian friends for hosting this meeting.



## IM2016 Wrap Up

**By Nicola Marras and Wolfgang Irler**

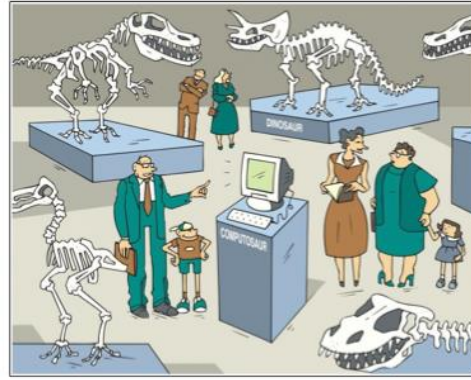


A few closing words about the IM2016 meeting: it was perhaps risky to do it in Italy, where the enthusiasts of old calculators are very few, but we think it was an unusual opportunity to learn about different realities.

Indeed, we were able to visit Wolfgang Irler's collection of mechanical calculators, perhaps the most important of the Country, and learn about one of the last manufacturers of slide rules. In fact Cesare Baj, with his multiple initiatives, made us think that these instruments still have something to say. His work confirms our motto: "think different; think analog", but it is also our job to support his initiatives. Working alone can be frustrating. Being supported by a community can give him the energy to continue.

A nice surprise was to see young people who grow our hobby. Matteo Munari, with his collection of over 800 slide rules, allowed us to appreciate many little-known pieces. If we had been aware before the meeting we would have reserved a special space to show them. It will be for the next time.

We have not forgotten to publicly thank the editors of the proceedings. Editing and proofreading a text is a long process, time-consuming and unpaid. Without the help of David and Donna Sweetman, Jerry McCarthy and Mark McCormick we would not have published anything! MOLTE GRAZIE !



*A museum would not be complete without a display of dinosaur bones. It would also be incomplete without a display of old calculating devices, for these are the fossils of today!*

In the future we plan to organize a real circle of fans in Italy. We are few, but given the enthusiasm shown at IM2016, we do not doubt it can be done.