



EAA - Excessively Argumentative Astronomers

-Brad Young, Astronomy Club of Tulsa



EAA is OK

Idiocy is the essence of the male mind!

Don't worry, this isn't going to be a technical discussion of Electronically Assisted Astronomy, because I have no idea how it works. But, reading the message boards and eavesdropping at the Okie-Tex Star Party this month, it seems EAA has become a hot topic again. EAA has been around for years; there are posts about it from 2007 on Cloudy Nights. I'm assuming some recent improvements have brought it to the fore again. Of course, anytime you have a new method or technology in amateur astronomy, you will have adopters who jump on it with both feet and haters who also pounce on it with both feet, just in a different way. *Side note: click [AstroBackyard](#) for a great video about Okie-Tex 2022, shot by the guy selling ASIAIR there.*

My Viewpoint

You're probably assuming, since I am a nearly completely visual astronomer, that I think EAA is a bad idea. You wouldn't be wrong, for me. For everyone else, I honestly don't see what the big deal is. For nearly two centuries we have had both tactile and recorded astronomy. You can either look at a picture of something, or you can experience it as it is in the moment. Or, per Young's Law:

Visual Astronomy is a
Rock Concert
Imaging is an MP3

EAA is just a different type of experience – perhaps singing along with a Cocomelon video. However, the bile spewed by people who think EAA is vile is clear and in high fidelity.

Haters Gotta Hate

One of the complaints I heard was that people using EAA will be diluting the hard work of those who came before and completed astronomy discoveries, projects, or awards without that technology. I don't think Tycho Brahe has been defamed by the invention of the telescope, nor did Herschel fade away after the invention of photography. If a competition is involved, or an award for completing a project, then there should be clear rules on what is allowed. Perhaps different or modified awards should be given for those who use EAA. There will always be new technology bringing the opportunity to increase our knowledge of the universe and foster interest with a larger audience. On both points, it seems EAA could



have value.

Another complaint I have heard is an old one - that "these kids today" aren't learning the sky the way they should by star hopping and memorizing their constellations. This may be true, but mainly because

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 22)

we have allowed our skies to become so light polluted that you can't see the constellations. As for star hopping, that has to do with guiding, not the quality or source of the images provided by the equipment. EAA may help amateur astronomy thrive, while hard nosed thinking may drive off beginners and alienate current observers.

Valid Points

"The Eiffel Tower and the Taj Mahal are mine to see on clear days" – Peter Townshend

Of course, one point I do agree with is that it is dangerous to let people think that the sky in their beginner scope is always just like the pictures they've seen on TV and the internet. EAA isn't there yet (until the James Webb junior model comes out). However, showing a person who's never seen Saturn before a normal view through a small telescope is going to excite them and they will have reasonable expectations. This increases the chances that they may have a good second experience with whatever equipment comes along next. If you show them an image that is enhanced too much by EAA technology, their next view of any object may be so disappointing that there is a risk they will lose all interest.

One use that seems to always slip through the cracks is helping those with visual impairment see things that may have been too faint or difficult before. Again, I'm not an expert on this technology but it would seem like there is a good fit here that could be exploited for useful accommodation for people

who might otherwise not get to enjoy the sky.

So, let's see EAA for what it is, a not so new technology that just like other enhancements, has its good and bad points. It shouldn't be banned outright from observing awards, nor should it be your first sight of a celestial object. But it does have its place and should be welcomed into the pantheon of equipment that amateur astronomers use.

Further Reading

There are several websites, videos, and message board folders that discuss EAA more thoroughly if you are interested. The first entry does a good job of itemizing the pros and cons, and the others have details on equipment needed and other facets unique to this branch of observational astronomy.

<https://skiesandscope.com/electronically-assisted-astronomy/>

<https://www.cloudynights.com/topic/685001-eea-announcements-beginner-guides-other-useful-links/>

<https://agenaastro.com/articles/miscellaneous/agena-beginners-guide-to-choosing-equipment-for-deep-sky-eea.html>

References:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uEOukbdybE>

Join the Astronomical League!



The mission of the Astronomical League is to promote the science of Astronomy. The major benefit of belonging to this organization is receiving the quarterly newsletter, The ReflectoR, which keeps you in touch with amateur activities all over the country.

Also:

- Participate in the Observing Program
- Avail yourself of the League Store
- Astronomy Books at a discount
- Attend Astronomical League Conventions



Only \$7.50 annually,
(Membership starts July 1)

alcor@warrenastro.org