

Citation for the 2019 RAS Service Award (A): Professor Donald York

The 2019 Service Award (A) is awarded to Professor Donald York.

Professor Donald York, as the Founding Director of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), was a key figure in the conception, design, construction, and initial operation of one of the most successful astronomical facilities of the 21st century. With its first-ever digital image of the entire northern high galactic latitude sky, homogeneously and painstakingly calibrated in a novel photometric system, plus millions of homogeneously obtained spectra, SDSS has touched every subfield of astronomy.

Multiple studies agree that SDSS is the most cited and most impactful facility in ground-based astronomy, or even all astronomy. More than 7,600 papers refer to SDSS in the title or abstract, and these publications have garnered roughly 400,000 citations. Twenty-five of these papers have 1,000 or more citations, and almost 800 have 100 or more citations.

Professor York enabled one of the most significant astronomical projects of our lifetimes, one that benefits the entire international community, and is a truly deserving recipient of the RAS Service Award.

For these reasons, Professor Donald York is awarded the Service Award for Astronomy.