

## Physical vs Virtual Astronomy Libraries — Discussion

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### **Abstract.**

A lively question/answer and discussion session followed the formal presentations of the panel speakers.

*Flora Grabowska:* How often are astronomers in China using English vs Chinese publications?

*Zhang Jian:* Mainly English.

*Flora Grabowska:* Print subscriptions are continuing; for instance: has anybody cancelled the print version of MNRAS? A 25% surcharge has to be paid for this expensive publication; e-only would be desirable, but astronomers don't want it.

*Sandra Ricketts:* I have done some investigation lately; e-only is the direction to go, especially for the most expensive, like MNRAS. I did some testing; for some journals I have not put the latest issues on display. I haven't received any complaints at all. (Issues are available from the librarian upon request.)

*Michelle Storey:* Astronomers like the smell of paper; I suggest including a sniff-pad with e-versions.

*Marlene Cummins:* Can we see a show of hands- how many people have cancelled the print version of an e-journal?

[About 5 people.]

*Kathleen Robertson:* OSA packages (JOSA A/B, Optics Letters etc.) e-versions are available now; an agreement was reached that the main campus library of my university would continue subscribing to print; my site library would have e-journals only. I've had good feedback so far.

*Bill Claspy:* ApJ is a space eater and in small libraries space matters! The journal has been accessible through ADS for a long time, astronomers are familiar with it. I'm comfortable online. Consideration: if you cancel print, are you losing access to what you paid for in the past?

*Donna Coletti:* In Cambridge we have two copies of the core journals and will be cancelling one copy.

At our branch library at the Whipple Observatory (FLWO) in Arizona, we plan to cancel as many paper subscriptions as possible within the next year.

Our new "virtual" branch library at the Submillimeter Array (SMA) in Hilo, Hawaii is entirely electronic and is managed by staff at the Wobach Library in Cambridge.

This is all happening right now so it is too early to report on success or failure.

*Marlene Cummins:* Oh yes, I almost forgot- we did cancel the (duplicate) print versions of most of the journals at our 'remote' observatory location. Almost all the funds saved have been eaten up by increased rates.

*Evan Owens:* Publishers discuss this a lot; there has not yet been much cancellation of print, even of the ApJ which is offering a discount for e-only (namely one third of the price).

*Françoise Genova:* It is partly a question of who takes the decision; how to make the choice. Is there no user input? For a big centralized system with e-access at various points, the physical presence of the library is important.

*Marlene Cummins:* It is an important role that we have as mediators with 'the system'. I send in access problems to them and they sometimes take a long time to sort it out. I know that they have a lot of fish to fry but I try to be a smelly fish so that they get me and my problem out of there!

*Brenda Corbin:* [referring to Holmquist's presentation] I am surprised that your astronomers are OK with moving the print holdings to the central science library. Our USNO staff, and especially visitors to the library love having everything at their fingertips, and especially not going to several different locations to find materials.

*Jane Holmquist:* Many administrators are now in favor of electronic-only subscriptions to save space; some years ago they wouldn't even have considered it. The researchers would probably prefer to keep the print close at hand.

*Dennis Crabtree:* Is the acceptance of electronic journals related to the age of the astronomer?

*Christina Birdie:* Astronomers still want to browse through the journals. We changed from air to surface mail delivery to save money and the older ones were uncomfortable with that; but as time passes they are getting better.

*Marlene Cummins:* Is that a general experience- are astronomers becoming more comfortable with electronic-only as time passes?

[General answer from the audience: YES]

*Sandra Kitt:* A new facility was built at our organization; our holdings were moved, ending up with the observatory in one building and the library in another. The first question asked by our scientists is- where is the library? The users got very much into electronic-only but sometimes there are glitches; then they are happy to walk two blocks to the print archive. Another issue is space problems; but for the time being we have to accept it.

*Marlene Cummins:* Electronic journals have become more stable.

*Flora Grabowska:* Acceptance of electronic media is not age-related; even computer-knowledgable people use print. I feel that the discipline is more important than age in determining acceptance of electronic journals.

*Liz Bryson:* (1) Tea in the library at a given time could be attractive (2) We need rich astronomers to donate money.

*Kathleen Robertson:* Some years ago more space was acquired on Hilo, but not money for publications or staff. Politicians want buildings but not staff/resources

*Alladi Vagiswari:* ADS has changed the attitudes of many astronomers.