

The Argentinian Astronomers and their Resistance to Change

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Abstract. Argentinian astronomers travel to Europe and the United States and when visiting these places they readily adapt to modern communication technologies; but, upon their return to Argentina, they must use journal hardcopies.

1. Introduction

Our library has the unique distinction of being both a university and a specialized library. Specifically, our problems stem from the fact that we lack financial support and cannot articulate our situation to anyone who can or will alleviate the current conditions. In addition to monetary disadvantages, the library is not only structurally inadequate, but also electronically inferior.

2. Financial Support

If financial support were sufficient for institutional subscriptions, in paper or electronic format, the researcher could be provided with an article in their office or in the reading room. But if the financial support isn't sufficient, some institutions must do without the journal or acquire it through interlibrary loan.

3. Structural Problems

At present, the operational ineffectiveness of the library is due to the following: First, the library building is old and accommodates a few people. There is no reading room nor copier for scientists to use. Second, due to the fact that the building is old, the library's collection has continued to grow while the building does not have the capacity to meet the needs for this expansion. Finally, there ensues a struggle between the need for more offices (i.e. graduate students) and the need for storing the books, maps and publications acquired by the library over the years.

4. Articulation Problems

The library staff doesn't understand why the researchers are not willing to share the reading/studying room. Some thoughts on the reasons for this are:

1. It hasn't the physical comforts so that a researcher could read/consult a book or publication.
2. The researcher prefers the "tranquility" of his/her office.
3. The students don't work in silence.
4. There are too many students using the reading/studying room.

5. Proposed Solutions

The structural challenges of the library are directly related to the existence of the poor economic situation in Argentina. However, it is still necessary to have an updated plan for improving the reading room, including providing basic amenities such as a copy machine and computers that have access to online catalogues and journal subscriptions. Perhaps in another time, and when the economic situation improves, thought could be given to planning an expanded library or even building a new one (the last one would always be very improbable). Finally, the library staff must articulate and train its users in the following:

1. Encourage the use of photocopied documents for internal use.
2. As the economic situation permits, encourage the acquisition of original documents.
3. Inform researchers as to their responsibilities when using books, serials and other printed material.

Acknowledgments. I wish to thank the Friends of LISA for making my participation at this meeting possible. From this, I return with two things: First, to recognize faces with email names; and second, until the economic situation improves, to work with the community of astronomical librarians in obtaining the scientific publications we lack.