

Evolution of the AAO Library

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Abstract. In the last five years, the AAO library has become more electronically oriented, with the library's web page playing a greater part in users' awareness of the library and its services. In addition to the more traditional activities, librarian's tasks now include eprinting scientific papers and the production of the AAO Newsletter.

1. Overview of the AAO library

The Anglo-Australian Observatory is based in Sydney, Australia, with two telescopes at Siding Spring Mountain. One telescope is about six hours drive northwest of Sydney. They are the 4m Anglo-Australian Telescope and the 1.2m UK Schmidt Telescope. The main library is in Sydney, and a smaller library facility at Siding Spring. There is one librarian, who is based in Sydney, and travels approximately four times per year to the telescope library.

The library was established in 1975, and moved to its present home in 1983. The collection at that time was recorded on a conventional card catalogue, using the UDC system (as is the case still). The collection was converted to a computer-based catalogue in 1989 and the library has had a web presence since 1994, with a major update in 1999. The top page has just been updated, while a complete revamp of the AAO web site will take place in the near future.

Today, astronomers rely heavily on online information. Consequently, the librarian's tasks have changed and evolved over the last 27 years. The library may now be described as a web-based information centre, with world-wide links. On our library's site, there is a search engine for the card catalogue, a list of journals (with links if available,) AAO's eprints, the Newsletter, and numerous links to other sites such as observatories, libraries, societies, and general reference. Even if the librarian is not present, users should be able to make full use of the collection.

2. Major Changes in Recent Years

In the last few years, the library's web page has taken on a more important role. The catalogue can now be searched online, rather than users trying to navigate the intricacies of the cataloguing software.

There is a list of journals available for perusing by AAO staff and researchers, and it doesn't matter if they are at Epping or at the telescope. Most

astronomers bookmark their journal preferences, but of course, the site licences are the librarian's responsibility.

At the telescope library, AAO no longer receives print copies of the major astronomy journals and telescope users must rely on the electronic versions; however, print copies are still received at Epping, but following some discussion earlier this year, an experiment is currently being carried out, whereby *MNRAS*, although still being received, is no longer on display. Astronomers use the electronic version for browsing current issues and so far, there has been very little negative feedback. *MNRAS* was chosen for this experiment because it is our most popular journal and the one that AAO astronomers use most for publishing their data. Nevertheless, the decision regarding cancellation of the print copy has not been finalized.

Five years ago, the AAO, like many other institutions, issued preprints on a regular basis (usually mailed with the quarterly newsletter). The librarian was responsible for the printing and distribution of these, while one of the astronomers maintained a web page of eprints. This page is now the responsibility of the librarian, and can be seen at:

<http://www.aao.gov.au/AAO/local/www/lib/aoarea/preprints.html>

Most of these papers are available on astro-ph, and the eprint links to the site where the abstract is contained. Preprints are no longer produced, but a list of abstracts is printed three times a year and mailed, with the AAO Newsletter, to a select group of institutions.

For a number of years, the AAO librarian has been the assistant editor of the AAO newsletter, duties that previously involved proofreading, organising, printing and distribution. With the advent of a new format in 1997, she now takes a more active role in the layout and production of the newsletter, while still doing the original assigned tasks. In addition, the librarian provides a pdf version of the newsletter on the web site.

3. Radcliffe Collection

Since the AAO has only been around since 1974, it was particularly fortunate to be able to purchase, upon its closure, the Radcliffe Observatory library's collection.

This collection contained many long runs of astronomical journals and its acquisition means the AAO library holds *Astronomy & Astrophysics* and its *Supplement Series*, *Astrophysical Journal*, *Royal Astronomical Society Monthly Notices* and *The Observatory* dating back to volume 1. These are listed, together with all our other journal holdings at <http://www.aao.gov.au/lib/jnlsA.html>

The monographs in the collection were added to the AAO library catalogue a number of years ago. Our oldest book is *Astronomy Explained upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles* by James Ferguson F.R.S. published in 1794 – pretty young by the standards of Old World libraries, but old for us! Other titles include : *The Radcliffe Catalogue of 6317 stars* (1860) and *Sir John Herschel's Results of Astronomical Observations Made During the Years 1834, 5, 6, 7, 8 at the Cape of Good Hope* (1847).

A number of observatory publications were also part of the Radcliffe Collection. A preliminary listing of these has been made and can be viewed on the library's web page at:

<http://www.aao.gov.au/AAO/library/obspubs.html>

It is hoped that this list can be enlarged and improved upon in the future, thus providing more comprehensive details of the collection.

4. AAO Databases

Access to a number of databases can be obtained from the AAO's web pages at <http://www.aao.gov.au/AAO/archive/>. Some of these are listed below:

Archives

- *AAT Archive Database*

An ongoing project to provide an online index to data observed at the AAT. It is not yet complete. Data has been archived since the inception of the telescope, i.e. 1974 for photographic plates and 1975 for electronic data.

- *UKST plate catalogue*

This is maintained at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, and details can be obtained at their web page:
<http://www.roe.ac.uk/ukstu/ukst.html>

- *Supernova database*

A database of observations of SN1987A taken at the AAT. Other supernovae will be added in the future.

Sky surveys

- *SuperCOSMOS*

These pages provide online access to the digitised data derived from SuperCOSMOS scans of photographic Schmidt survey plates.

- *STScI Digital Sky Survey*

A number of photographic sky surveys scanned by STScI.

- *APM catalogue*

The APM Sky Catalogue provides object parameters from the POSS I B & R, SRC J/EJ and SES/ER photographic surveys, scanned at the Automatic Plate Measuring facility at Cambridge. The Galactic Plane and Magellanic Clouds are not included.

- *H-alpha survey*

This survey began in 1997 and was carried out at the UKST. The data is non-proprietary.

- *Off-line atlases and catalogues*

Not all atlases and catalogues are online, and this page provides details of photographic sky surveys, CDROMs, and atlases and where at the Observatory they can be located.

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