

## AN OBSERVATORY PUBLICATIONS RECLASSIFICATION PROJECT

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In our library we define observatory publications as all materials disseminated in serial form and on its own behalf, by an observatory, astronomical institute or university department. Included are annual reports, research reports, reprints, newsletters, and monograph series. Preprints, though fitting the description, are handled separately. Excluded and catalogued separately are individual monographs and users manuals. Sometimes items such as catalogues and atlases are catalogued and shelved elsewhere with a dummy left in the appropriate place.

Traditionally, libraries have shelved observatory publications alphabetically according to the city or town in which the observatory is located. Reference tools such as Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts and the Bibliography of Non-commercial Publications have used that arrangement too. One of the problems of this system is that without a number, it does not provide a single, unique, identifier for observatories with many locations. The same holds true in cases where there are many observatories in one location. In addition, the location may not be known or the library's arrangement may have idiosyncracies.

An alternate system is to arrange the materials alphabetically by the name of the observatory. Problems can arise with this system when an observatory is known by two different names, or is known most often by an abbreviated name or the name of its telescope, or when the observatory name changes or when a previously "independent" observatory starts publishing under an umbrella with others. Added to all that is the problem of multiple languages and the question of transliteration vs. translation.

Most of these difficulties can be alleviated by assigning a number to each publication. This provides an identifier which is unique (unlike places) and invariable (unlike names). Access can be facilitated by generous cross-references. Before the start of the project our collection had neither of these features.

The decision was made to use the LC call number QB4 ("Observations. By name of the issuing observatory.") for all observatory publications, cutting them according to the name of the institution rather than its location. Using QB4 has the desirable effect of collocating all serial publications of any given institution.

AACR2 was used to determine form of name and main entry.

Variations of name were resolved by using A & A Abstracts with the American Astronomical Society Bulletin and the current issue of the publication itself as supplementary sources. If not found elsewhere, non-roman names were transliterated according to the table found in the introduction of the A & A Abstracts. The large number of names starting with "observatory" and "university" were interfiled, regardless of spelling.

Once the name of the issuing body was established and a number assigned, individual publications could be cuttered according to title. For example, the Annals of the Bosscha Observatory are QB4.B677 A5. Its Contributions are QB4.B677 C6.

Reprints from serials held by the library were listed and discarded.

Each observatory's publications are taken off the shelf and brought to a work area. Work sheets are made up for each publication, giving it a number and other cataloguing information. The blank work sheets are made up in such a way that information lines can be completed or stroked out, as necessary. If no issues have been received recently the Bibliography is checked to see whether the series is really discontinued. If it is not, a letter is sent requesting reinstatement of our name on the mailing list and missing back issues if possible. The items are then set aside for binding or are labelled and returned to the shelf. The work sheets are set aside and the cards are typed and filed in batches, along with the kardex card.

In addition to the traditional card catalogue we also have a word processing file of our holdings which may include cross-references. This is a useful working and reference tool.

Having the project only partly done makes it much more difficult to find things than it was before. But is is also very difficult to find the time to complete a large project such as this. I don't have any solutions except to say that, once started, priority must be given to working on it continuously.

#### REFERENCES

- Astronomy and astrophysics abstracts. Berlin : Springer-Verlag for Astronomisches Rechen-Institut, 1969 - .
- Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society. New York, N.Y. : American Institute of Physics. (The first issue of each volume contains observatory annual reports.)
- Gorman, Michael, and Winkler, Paul W., eds. Anglo-American cataloguing rules. 2nd ed. Chicago, Ill. ; Toronto, Ont. : American Library Association; Canadian Library Association, 1978.
- Smulders, Pauline A.H., ed. Bibliography of non-commercial publications of observatories and astronomical societies. 4th ed. Utrecht, The Netherlands : Sonnenborgh Observatory, 1980/81.