

In addition to their fine telescopes, Cooke also became known for their domes, including the famous Onion Dome at Greenwich. But their focus extended far beyond astronomy, and they too were particularly well-known for their surveying instruments. Towards the end of the nineteenth century 'optical munitions' became important.

Early in the 1880s, the firm acquired "A brilliant and inventive young man ... " named Dennis Taylor (1861-1943), who was to assemble some 50 patents for a variety of optical instruments. One of these was the photovisual objective, and the Carter Observatory telescope was furnished with an early example of this. In 1891, Taylor's book, *The Adjusting and Testing of Telescope Objectives*, was published, and this quickly became the standard work in this field. For many years, Taylor was a Cooke stalwart, and he made an important contribution to astronomical optics. McConnell tells us that he counted "... gardening, astronomy, photography and natural history among his hobbies ..." (page 71).

From these dizzy heights, it is remarkable to reflect on how quickly the fortunes of the company changed. In 1922 it was reconstituted as Cooke, Troughton & Simms, and despite their long and successful collective track records as manufacturers of astronomical equipment of all kinds, it took just two years before the new business was up for sale. They were bought out by Vickers, who after the depths of the Great Depression transferred the astronomical side of the business to Grubb, Parsons Ltd. in 1938. After precisely 100 years the Cooke telescope, a respected British institution, was no more.

For those of us with a love of old refractors, Cooke or otherwise, McConnell's book tells a tantalizing tale, and it will find a place in many a bookcase. I thoroughly recommend it.

Wayne Orchiston  
Carter Observatory  
Wellington, New Zealand

*Vultus Uraniae*, by Laura Peperoni and Marina Zuccoli (Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, 1996), 32 pp. paperback, A4.

*Ex libris stellarum*, edited by Remo Palmirani and Marina Zuccoli (Editrice Lo Scarabeo, Bologna, 1998), 38 pp., paperback, B5.

It is not very often that there is the offer of two charming little books just for the price of a letter requesting same from the University. *The Countenance of Urania* is written in both Italian and English in adjoining columns and was made available originally at the time of an exhibition of volumes from the library of the Department of Astronomy of the University of Bologna and the University Center for Museums and Archives.

The reader is given a brief introduction to the mythology of the Muse Urania and her sisters. This is followed by a description of some literary and astronomical works which mention Urania in their titles. The first illustration is not of the 'vultus Uraniae', but of Sextans Uraniae in Hevelius' *Star Atlas* of 1690; however, the frontispiece his earlier work *Selenographia* shows Urania between the Moon and the Sun seated upon an eagle. For this and most of the other engravings depicting Urania there are notes on the artists who did the engravings.

For those interested in books and particularly astronomical books, there is a wealth of information to be culled from this delightful little book. To whet your appetite, the frontispiece from La Caille's *Ephemerides des mouvemens célestes, pour dix années, depuis 1765 jusqu'en 1775, et pour le méridien de la ville de Paris, 1763* is reproduced on the inside backcover; the engraving is signed by Simon Challe and François Antoine Aveline.

It is pleasing to see that the delightful practice of personalizing your books with your very own book-plate has not gone the way of many other traditions. I remember designing and printing one whilst a student which depicted the three branches of science in which I was

employed. The book-plates described and depicted in *Ex libris stellarum* are divided into seven categories, with illustrations in all sections; thirty-five of the sixty-five book-plates are illustrated.

Book-plates have been used since the end of the eighteenth century, and we are usually greeted with the heraldic shield or just the coat of arms for those found in old books. Later, they were designed to show the particular interest(s) of the proud owner of the book in which they had been placed. The categories into which *Ex libris stellarum* is divided are those which you would expect, especially by an older reader, except section six, L'esplorazione spaziale, here one of the two illustrated examples shows Jurij Gagarin, the other Neil Armstrong.

The time spanned is from 1864 to 1998 with the vast majority being from the last thirty years. Two are reproduced here with the owner's name clearly visible; however, if you wish to know who designed them, then read the booklet. As can be seen, Urania also appears in one of them.



Both these items are available from: Department of Astronomy, Attention M. Zuccoli, University of Bologna, via Zamboni 33, I-40126 Bologna, ITALY.

John Perdrix

*Nautical astronomy in New Zealand, the voyages of James Cook*, by Wayne Orchiston (Carter Observatory Board, Wellington, 1998), 131 pp., ISBN 0-473-05303-9, NZ\$29.95 + postage and packing, paperback, A4.

As stated in Patrick Moore's foreword, "... this monograph represents a very clear, informative and readable account of the New Zealand component of the Cook voyages ...", but it contains much more not indicated by the title with which I had difficulty towards the end of the volume. Although explained in the introduction, I failed to see what "... summarise international developments in research astronomy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and trace the evolution of New Zealand astronomy through to the end of the nineteenth century." has to do with the voyages of James Cook.

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