

## The IAU Astronomical Archives Working Group. 2: progress report

### Wayne Orchiston

*Anglo-Australian Observatory, and Australia Telescope National Facility,  
P.O. Box 296, Epping, NSW 1710, Australia  
wo@aaoepp.aao.gov.au)*

### Brenda Corbin

*U.S. Naval Observatory, 3450 Massachusetts Avenue NW,  
Washington DC 20392-5420, USA  
corbin.brenda@usno.navy.mil)*

### Ileana Chinnici

*Osservatorio Astronomico, Piazza del Parlamento 1, 90134 Palermo, Italy  
chinnici@astropa.unipa.it)*

### Suzanne Débarbat

*Observatoire de Paris, 61 av de l'Observatoire, 75014 Paris, France  
debarbat@danof.obspm.fr)*

### Wolfgang Dick

*Vogelsang 35a, 14478 Potsdam, Germany  
wdick@astrohist.org)*

### Daniel Green

*CfA, HCO/SAO, 60 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138-1516, USA  
green@cfa.harvard.edu)*

### Adam Perkins

*Royal Greenwich Observatory Archivist, University Library,  
West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR, England  
ajp21@cam.ac.uk)*

One of the features of the 2003 July IAU General Assembly in Sydney was a half-day meeting devoted to astronomical archives. The WG1 Meeting attracted a good audience, and featured the following papers.

Jessica Chapman presented a paper co-authored by Wayne Orchiston and Barnaby Norris about the Historic Photographic Archive at the Australia Telescope National Facility (ATNF) in Sydney. This contains a unique photographic record of the development of radio astronomy in Australia from 1945 to the present day, as seen through the eyes of the photographers at the CSIRO's Division of Radiophysics and later the ATNF. After summarizing the types of images preserved in the collection, Jessica discussed the current project to create a digital library of the most important images.

Brenda Corbin could not come to Sydney, so Steven Dick presented her paper about recent projects concerning the archives at the U.S. Naval Observatory. Brenda discussed the interest shown by people in the Library, partly as a result of the upcoming transits of Venus, and she discussed the Observatory's involvement in the 1874 and 1882 transits. Photography occupied a special place at this time, and she noted that some of the original plates

are preserved at the Observatory. For further information, Brenda can be reached at: [corbin.brenda@usno.navy.mil](mailto:corbin.brenda@usno.navy.mil)

Adam Perkins (Cambridge University Library) also was unable to attend the General Assembly, so his paper was represented by Richard Stephenson. Adam began by recalling what happened to the Royal Greenwich Observatory archival collection after it was moved from Herstmonceux to Cambridge just prior to the close of the Observatory. The RGO Archives span more than three centuries, and are now the responsibility of the Library's Department of Manuscripts. The collection includes documents from various overseas observatories, and many important record lots, including the Board of Longitudes archives and the Airy papers. More information about this important collection can be obtained from Adam (email: [ajp21@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ajp21@cam.ac.uk)).

Wayne Orchiston presented a paper about the Tebbutt Collection in the Mitchell Library, which is part of the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney. Although he was amateur, Tebbutt was Australia's foremost nineteenth century astronomer, and he carried out an amazing range of observations, published prolifically, and maintained a voluminous

correspondence with amateur and professional astronomers from around the world. Tebbutt's records are an invaluable resource for those researching the history of Australian astronomy during the period 1850-1915, but they also throw useful light on aspects on overseas astronomy. Wayne discussed the different types of records found in the Tebbutt Collection, and gave various examples of how data in different records could be used for historical research.

Tsuko Nakamura gave a paper on the current status of the project to establish a general inventory of astronomical archives preserved in Japan. Till now, the project has focussed on archives predating 1870, but in the future it will be expanded to cover more recent records. Many of the early archives are in the form of hand-written documents. A book has already been published about the project, and it is hoped that another progress report will be given at the Prague General Assembly in 2006. In the interim, Tsuko is happy to provide further information (e-mail him at: [tsuko@cc.nao.ac.jp](mailto:tsuko@cc.nao.ac.jp)).

Suzanne Débarbat and Laurence Bobis (the Curator at Paris Observatory) discussed the "Alidade Project", which was initiated by Nandou Daliès, one of their predecessors. The idea was to establish an inventory of astronomical archives in French repositories, and this project has been carried out in collaboration with other relevant institutions, such as the Académie des Sciences. A recent development has been the application of computers to this Project. The inventory for the Paris Observatory is more or less complete, and can be found at the following web site: [La.Bibliotheque@obspm.fr](mailto:La.Bibliotheque@obspm.fr)

Luisa Pigatto presented a paper she prepared with Maurizio Salmaso and Valeria Zanini on the letters written by Laurenzoni and Tacchini during the period 1870-1904 and preserved in the archives of Padova Observatory. Both scientists were well-known, particularly in the field of solar astronomy, and along with Secchi played an important part in the development of astrophysics. From the letters, the authors were able to show how this field evolved in Italy during the second half of the nineteenth century, and they emphasized the value of such archives in making better known certain facts concerning some important events.

Magda Stavinchi presented a paper that she and V Mioc prepared about how, in Romania, monasteries have served a vital role in the long-term preservation of astronomical archives. They gave examples of some of the notable archives found in these monasteries, mostly located in the northern part of the country, and noted that such archives mainly record astronomical events that were observed in Romania.

Mary Brück and Karen Moran (the Librarian at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh) prepared a poster paper about the Crawford Collection at the Observatory. This contains around five thousand items, including many old documents and rare books. Most of the collection came to the Observatory as a gift from the 26th Earl of Crawford; other acquisitions derived from Babbage, of computer fame. For more information about the Crawford Collection and the ROE Library contact Karen (e-mail: [ksm@roe.ac.uk](mailto:ksm@roe.ac.uk)).

Iralki Simonia prepared a poster about astronomical archives preserved in Georgian institutions. These

include some very old documents, with contain a range of information that could be of use to historians of astronomy. Iralki's poster included a number examples, supported by photographs of selected pages from some of the manuscripts.

A key development since the Sydney General Assembly is that Dr Chris Sterken and Professor Hilmar Duerbeck have kindly agreed to publish papers from the Archives WG Meeting in a 2004 issue of the *Journal of Astronomical Data (JAD)*, along with some of the papers from the archives session at the 2000 Manchester GA. *JAD* is an electronic journal, and can be accessed via the following web site:

<http://www.vub.ac.be/STER/JAD>

The journal is also issued annually on a CD, and at this stage, the following authors have already agreed to submit their papers to *JAD*:

- Ansari, R. Astronomical archives in India.
- Corbin, B. Archives in the U.S. Naval Observatory—recent projects.
- Débarbat, S., and Bobis, L. The Alidade Project — work in progress.
- Dick, W. German astronomical archives.
- Moran, K., and Brück, M. The Crawford Collection at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh.
- Nakamura, T. Progress report on the Japanese astronomical archives project.
- Orchiston, W. An introduction to the astronomical archives of Australia and New Zealand.
- Orchiston, W. Highlighting the history of Australia astronomy: the Tebbutt Collection in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.
- Pigatto, L., Salmaso, M. and Zanini, V. The Lorenzoni-Tacchiini correspondence in the Padova Observatory Archive. The 'true' history of Italian astronomy in the second half of the nineteenth century.
- Simonia, I. Old Georgian astronomical manuscripts.
- Stavinschi, M. and Mioc, V. Storing astronomical information in the Romanian territory.
- Wilkins, G. The archives of the Norman Lockyer Observatory.

Meanwhile, we have noticed the following recently-published papers about astronomical archives:

- Ansari, R., 2002. Practical astronomy in Indo-Persian sources. *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 37:255-265.
- Débarbat, S., 2003. The IAU, astronomical archives and commission 41 and the ICHA. *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, 5:181-183.

Another location where papers on astronomical archives can be found is the Proceedings of the conference on astronomical history held in Cheongju (Korea) in July 2002. *Astronomical Instruments and Archives From the Asia-Pacific Region* (Seoul, Yonsei University Press, 2004), edited by Wayne Orchiston, F. Richard Stephenson, Suzanne Débarbat and Nha Il-Seong, contains the following archives-related papers:

- Jeong Seong-Hee. Calendar-making in seventeenth to nineteenth century Korea and the present archives (pp. 177-180)
- Lee, J.-B. and Nha, I.-S. The long-term project of astronomical archives in Korean history (pp. 35-39)
- Oh Gil Sun. Creating ancient star maps using a computer (pp. 165-176)

- Ohashi, Y. Medieval Indian astronomical instruments and archives (pp. 125-128)
- Orchiston, W., Chapman, J. and Norris, B. The ATNF Historic Photographic Archive: documenting the history of Australian radio astronomy (pp. 41-48)

One further 'publication' relating to astronomical archives deserves to be mentioned, and this is a CD-Rom that was issued by the University of Bologna in 2003. Edited by Marina Zuccoli and Laura Peperoni from the Departments of Astronomy and Economics, respectively, this concerns a project titled "Science for Everyone. From Bologna's Astronomers' Documents to their Books", which aims to teach people about the old Astronomical Observatory (which is now an museum), the Archives (where the astronomers' manuscripts are preserved) and the Library (which houses books used and/or published by the Observatory's astronomers). The CD explains what the University's astronomical archive is, how it was formed, and how people may access it. Useful lists of manuscripts, letters, and books housed in the Department of Astronomy at the University are also given. We thank Marina and Laura for kindly providing us with a copy of the CD-Rom, and Luisa Pigatto for preparing this account.

Two other developments will also be of interest to members. The U.S. Naval Observatory recently sent twenty-four manuscript volumes of Hertzsprung's measurements of photographic plates to the Hertzsprung archives in the Department of Science at Aarhus University in Denmark, and Klaus-Dieter Herbst is working on a multi-volume publication that will include all known astronomical letters to and from Gottfried Kirch.

Finally, we are excited by a new archives-related initiative that C41/ICHA has become involved with. The International Union for History and Philosophy of Science has recently obtained funding for an international project titled "World History of Science Online: Databases of Bibliographical and Archival Sources". From the start, the IAU has been a Supporting Applicant for this project, and we anticipate that our Working Group will be closely involved in helping develop the astronomical components of the databases, in collaboration with the Library and Information Services in Astronomy group (LISA), which comes under the umbrella of IAU Commission 5 (Documentation and Astronomical Data).

