

NON-PRINTED MATERIALS

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Many modern catalogues and/or observing lists are too large for easy printing in a magazine, or have too short a life to be economically worth printing as a catalogue or a book. We have therefore two ways of presenting them:

- a) on microfiche
- b) on tape (or diskette).

One could add computer print-outs, but by experience there are mostly made for private use.

Microfiches have never become very popular, although they are quite handy for long catalogues. The Henry Draper catalogue, weighting 10 kgs occupies 14 microfiches weighting 42 grams and can be accommodated in a common envelope. Durability of good microfiches is guaranteed for several decades and its price is cheap. Except thus for the reading device, which is bulky, the microfiche is a handy way to store information, especially when only small amounts of information are to be retrieved.

Magnetic tapes are now the main support for data archiving. They are very efficient for storage, but need a computer to be readable. Among its drawbacks we have its weight (2 kg), relative fragility for transportation and its short life. If not used, after a few years one gets problems when reading it. With regard to the volume of information, on one magnetic tape one can put the whole SAO catalogue, which occupies 2600 printed pages. A tape costs about 20 US\$, whereas the four printed volumes may costs about 5 times that amount.

Diskettes are smaller and cheaper and can be easily shipped. However their storage capacity is about one percent of a magnetic tape, whereas its cost is about ten percent of that of a tape. Diskettes at present are thus reduced to small catalogues, equivalent to about 50 printed pages.

And finally we have as a promise the optical numerical discs. At present we find large discs, and the compact disc which can stock the equivalent of about 5 tapes. Manufacturers claim a long life, but since we have no sufficiently long experience, the life time estimates of 20-30 years may be or may not be realistic. If a common standard can be agreed upon, these devices are the support for catalogues and observational archives.