

## THE UNION LIST OF ASTRONOMY SERIALS

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I would first like to present a little history of this project. I started working at Yerkes Observatory in March of 1972 and found out about the informal meeting in June of that year of observatory and astronomy librarians meeting at Harvard-Smithsonian after the Special Libraries Association meeting in Boston. I arranged to go to that one-day meeting to meet some of the people working in the field; especially in order to know who to call for some good advice once in a while.

My notes from the business meeting that day tell me that "a Union List of Observatory Publications/Astronomy Journals was discussed; no decision." So I first heard about a union list of astronomy journals in 1972, but it may have been discussed many years before that. The Union List was further discussed at meetings in Pittsburgh in 1973, Toronto in 1974, Chicago in 1975, Denver in 1976, etc., etc.,

This was all long before the explosion of personal computers and word processing. Several valiant attempts were made in trying to get the project organized, including a noble effort by Pat Molholt, then at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Pat had a computer program written which would organize the titles alphabetically. She also tried to get LC-MARC format into the program. However, Pat soon thereafter left the University of Wisconsin, as did her successor in the Astronomy Library, and the project died for a while. Kathy Strand reported on a typing project at the 1980 SLA meeting in Washington, D.C. At the Atlanta meeting in 1981 it was said that a typed list of 2000 titles existed. Industrious P-A-M members had collected titles from various bibliographic tools -- *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts*, *Bibliography of Noncommercial Publications*, *Astronomisches Jahrbuch*. This was when I became involved. Kathy Strand send me the typed lists and I put the titles into a single computer list (trying to eliminate duplicate titles). I then started checking the list against my own library's card catalog. I added my own holdings as I went along, and added more titles held by my library which were not on the original list and deleted titles which seemed to be nonastronomical or not strictly astronomy (physics, geophysics, geodesics, meteorology, mathematics, general science, etc. ). After some rechecking and double-checking, I sent the master list to Pat Moholt who then photocopied it and sent out copies to the librarians who had agreed to add their own holdings and more new titles.

I then added the other library's holdings to the computer file as I received them. Entries changed from library to library; cross references were added where necessary. I am not a cataloger so I try to resolve these differences as best I can. Some librarians sent photocopies of the title pages of series where there was some

question of the correct entry. This is the most helpful way of solving problems; sometimes catalog cards help, especially if they contain information about the history of an observatory.

That was the basic procedure for compiling the first edition of the *Union List of Astronomy Serials*.

The first edition was finally printed and ready for distribution in late 1983. (In astronomical terms not such a long time after all.) The P-A-M Division secured a loan from the Special Libraries Association to pay for the printing. However, only 187 copies were sold, and we barely made enough money to cover expenses. Although not perfect (no union list ever is, I think), I think it is a valuable bibliographic tool, especially for small observatories far away from a large collection of serials.

The second edition is now in the works. The computer file is now on a Macintosh computer diskette, approximately 430 K in size. (If anyone would like to receive a working copy on a diskette, see me after the session. I could also send you the files over E-mail.

The basic procedure remains the same. I enter titles and holdings as I receive them, and try to work out the differences in cataloging schemes from various libraries. I am adding the International Standard Serials Number (ISSN) where I can find it. I am adding more titles, especially in the area of space sciences, so the list has grown much larger. I am correcting typographical errors and other types of errors from the first edition when I find them. For instance, I may ask librarians to clarify their holdings where the entry indicates that the run consisted of volumes 1 to 12, numbers 1-148. If the librarian has indicated that the library hold 1-10 does that mean volumes 1 to 10, or issues 1 to 10? Sometimes I can tell from the context, and sometimes I cannot, so these problems need to be resolved. I would like this document to reflect accurately, as nearly as possible, what has been published by observatories and astronomical societies. In a field where the early literature especially seems to be somewhat ephemeral, I think we need a source which contains some history as well as pertinent information about holdings.

More complicated problems arise when an observatory closes or moves to a new location. Publications change title (the rule, rather than the exception, it seems, in astronomy publications!!), but the numbering might not change or begin over again. These sorts of problems also have to be resolved. Some I can handle by checking the Yerkes Observatory collection but many I cannot. That is why the second edition, with the addition of holdings from non-U.S. libraries, will be a more nearly perfect product, I hope. I would like to ask everyone who received a copy to check especially their own observatory titles and clarify any problems or errors; also to clarify any problems or errors if they have information about other observatories in their country. If anyone here did not receive a gratis copy last December or January, let me know sometime during the meeting -- I have some extra copies with me and will be glad to give you one. This is a spare time project for me so I do not want to project a deadline at this time, but I will try to do as much as I can in the next few months. If any of you brought your lists along, I will be happy to take them back to Yerkes with me.