

A PROPOSAL FOR BETTER COOPERATION AMONG LIBRARIES OF ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORIES

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SUMMARY

The cooperation between libraries of astronomical Observatories remains clearly insufficient despite the numerous means of communication now available. The library of the Royal Observatory of Belgium therefore recommends the establishment of a "subgroup" of users (Libraries of Astronomical Observatories) within the already existing DOBIS-LIBIS Users Group.

I. INTRODUCTION

To give a short summary of the present situation with respect to the cooperation between libraries of astronomical Observatories:

- Documentation (on new books, new periodicals, meetings, etc.): very limited exchanges.
- Observatory publications: Great disparity between exchanges according to the countries involved and insufficient in general.
- Loans of publications: The cooperation is often at variance according to the countries and remains generally rather limited.
- Catalogues: The data concerning library catalogues are quite insufficient. It seems that each library is operating in a closed circle.

II. PRESENT MEANS OF COOPERATION

The range of means in communications is steadily increasing:

- Postal services: For the documentation, the exchange of publications and the loan of books, mailing still appears to be the safest and most economical service.

- Telephone, telex, telefax etc: These means of communication are very useful for a rapid contact between libraries.

- The computer allows to establish a network of libraries connected online, e.g. on a permanent basis.

III. PROPOSAL OF THE LIBRARY OF THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY OF BELGIUM

The library of the Royal Observatory of Belgium proposes to all other libraries of astronomical observatories to become a member of the DOBIS-LIBIS Users Group in order to create a "subgroup" of users of these libraries.

Let us briefly introduce DOBIS-LIBIS (DOBIS: Dortmunder Bibliotheksystem) (LIBIS: Leuvens Integraal Bibliotheek Systeem). This software is an I.B.M. product developed by the Dortmund University of the Federal Republic of Germany in conjunction with the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven of Belgium.

This software has been conceived by computer-specialized librarians (and not by ordinary analysts) and is considered by many specialists as being the best system for the administration of libraries. This software is at present known and appreciated in the whole world and its Users Group is now spread over all continents. In the United States, for instance, a number of 13 DORIS-LIBIS installations were already operational in December 1987.

The establishment of a "subgroup" of users of DOBIS-LIBIS for libraries of astronomical observatories, could provide them with the following benefits:

- Permanent online communication: represents the main advantage of the system. All contacts would be then facilitated: exchanges, requests of documentation etc.

- Loans of publications: immediate information as to the existence of the book and to the possibility to receive it on loan.

- Catalogues: easy access to the catalogues of the other libraries of astronomical observatories and possibility of catalogues exchange on a standard material compatible with the system (a magnetic tape for instance).

- Harmonisation of the methods for the management of these libraries: This is one of the conditions required for an efficient collaboration among themselves.

IV. PRESENT SITUATION

- In Belgium, the situation is as follows:

- The library of the Royal Observatory of Belgium is not yet connected to the DOBIS-LIBIS Users Group. The General Directory of the Ministry of National Education possesses an installation and a project of connection is being considered.

- The Library of the Astronomical Institute at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven is connected to the DOBIS-LIBIS Users Group.

- Outside of Belgium, it is likely that several libraries of astronomical observatories and institutes operating within the universities are already connected to the DOBIS-LIBIS Users Group. However, we are unable to specify which ones. We invite these libraries to establish contact in order to make an inventory.

V. CONCLUSIONS

A Belgian library of astronomy has tested the DOBIS-LIBIS software and can give evidence of its high qualities. This library invites us to join the DOBIS-LIBIS Users Group to develop closer ties between our libraries for the benefit of science.

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