

direct approaches include “Observatory Nights”, special events for children, series of popular lectures, and publication of lecture series as popular books. Television, radio and film are used whenever possible to provide information about general and specific events. Standard information packages answer many of the 5000 written requests received annually. Day-to-day queries are handled (in part) by an automatic telephone answering service. At the SAO’s Whipple Observatory in Arizona (site of the MMT), visits are by guided bus tours from the foot of the mountain 18 miles (32.5 km) away. Concrete pads have been installed at the base-camp for the use of amateur astronomers – perhaps the only amateur observing site connected with a major U.S. observatory.

The Role of the Observatoire de Paris, Meudon in Providing Astronomical Information

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The three research centres (Paris, Meudon, Nancy) receive groups totalling about 10 000 visitors per year, consisting primarily of school-children and the general public. Tours begin with a slide-show and then visits to the instruments are guided by an astronomer. One-day courses for teachers are held at Meudon and Nancy once a month and observing evenings at Meudon. Open days are held frequently, and in May 1985, despite dreadful weather, 30 000 people visited Meudon. Each centre has prepared brochures describing its work, together with lists of postcards, slides and other material. Three slide-shows are available, and others are in preparation.