

LISA 10⁺



Historical Archive at the European Southern Observatory

Leslie Kiefer

Uta Grothkopf, Mahmut Eren, Silvia Meakins

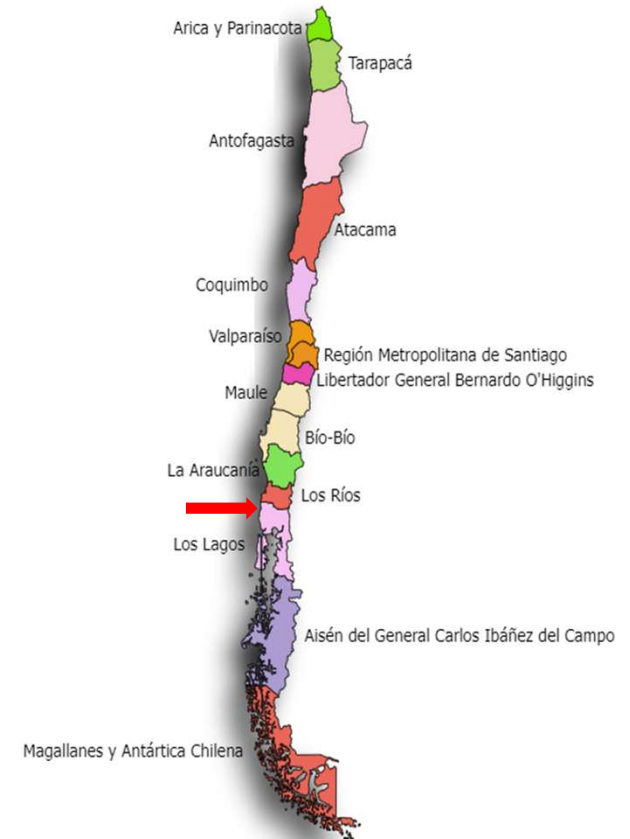
*Library, Documentation, and Information Services (LDIS) department
European Southern Observatory (ESO)*



Presentation

- **Chilean**
 - **Librarian**, Master in Librarianship and Information
- “Diplomado” or post-graduated in:
- Historical Archives
 - Media to Communicate Heritage

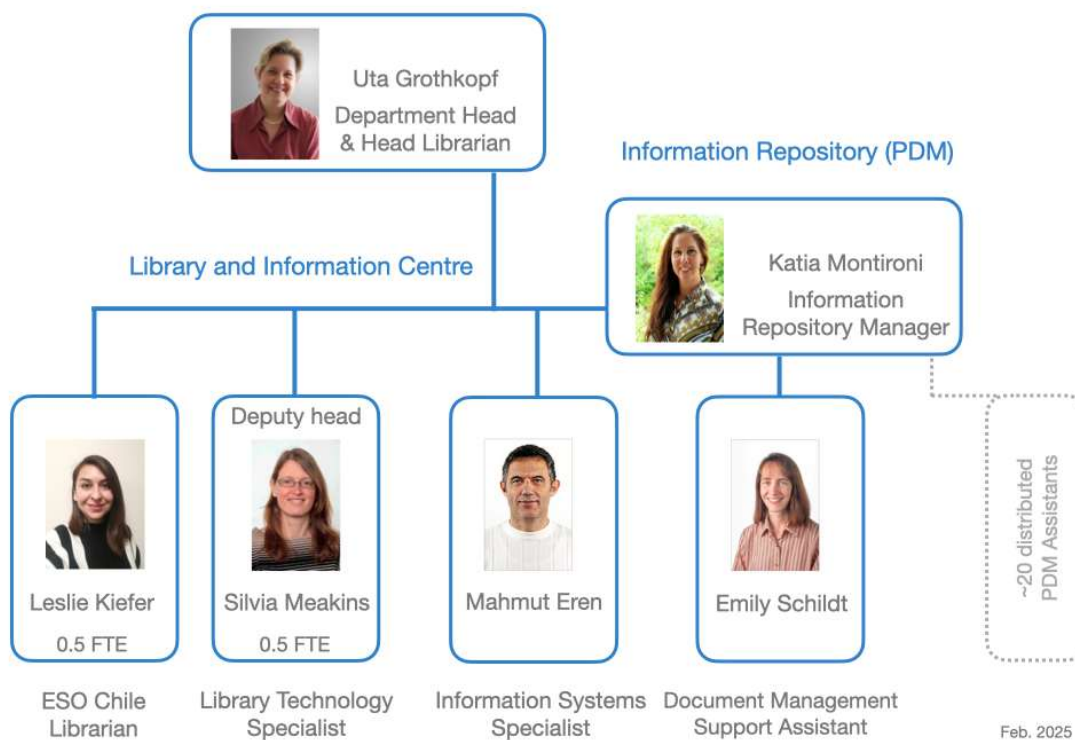
Current position Librarian and Conference Logistic “Expert” at ESO



Library



Library, Documentation, and Information Services (LDIS) department



Feb. 2025



Presentation

- What is ESO
- Historical Archive Project
- Opportunities & challenges- Can we have an archive at ESO?
- Next-steps

ESO

The European Southern Observatory (ESO) is the pre-eminent intergovernmental science and technology organisation in astronomy. It carries out an ambitious programme focused on the design, construction and operation of powerful ground-based [observing facilities](#) for astronomy.

- **The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, Germany**
- **The ESO Offices in Chile are located in Vitacura Santiago, Chile**





ESO Sites

La Silla

La Silla Observatory is located on the outskirts of the Chilean Atacama Desert, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile and at an altitude of 2400 meters. Founded in 1969 its ESO's first telescope.



Credit: Gerhard Hudepohl/ESO

Paranal

At 2635 meters above sea level in the Atacama Desert of Chile, ESO's Paranal Observatory founded in 1996, is one of the very best astronomical observing sites in the world. House of the VLT & VISTA



Credit: G. Hudepohl (atacamaphoto.com)/ESO

ALMA

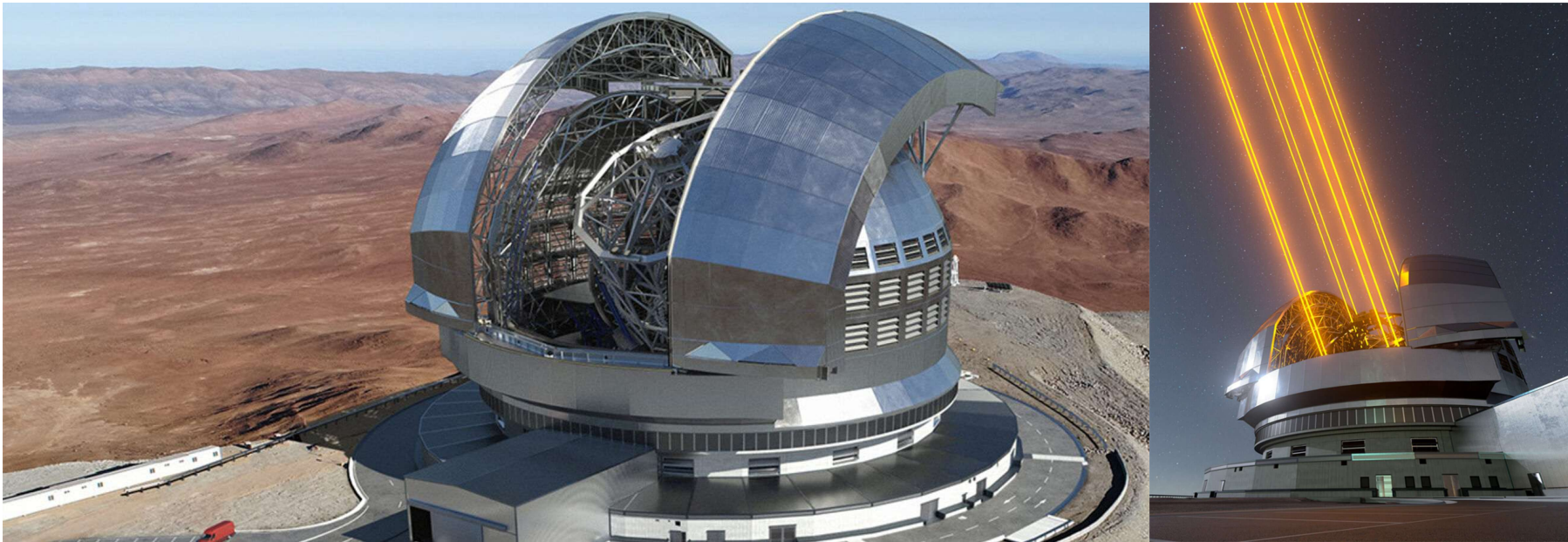
Located high on the Chajnantor plateau in the Chilean Andes. ALMA is a single telescope of revolutionary design, composed initially of 66 high-precision antennas, was founded in 2013 by ESO, NRAO y NAOJ.



Credit: G. Hüpdepohl (atacamaphoto.com)/ESO

ELT

Since 2005 ESO has been working with its community and industry to develop an extremely large optical/infrared telescope. ESO's Extremely Large Telescope, or ELT for short (2029-2030)



Credit:G.Hüdepohl (atacamaphoto.com)/ESO



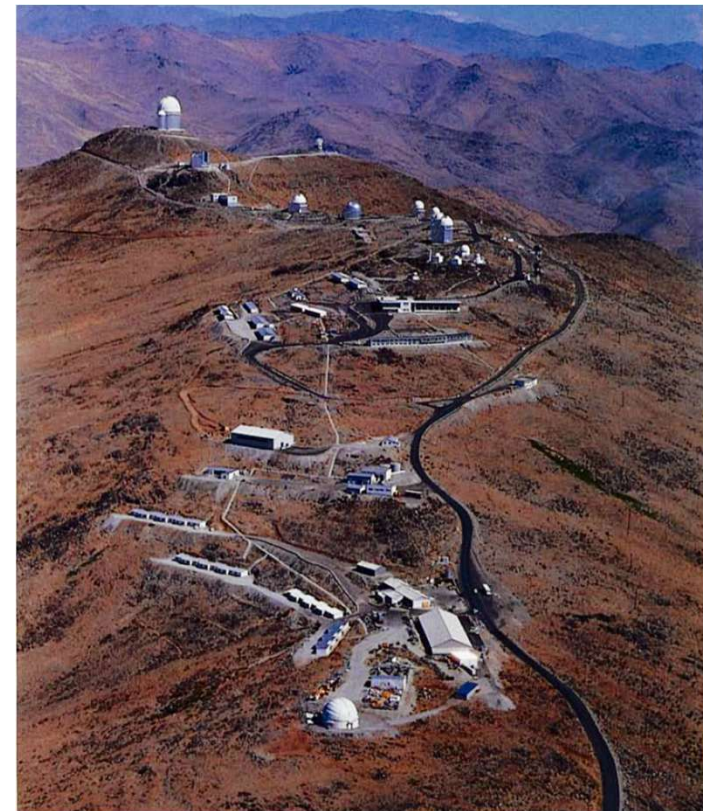
The Library, Documentation, and Information Services (LDIS) department

Historical Archive Project

Historical Archive Project

Where can we find interesting documents/objects?

- **La Silla Observatory**
 - Old telescopes
 - Old offices
 - Control room
 - Technical rooms
- **Paranal Observatory**
 - Storage
 - PDM
- **Library Garching/Chile**
 - Collection
 - Digital documents
 - Observatory reports
 - EHA ESO Historical Archives (stored at Garching)



Historical Archive Project



What can we find here?

- **Internal documents**
 - Correspondence
 - Meetings reports
- **Documents about the construction of the sites, why Chile?**
- **Finance reports**
- **Agreements with other institutions**
- **Pictures**
- **Night reports**
- **Objects**
- **Plates**
- **Maps, plans**



Photo 1: ESO's "Zeekoegat Station" in 1962, in the background ESO buildings and houses. Photograph by D. Beintema.

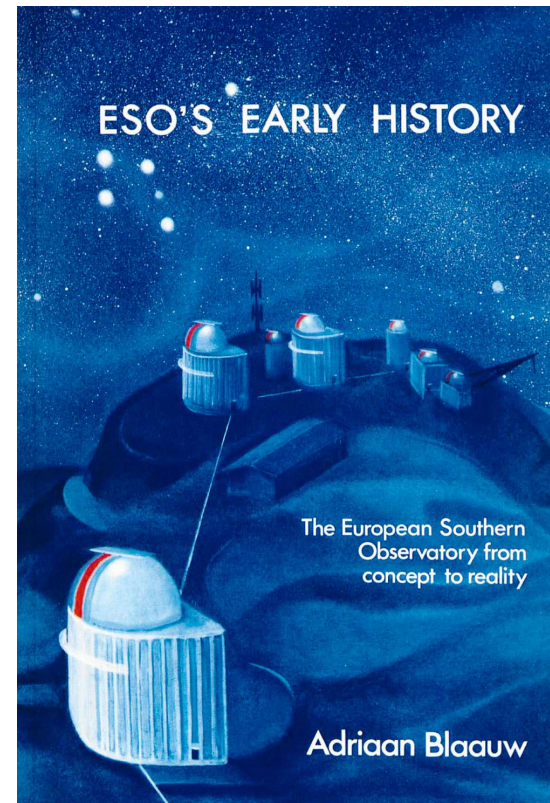
Photo 2: Route to Cerro Morado, Photograph by Dr. K. Edmondson.

Historical Archive Project

The History of Astronomy in Documents

- Documents added as a result of correspondence carried in the course of writing the book **"ESO's Early History"**
- Archives of **Adriaan Blaauw**

Involved on the creation and development of ESO as Secretary of the ESO Committee, as Scientific Director in the years 1968 and 1969, and as Director General during the years 1970-1974.)



Historical Archive Project

The History of Astronomy in Documents EHA



I.A. Archives J.H.Oort

Introduction

J.H.Oort, initiator of ESO in the year 1953, was Chairman of the ESO Committee (the committee that preceded the ESO Council) in 1957-1963, and first President of the Council, during the years 1964 and 1965. His fundamental role in the establishment of ESO has been described in the book ESO'S EARLY HISTORY by A.Blaauw (ESO, 1991). The documents due to Oort incorporated in these archives consist of two collections: those transferred by him to L.Woltjer (Director General of ESO 1975-1987), section I.A.1., and those transferred to A.Blaauw (Director General of ESO 1970-1974), section I.A.2. Although these documents would seem to cover to a large extent Oort's activities in relation to ESO, it should be noted that extensive correspondence and documentation relevant to ESO also is contained in the Oort Archives kept at the University Library of Leyden University and classified and described by the astronomer Mrs Dr. J.Katgert-Merkelijn (Leyden University Library 1992). This documentation partly overlaps with the present archives in that the latter contain copies of those at Leyden and vice versa, and both contain copies of reports and other more general documentation.

I.A.1. Documents donated by J.H.Oort to L.Woltjer

- I.A.1.1. - Memorandum on a project for a large observatory in the southern hemisphere; report on a meeting at Leiden Observatory on June 21, 1953.
- Preparatory correspondence and notes for the organization of an international meeting at Leiden in January 1954; Memorandum on this meeting of January 25-27, 1954, with attached Addendum A containing the text of the statement mentioned below, Addendum B: Organization of the Observatory, and Addendum C: Report of the Committee on Seeing.
- Statement of intent, in French language, for the establishment of the observatory, signed (original signatures) by O.Heckmann, A.Unsöld, P.Bourgeois, A.Couder, A.Danjon, R.O.Redman, J.H.Oort, P.Th.Oosterhoff, P.J.van Rhijn, B.Lindblad, K.Lundmark, and K.G.Malmquist.
- I.A.1.2. - Draft Convention for the Observatory by J.H.Bannier and G.Funke. Letters between Oort and Danjon of Sept. 1954.
- Provisional agenda and list of participants for Réunion du Comité de l'Observatoire international, to be held in Paris, Nov. 8, 9 1954. Letter Oort to Danjon of Nov. 1, 1954.

ESO HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

Summary of Contents, December 1992

I.DOCUMENTS RECEIVED FROM OUTSIDE ESO

I.A. Archives J.H.Oort

I.A.1. Documents donated by J.H.Oort to L.Woltjer

I.A.2. Documents donated by J.H.Oort to A.Blaauw

I.C. Archives A.Blaauw

I.C.1. Documents pertaining to the Secretariat of the ESO Committee (the committee that preceded the Council) with the exclusion of documents concerning the site-testing expeditions

I.C.2. Documents pertaining to the Secretariat of the ESO Committee concerning the site-testing expeditions

I.C.3. Documents concerning the Working Group for Buildings 1963-1965

I.C.4. Other documents prior to 1968

I.C.5. Documents pertaining to the Scientific Directorship, 1968-1969

I.C.6. Documents pertaining to the General Directorship, 1970 through 1974

I.C.7. Documents pertaining to the Chairmanship of the Board of Directors of the Journal Astronomy and Astrophysics, 1967-1979

II. DOCUMENTS ORIGINATING FROM INSIDE ESO

II.A. Documents from file "ESO Allgemeinw", 1961-1964

II.B. Documents from file "Seeing Chile vom 1 Jan.1964"

II.C. Documents from file "ESO Publications Aug. 1963 - 31 Dec 1971"

II.D. Library 1969-1974

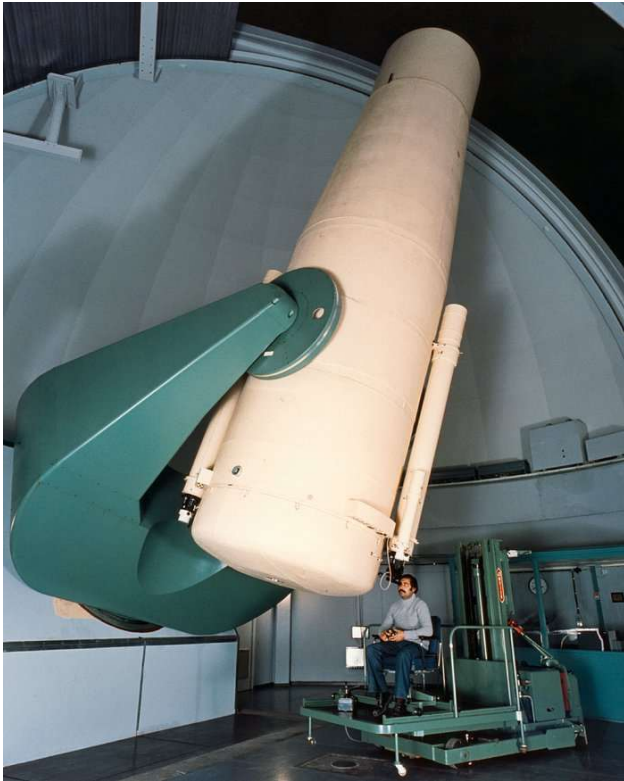
II.E. Instrumentation Committee, correspondence Dec 1972 - October 1975

II.F. Archives H. van der Laan, 1988-1992

III. DOCUMENTS ADDED AND CORRESPONDENCE CARRIED IN THE COURSE OF WRITING THE BOOK "ESO'S EARLY HISTORY", 1988-1991

Historical Archive Project

The History of Astronomy in Documents & Objects



The ESO 1-metre Schmidt telescope (1971)



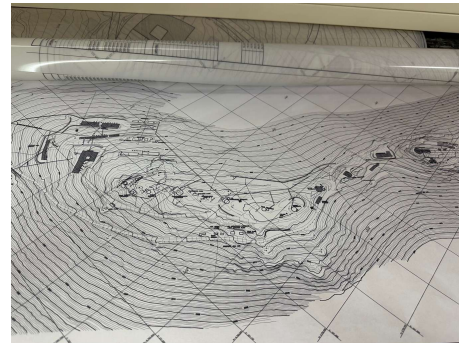
Credit: ESO

Historical Archive Project



What kind of problems do we face?

- What is going to be part of the archive
- Not a priority for the institution
- Limited staff and time
- Duplicates and old formats
- Main materials at observation sites
- Problems identifying material
- Documents stored at personal archives





Can we have an archive?

Archives, definitions & rules

“An archive, is one or more sets of documents, whatever their date, form, and material support, accumulated in a natural process by a person or public or private institution during its management.

Preserved, respecting that order, to serve as testimony and information for the person or institution that produces them, for citizens or to serve as sources of history.” (Heredia, 1991)

Qualities

Authenticity - Reliability - Integrity - Usability

Characteristics

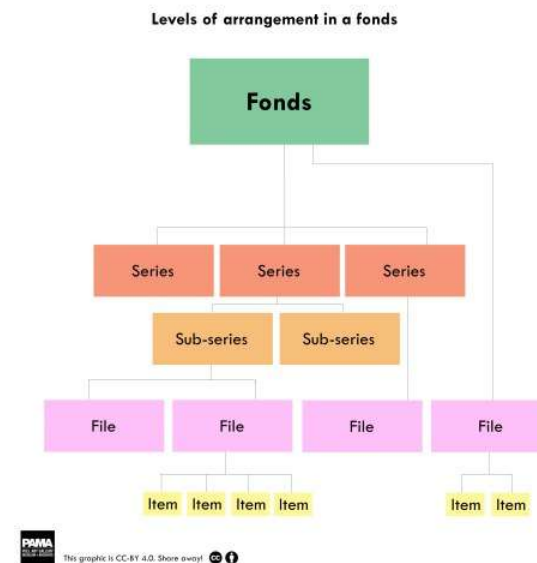
Only retained if they have long-term historical value

Archives are not consciously created as historical records

Archives are diverse in form

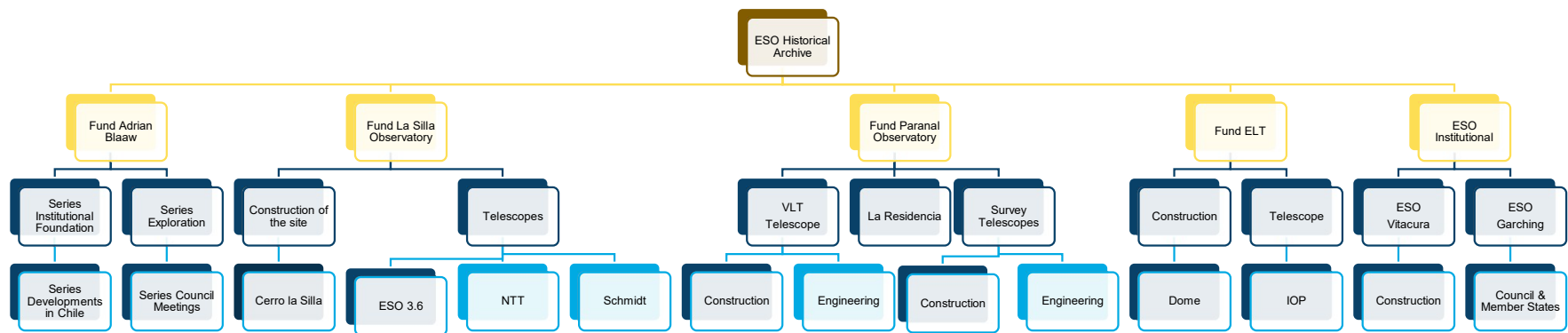
(International Council of Archives)

- **Respect des fonds** (origin)
- Define the structure previously
- Define a digital preservation plan

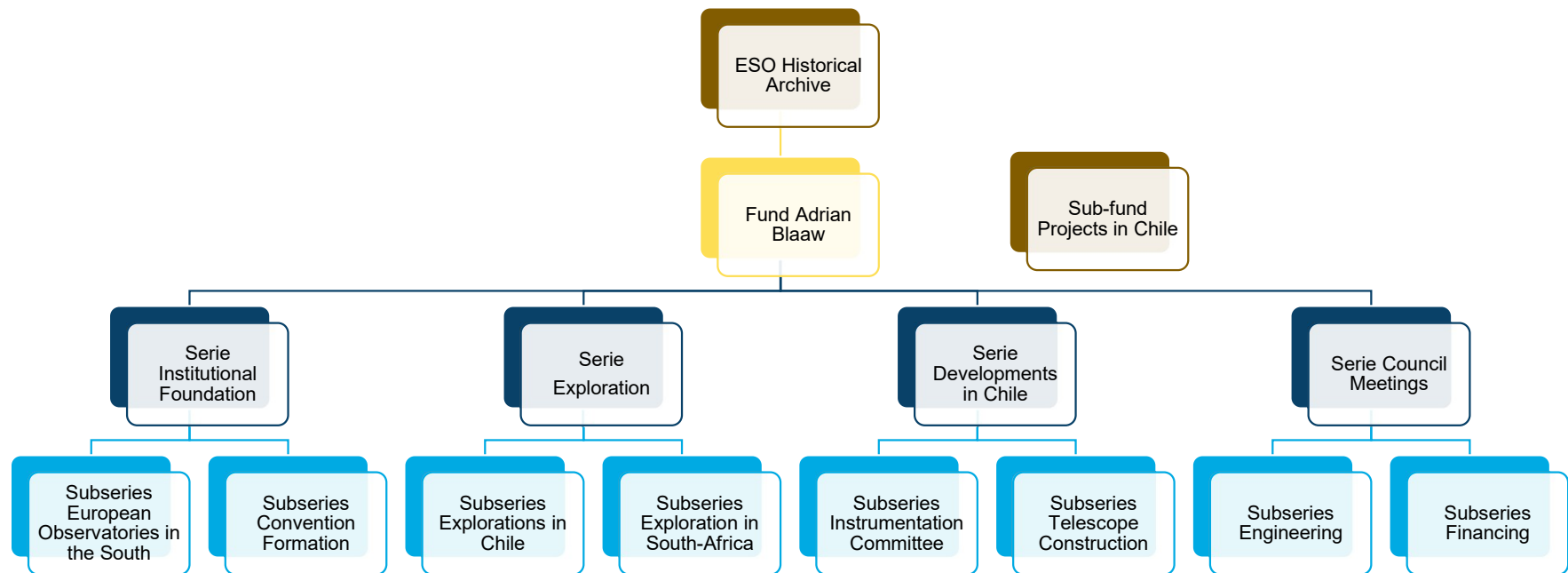




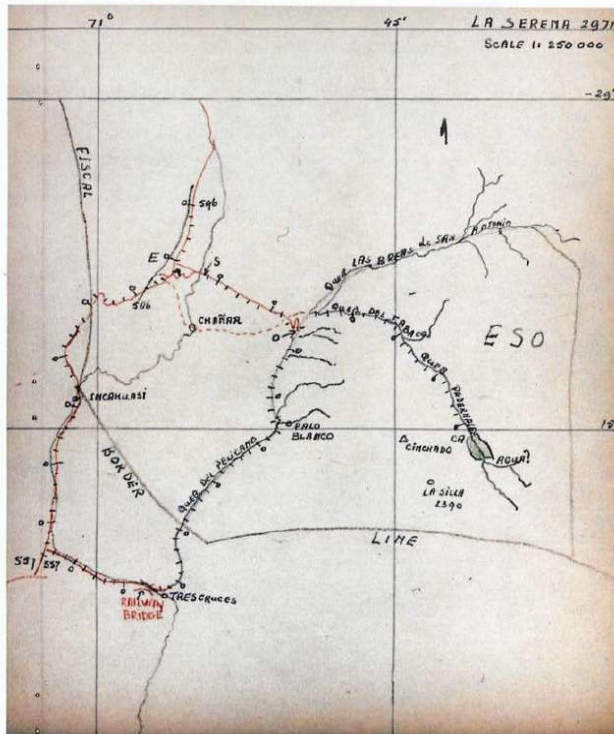
Classification



Classification



Record Description



Map A: Reproduction – at about half the original size – of a map drawn by A.B. Muller and accompanying his report to the ESO Directorate of June 29, 1964, describing explorations to find the best access road to La Silla.

Field	Information:
Reference Code:	DE-AHE-BLA01-des-sil_4_10 (Germany, Adriaan Blaaw Fund, Development Series in Chile, La Silla Observatory Subseries, Box 4, Folder 10)
Title:	La Silla Access Map
Date(s):	1964
Author(s) Creator(s):	A.B. Muller
Recipient(s):	ESO Directorate
Document Type:	Map
Support:	Paper
Format:	A3
Extension:	2 sheets
Language:	EN
Summary/Scope and Content:	Map of the access roads to the territory of La Silla, in the Region of Coquimbo
Keywords:	La Silla, observatory
Observations:	Map indicating the best access routes to Cerro La Silla
Location:	Box 4, file 10
Digitized:	No
Access Restrictions:	Restricted Access

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Next steps

- *Define definite Funds*
- *Describe archive structure and normative according to ISAD G*
- *Define Software and Digital Preservation Policies*
 - Define where we are going to store, and how? (Santiago, Garching?)*
- *Begin the process of scanning material and process them*

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Next steps...future (& forever)

- *Look for an Intern in the areas of:*
archives, history, libraries
- *Scan and process the Historical Archives in Garching*
- *Process the materials from La Silla*
- *Travel to Paranal to select material*
- *Scan and process material from Paranal*
- *Seek expert help for identification & description of materials*



Bibliography

- Blaauw, A. (1991). *ESO's Early History, the European Southern Observatory from concept to reality*. Garching, Munich: European Southern Observatory.
- Heredia Herrera, A. (1991) *Archivística general: teoría y práctica*. Sevilla: Diputación Provincial
- International Council of Archives. Recuperado el 20 de Octubre de 2025, de [<https://www.ica.org/resource/universal-declaration-on-archives-uda/>]
- European Southern Observatory. Recuperado el 10 de Octubre de 2025, de [<https://www.eso.org/public/teles-instr/lasilla/>]

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Thank you!

Leslie Kiefer
leslie.kiefer@eso.org

