

# Library and Information Services in Astronomy II Provides Wealth of Practical Information

by Uta Grothkopf

In 1988, the very successful Library and Information Services in Astronomy (LISA) Conference was held in Washington, DC. A follow-up conference, LISA II, took place at the European Southern Observatory (ESO) in Garching near Munich, Germany, May 10-12, 1995. One hundred twenty-one colleagues from 26 countries attended this truly international meeting that brought together astronomy librarians, information scientists, and astronomers as well as representatives from major publishing houses.

May 10, the first day of the conference, was reserved for practice-oriented, hands-on tutorials. After a general introduction to the Internet and its possible applications for library services by Uta Grothkopf of ESO, Liz Bryson of Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope invited attendants to explore the World Wide Web. Starting with an explanation of the make-up of a Web page, the workshop went on to show how easily users can navigate on the Web by pointing and clicking on links in the text. Daniel Egret of the Centre de Données Astronomiques de Strasbourg (CDS) closed the morning session by presenting a general overview of astronomical data.

The SIMBAD (Set of Identifications, Measurements, and Bibliography for Astronomical Data) database is an important instrument for many astronomy librarians, yet not all of them are familiar with this service. Robyn Shobbrook of the Anglo-Australian Observatory (AAO), assisted by Soizick Lesteven of CDS, showed how to access, query, and use

the database. Ellen Bouton of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) and Sarah Stevens-Rayburn of the Space Telescope Science Institute reviewed the current trends in preprint distribution, discussing the development, maintenance, and access to bibliographic listings of preprints. The last tutorial, presented by Miguel Albrecht and Benoit Pirenne of ESO/Space Telescope-European Coordinating Facility, dealt with the data previewing features of Starcat.

Speakers provided handouts of their presentations to help participants remember log-on procedures, features, and options of the systems presented once they returned to their libraries.

May 11 began with the official opening of the meeting by ESO's Director General, Riccardo Giacconi, who welcomed the participants and pointed out how important libraries are for both the community in general and the scientists in particular.

One of the "hot topics" these days is the impact evolving technologies and enhanced methods in information retrieval will have on professions in the information sector. Many speakers mentioned the evolution that is currently taking place, most of them explaining their concepts of librarianship as it is or should be today. Also, the Theme Talk of LISA II was devoted to this topic: José-Marie Griffiths, Director of the School of Information Sciences and Acting Vice Chancellor for Computing and Telecommunications at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN,

spoke about "The Changing Role of Librarians: Managing New Technologies in Libraries." Her encouraging and motivating talk led to an extended discussion.

### **Varied Program Provided**

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The conference program was filled with diverse themes. Daniel Egret described and categorized the major existing online astronomical services from dedicated catalogues and archives to general information systems. As an ever-increasing amount of information becomes available in networked systems, Jim Fullton of the Clearinghouse for Networked Information Discovery at MCNC in Research Triangle Park, NC emphasized the importance of using protocols like Z39.50 in applications.

Librarians, and not only those in charge of historical collections, must worry about conservation of their material. Brenda Corbin of the U.S. Naval Observatory (USNO) and Donna Coletti of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics talked about the project on "Digitization of Historical Astronomical Literature" underway in their institutes.

A material for storing data that is hoped to survive a long time compared to the rapidly changing online material found its way into libraries some time ago—the CD-ROM. Kathleen Robertson of the Institute of Astronomy in Honolulu, HI, surveyed the current "Role of the CD-ROM in Astronomy."

Alladi Vagiswari of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics presented her study on the "Growing Importance of Conference Proceedings in Astronomy and Astrophysics and its Impact on Collection Development" during the years 1980 through 1990. She drew attention especially to the problems that librarians in limited-budget countries encounter when acquiring proceedings.

Several talks dealt with the immense amount of work and precision necessary to maintain the SIMBAD database. Susanne Laloë of the Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris (IAP), explained the process of "Updating of the Bibliography in the SIMBAD Database" which

is done at the IAP, with the collaboration of Paris, Bordeaux, and Strasbourg observatories and involves eight colleagues. The aspect of quality control within SIMBAD was addressed in the presentation, "Multivariate Data Analysis Applied to the Bibliographical Information Retrieval" by Soizick Lesteven of CDS, Strasbourg. Daniel Egret explained the efforts made by the Strasbourg Astronomical Data Center in order to provide integrated astronomical data and information services.

### **Electronic Publishing**

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One afternoon was devoted to electronic publishing. André Heck from Strasbourg Astronomical Observatory (SAO) reviewed the current information technology evolution and the major modifications it brings to communication. He suggested that the restrictive concept of "electronic publishing" should be replaced by the broader notion of "electronic information handling," thus encompassing various types of information as well as different media and communication methodologies and technologies.

Representatives from the major publishing houses were present during this session. Peter Boyce of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) talked about the steps taken by AAS to provide electronic journals with sophisticated browsing and searching capabilities, including links to the searchable abstracts in NASA's Astrophysics Data System, and to data tables as well as the underlying data when they appear in public archives and the capability to print individual articles locally.

Michiel Kolman of Elsevier and Evan Owens of the University of Chicago Press represented their respective publishing houses. Michael Feith of Springer-Verlag gave an overview over the electronic services and journals offered by Springer.

A lot of practical information was provided in the presentation by Francois Ochsenbein of Strasbourg Observatory, who explained the Astronomy & Astrophysics Tables and Abstracts, which are distributed in electronic form by CDS even before publication of the paper edition. The current status and future

plans of NASA's Astrophysics Science Information and Abstract System (ASIAS) was refereed by Guenther Eichhorn of the Center for Astrophysics at Harvard University. Jochen Brinkmann of the European Space Agency/European Space Research Institute presented "BRAQUE," a new MS Windows search interface to bibliographic and fulltext databases of ESA/ESRIN.

Resource discovery on the Internet is part of today's work of librarians. For astronomy-related topics, usually AstroWeb is the database of choice. For other topics, information discovery often is more difficult. Hans-Martin Adorf of ST-ECF listed and commented on resource discovery methods. Fionn Murtagh, also of ST-ECF, reviewed tools for textual information retrieval, with a focus on publicly-available toolsets such as lq-text and WAIS.

A panel discussion on the topic of "Astronomy Libraries in Economically Less-Favored Countries" was a forum for colleagues to express their concerns and report on the difficulties they encounter in their countries. Chaired by Susanne Laloë of IAP Paris, the panel included Huang Bikun of Purple Mountain Observatory in Nanjing, China, MariaLapteva of the Institute for Theoretical Astronomy in St. Petersburg, Russia, Juana Maria Sainz Ballesteros de Lloveras of the Complejo Astronómico El Leoncito (CASLEO), and Alladi Vagiswari of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics in Bangalore, India. Despite the huge efforts necessary, it was obvious that many colleagues found excellent solutions in order to maintain smooth and efficient library service.

After many interesting and serious talks and presentations, it was time for Jean Sanderson of the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge, UK, to present her thoughts on the difference between an astronomical library and a good astronomical library, the way users modify their library, and the fact that today we all know more and more about less and less. Her conclusion was that computers must be servants, not masters, and the audience's applause showed how many colleagues agreed to this statement.

## Open Discussions

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Three "Birds of a Feather (BoF)" sessions, open discussions for colleagues interested in the topic, were held during the last afternoon of LISA II: Uta Grothkopf of ESO and Marlene Cummins of the University of Toronto animated the session on "Digitization of the Library;" and Jeanette Regan of Mount Stromlo and Siding Spring Observatories (MSSSO) and Helen Knudsen of the California Institute of Technology reported on the issue of "Main Site/Remote Site Library Operations." They were eager to share their experiences with those of colleagues also in charge of remote site libraries. Robyn Shobbrook of AAO and George Wilkins of Exeter, UK, were the moderators of the BoF-session on the development of the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC). All sessions included a short introduction to the topic and an extended discussion among all participants.

In addition to tutorials, talks, and demonstrations, 30 poster papers were on display throughout the conference.

The proceedings of LISA II will be published as a special issue of the journal *Vistas in Astronomy*. The volume contains a selection of papers as well as abstracts of poster contributions. Full texts of papers and posters can be found in the LISA II area on the World Wide Web at URL <http://www.eso.org/lisa-ii.html> (via the "Program" page). Most of the files are in Postscript, some are in HTML (or even in both versions); others are plain text. On the LISA II page, you will also find the group photograph taken during the conference.

The Scientific Organising Committee consisted of Miguel Albrecht (ESO, Germany), Brenda Corbin (USNO, United States), Marlene Cummins (Toronto, Canada), Bernard Hauck (Lausanne, Switzerland), Andre Heck (Strasbourg, France), Juana-Maria Lloveras (CASLEO, Argentina), Uta Grothkopf (ESO, Germany), Fionn Murtagh (ST-ECF, ESO, Germany), Robyn Shobbrook (AAO, Australia), Galia S. Shvedova (SAO, Russia), Wayne Warren (Goddard Space Flight Center, United States), and Marek Wolf (Prague, Czech Republic). The Local Organizing Committee consisted of Miguel

Albrecht, Uta Grothkopf, Fionn Murtagh, and Christina Stoffer.

The local organizers wish to thank their colleagues at ESO for their help, which led to a very productive meeting. The help of the many sponsors of LISA II is gratefully acknowledged.

The number of participants certainly would not have been as high as it was if the "Friends of LISA II" committee (Ellen Bouton, NRAO, Brenda Corbin, USNO, and Marlene Cummins, University of Toronto) had not worked tirelessly. Thanks to their enthusi-

asm, librarians from a wide range of countries were able to attend and share their experiences, concerns, and ideas with their colleagues.

LISA II once again has shown how important meetings of this kind are, especially to librarians, who have not always had the possibility to meet their colleagues personally in the past. The results will be many, be they additional information about techniques and tools in information services, closer working relationships, or higher motivation in general. We are looking forward to LISA III, which hopefully will take place in the near future.

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