

RESOURCE SHARING IN THE CSIRO DIVISION OF RADIOPHYSICS LIBRARY

Jenny Davies
Division of Radiophysics, CSIRO
P.O. Box 76,
Epping, NSW 2121,
Australia

BACKGROUND

The CSIRO Division of Radiophysics was established as the CSIRO Radiophysics Laboratory in 1939 to conduct radar research. After World War 2 experimental radar instruments were applied to the developing field of radio astronomy. Current areas of research for the Division, which is host to the new Australia Telescope (AT), are radio astronomy, antenna technology, satellite communications, signal processing and microelectronics.

The AT has three observatory sites, all in New South Wales: six antennas near Narrabri, over 500 km from Sydney, the 27-year-old Parkes observatory, 350 km from Sydney, and one antenna near Coonabarabran, between Parkes and Narrabri. Most staff are located at the Division's headquarters in Sydney, where the main library is also located, and small collections are maintained at the Parkes and Narrabri observatories.

THE CSIRO LIBRARY NETWORK

CSIRO has 32 Divisions located on 70 sites around Australia conducting research in a wide range of scientific and technological fields and with libraries located at most sites. The libraries have always formed a close network, with many cooperative activities. Their collective resources provide a major information source for science and technology research in Australia.

Centralized maintenance of subscription placement, cancellation and payment results in considerable financial benefit to the Divisions.

All CSIRO libraries contribute to a union catalogue. Computer-produced microfiche, which commenced production in 1977, were replaced in 1987 by an online catalogue using the Canadian GEAC library system.

Most Divisions selectively add holdings to the on-line National Union Catalogue maintained by the National Library of Australia.

Regular circulation between Divisions of new issues of periodicals is common, thus helping to keep each library's budget in check. However, since astronomy research in CSIRO is confined to the AT, a high level of self-sufficiency in this area is essential.

LOCAL RESOURCE SHARING

Until 1968 the Division was located with what is now the Division of Applied Physics in the grounds of the University of Sydney. Both Divisions still maintain the close ties formed during those years with the libraries in the University's Schools of Physics and Engineering.

Our library also provides most library services for the CSIRO Division of Information Technology, which has groups located in a neighbouring Sydney suburb, and in Canberra and Melbourne. As there is considerable overlap in areas of interest co-location of library services is significant in minimizing unnecessary duplication of effort and purchases.

The headquarters of the Anglo-Australian Observatory is located at the same site as our headquarters in Sydney. An informal cooperative arrangement exists between our libraries and staff have free access to both. A computer-produced shared listing of periodical titles is in preparation and is proving valuable, since users often find a required title is a mere five-minute walk away.

OBSERVATORY LIBRARIES

The remoteness of the AT observatory sites currently necessitates extensive duplication of major periodicals and monographs. Delays in obtaining core material from our headquarters library by mail or courier would be unacceptable for observers, and the cost of facsimile transmission would be prohibitive. Observatory libraries are also essential for on-the-spot research.

The Parkes observatory is geographically isolated from other astronomy institutions. However, the Australian Department of Science Ionospheric Prediction Service has a solar observatory on the Narrabri site, and the University of Sydney School of Physics is building its stellar interferometer there. The IPS staff use our small site library, thus minimizing the need for their own library.

CONCLUSION

It was only as this paper was written that the extent to which our library is involved in cooperative arrangements became apparent. In many areas there is scope for improvement. The most important factor however will always be the willingness of each side to participate, a factor which, to date, has been limited only by the resources available in each library.