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The Royal Astronomical Society's Library and Archives

By Peter D. Hingley, London

The Royal Astronomical Society has been accumulating books, manuscripts, pictures, instruments and miscellaneous relics since its foundation in 1820 February. Originally only a 'box of books', the Library has grown to occupy quite a large proportion of the Society's premises in Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, and has an open shelf stock of about 12,000 'modern' books (i.e. post 1850), about 4,000 books and pamphlets before 1850, and the remaining 16,000 volumes are bound periodicals, some of them of great age. The Library is primarily a research library dealing with modern astronomy and geophysics and seeks to maintain a balanced, if not fully comprehensive, stock of books in those subjects. The majority of serious journals in astronomy are held from volume 1. Many journals are held dealing with the more theoretical aspects of geophysics but the monographs stocks in this field are less complete. It also has extensive collections for the history of astronomy, and some on that of geophysics.

The crème de la crème of the Rare Books is the collection bequeathed by the late Colonel E H Grove-Hills on his death in 1923. The Library has also subsumed the very interesting Library of the Spitalfields Mathematical Society (1717-1846) though alas quite a lot of their books were subsequently disposed of; we probably have about 800 left including journal volumes.

The RAS Archives were catalogued by Dr J A Bennett whose catalogue was published as the last issue of the Society's *Memoirs* in 1978 (Vol. 85). Printed copies of this are still available. They include both the administrative papers of the Society, and its correspondence with its members, from the first days of its existence onwards, (and although there are many famous names in those pages sadly this material can induce a certain ennui in the researcher as much of it is purely administrative). These are referred to as 'RAS PAPERS' and 'RAS LETTERS'.

Much more varied and interesting are the 'RAS MSS', which is a wide ranging collection of deposits of papers from individuals and a few observatories. They include material from such interesting people as Sir James South, Francis Baily, William Lassell, the complete run of Heinrich Schwabe's sunspot observing books from which he derived his original results about periodicity, Madras Observatory, and many more.

Overwhelmingly the most important group of manuscript material owned by the RAS is its manuscripts of Sir William, Miss Caroline, and Sir John Herschel. A microfilm of this is available (24 reels!) but until very recently it has been stored in the archives strongroom of Churchill College, Cambridge; it has just been returned to Burlington House.

The 'ADD MSS' are an even more varied collection, including material in many formats and types. Due to constraints of time and finance Dr Bennett's catalogue was selective - generally the names listed of correspondents are only those important enough to be in 'Poggendorff's Biographisch-Literarisches Handwörterbuch...', and, alas, there is no subject index. The latter problem has been partly (and laboriously) addressed by having a scanned file made of the catalogue which has been proof-read by myself and the corrections inserted - though inevitably there are still some errors - so that simple searches can be done by names or subjects. As time has gone on more material has come to light, and a supplementary list is slowly being compiled, again in WORD so simple searches are possible, though alas due to time constraints progress has been painfully slow.

Numerous small manuscript items were discovered by searching through the Library's 'Tract' collection and things get found or are donated. Interesting deposits of material added since Dr Bennett's catalogue have included proof and MS versions of George Bishop's 'Charts of the Ecliptic', additional papers of James Glaisher, and observing material of the Revd T E R Phillips, the Revd T W Webb, F J M Stratton, and A G Shrimpton. Some work has also been done on the RAS's photographic holdings; the collection is strong in portraits and photographs of telescopes and eclipse expeditions. The collection of astronomical photographs is only now being explored; there are varying numbers of prints by A A Common, Isaac Roberts, Max Wolff and Paul et Prosper Henry while there are several thousand glass plates in many varying formats some dating back to the 1860s. At long last conservation enclosures and space are available for the sorting out of these but again time is very limited.

One of the most frequent types of enquiry is for bio-bibliography of former scientists and to assist with this type of enquiry a 9 page handout is available on request, 'Biographical and Portrait Sources for Astronomers' (Bio-Paws for short!) which, although inevitably British orientated, lists quite a lot of the sources for such study as well as acting as a guide to RAS holdings.

The Library is not actually a public one and is maintained for and financed by the Society. With

a staff of only two it is difficult to deal with the many public enquiries from people wanting to name stars after their Granny (!) or see the next eclipse. We do however welcome many overseas researchers each year and as far as possible answer incoming research enquiries from non Fellows. It is really essential however that any non-members wishing to use the Library should make contact in advance by e-mail, telephone, or letter, especially if they wish to use special collections material. They should also be prepared to prove their identity with a University staff card or the like.

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Modell von Keplers "Mysterium cosmographicum"

Von Reinhard E. Schielicke, Jena

Seit mehreren Jahren waren Frau Dr. I. Stein, Direktorin des Heinrich-Schütz-Hauses Bad Köstritz, und der Autor bemüht, ein Modell des Keplerschen "Mysterium cosmographicum" bauen zu lassen (siehe auch *Mitt.* Nr. 7, S. 4). Inzwischen hat sich ein Jenaer Modellbauer dieser Aufgabe (zu einem sehr moderaten Preis) unterzogen.

Die Saturn-Halbschale ist aus Pappmaché gefertigt und hat einen Durchmesser von 1 m. Alle anderen Planeten-Halbsphären sind aus Plexiglas. Während die fünf platonischen Körper aus Messingprofilen bestehen, sind die Planetenringe und der Fuß aus Holz gebaut. Das Modell ist nach Keplers Angaben farblich gestaltet.

In der Bad Köstritzer Heinrich-Schütz-Gedenkstätte versinnbildlicht das Modell nach den Vorstellungen des jugendlichen Kepler die beide Zeitgenossen verbindende Suche nach Harmonien und Sphärenklängen in der Natur an der Schwelle des 17. Jahrhunderts.

Anschrift: Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte im Geburtshaus des Komponisten Heinrich-Schütz-Haus, Heinrich-Schütz-Str. 1, D-07586 Bad Köstritz, Tel.: 036605-2405, Fax: 36199

Öffnungszeiten: Di - Fr 10-17 Uhr, Sa/So 13-17 Uhr