

PREPRINT INFORMATION SERVICE AT THE RAMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE LIBRARY

A. Ratnakar
Raman Research Institute
Bangalore 560 000
India

An important channel of communication in many scientific fields is "Preprints." The Astronomical Community uses this method very effectively for speedy communication. One of the main reasons for the prevalence of this practice in Astronomy is to reduce the time gap between the submission of an article and its actual publication in a scientific journal. Preprints are circulated by Astronomers among their colleagues. Libraries receive preprints either from authors or from institutions at which the authors are working.

Radio astronomy is one of the major fields of research activity at the Raman Research Institute. Recognising the importance of Preprint literature in Astronomy, the Library at the Raman Research Institute started collecting Preprints relevant to Radio Astronomy. The Library presently receives preprints from about forty institutions/observatories from all over the world.

Preprints received in the library are displayed immediately after their receipt in an area visited by Astronomers daily (coffee lounge in our case). Preprints remain in this area for about ten days after which time they are kept in the library from where one can borrow them.

Retrieval and Dissemination:

When a preprint is received in the library, the relevant details viz, author(s), title, observatory/institution from where it has come, key words and wherever it is given, the title of the journal to which it is submitted are stored in the computer. Whenever it is required one can get information "on line" about a preprint using any one of the above identifiers. There is a terminal in the library which is connected to a VAX 11/780 computer.

Presently, information about 500 preprints has been stored in this data base. Every fortnight a list of preprints received is printed out and this list is sent to a few astronomical libraries in the country. In return, the library also receives lists of preprints received at other libraries. These lists are however mostly from within the country. In addition to these, a few institutions (Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge,

California Institute of Technology, Pasadena) send the list of preprints issued by their organisations. These lists are scanned for getting any preprint of interest to Astronomers at this Institute.

Suggestion for wider dissemination of information about Preprints:

1. As not all libraries receive preprints issued from every observatory/institution, it is very important that a system is evolved wherein a list is generated of recent preprints brought out by various observatories. For this we should identify an organisation and request the various astronomical observatories/Astronomers to send to this organisation a copy of their preprint or at least information about it as soon as the preprint is ready. Perhaps Commission 5 of the IAU could send a circular with such a request. When such an arrangement is made, the organisation identified for this purpose can generate a list of preprints received or issued once a fortnight. Libraries can receive a copy of such a list by paying a small subscription to cover the cost of production and postage.
2. To persuade *Current Contents* (published weekly by the Institute of Scientific Information, Philadelphia) to cover the preprint list suggested above.
3. Some of the Astronomy/Astrophysics journals like *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, *Astronomy and Astrophysics*, *Journal of Astrophysics and Astronomy*, should be requested to give a list of articles received by them for publication. This is currently done by *Astrophysical Journal*. This would certainly help us to know about possible new preprints.
4. To explore the possibility of some international data base which can be accessed on line including preprints in their data base.