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THIRTHIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RESOLUTIONS OF THE XXXth GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RESOLUTION B3

on preservation, digitization and scientific exploration of historical astronomical data

Proposed by IAU Inter-Division B-E Working Group on Coordination of Synoptic Observations of the Sun

The XXX General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union,

noting

1. that historical observations provide irreplaceable information regarding changes in the Sun, stars, and other objects of astronomical interest and thereby allow researchers to investigate the time domain and the nature of those transient, evolutionary or recurring changes across a far greater interval than is possible from the relatively short time-span of modern-age (born digital) observations alone;

2. that despite IAU Resolution B3 (2000), which recommended "the transfer of the historic observations onto modern media by digital techniques", the great majority of archives remain inaccessible digitally;

fearing

3. that appreciation of the unique potential which astronomy's data from the past offer, regardless of the prevailing technology, is seriously lacking;

4. that although archives and records of astronomy's analogue observations (photographic, paper, primitive magnetic tapes, etc.) are still being maintained worldwide, many are in state of increasing decay and all are at risk of loss through natural disasters and through human ignorance or error;

5. that many important datasets were acquired and curated by individual projects, which may not have resources or even plans for preserving the data much beyond the present, and

recognizing

6. that the data accumulated over the past decades and even centuries will be lost unless

a concentrated action is taken to identify and preserve all significant records;

recommends

7. that a concerted effort be made to ensure the preservation, digitization, and scientific exploration of all of astronomy's historical data, both analogue and primitive digital, and associated records.