

Connecting and sharing observatory histories and archives as online data

Rapport sur les contributions

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This talk will focus on aspects of two digital projects, Tools of Knowledge and Voyages in Time, both of which have at their core data created at the Royal Observatory Greenwich (ROG). The first draws on the SIMON database of scientific instrument makers in Britain and Ireland, 1550-1914, largely the work of Gloria Clifton, former Head Curator at the ROG. The information included reflects the interests of scientific instrument curators generally, but the makers of instruments at the ROG and other observatories feature strongly and extends to the chronometer makers whose names were included in reports of the Observatory's annual chronometer trials. The core work of the Tools of Knowledge project was to remodel the SIMON data semantically, making it explorable by researchers and ready to link to other datasets. Relevant information that would enrich or could link to the new database (SEMSIM) is held in museum databases and observatory archives. Among the latter are the ROG's Chronometer Ledgers, which record the issue of chronometers to naval vessels and for other purposes. The Voyages in Time project is using crowdsourced transcription to create a suitable dataset to test the lining of databases hosted on the Arches heritage data management platform. Ultimately, this data will be openly available, but the volunteer crowdsourcing project has been a good means of sharing this work and the relevant histories with an interested audience. It is hoped that, in the future, such linked datasets might also be used to engage wider publics by helping provide narratives –human and object biographies, or business and institutional histories –that are shareable online.

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