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Collection Overview

 Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
 Creator: Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Project Celescope
 Title: Records
 Dates: 1958-1968
 Quantity: 2.6 linear meters.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 260, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Project Celescope, Records

Historical Note

Conceived in 1958, Project Celescope was an experiment undertaken by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) to study the atmospheres of the hotter stars by means of photometric measurements in those regions of the ultraviolet that are accessible only from above the earth's atmosphere. Measurements were achieved by mounting telescopes, in an orbiting satellite, that would focus starlight on ultraviolet-sensitive television cameras. Project Celescope was funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as part of its Orbiting Astronomical Observatory (OAO) program. The project reached a climax on December 7, 1968, when NASA launched the second OAO satellite containing the Celescope experiment. More than 8,500 photographs of more than 2,800 areas of the sky were made during the experiment's lifetime.

From 1958 to 1965, Project Celescope existed as a separate division of SAO. In 1965 the project was placed under administrative control of the newly created Department of Flight Operations. The project's primary staff included Fred Lawrence Whipple, project director; Robert J. Davis, project scientist; and Francis R. Nitchie, Jr., engineering administrator, 1958-1962. In 1962, the title of the latter position was changed to project manager. Project managers included G. K. Megerian, 1962; Charles A. Lundquist, acting project manager, 1963; and John J. Burke, 1964-1968.

Introduction

This finding aid was digitized with funds generously provided by the Smithsonian Institution Women's Committee.
Descriptive Entry

This record unit documents the operation of Project Celescope from its inception in 1958 until shortly before the launch of the experiment in December 1968. Records include correspondence; memoranda; TWX messages; contracts, invitations, bids and proposals; reports; and related materials concerning the technical development of Celescope; involvement of NASA in the project; SAO administration of the project; and the selection and work of contractors producing instruments for the project.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
  Astrophysical observatories.

Names:
  Burke, John J.
  Davis, Robert T.
  Department of Flight Operations (SAO). Project Celescope (SAO)
  Electro-Mechanical Research, Inc
  Lundquist, Charles A.
  Megerian, G. K.
  Nitchie, Francis R., Jr.
  Orbiting Astronomical Observatory. Project Celescope
  Project Celescope (SAO). Department of Flight Operations (SAO)
  Project Celescope (SAO). Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
  Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. Project Celescope.
  United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
  Whipple, Fred Lawrence, 1906-
Series 1: OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, 1958-1967. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY.

This series consists of copies of outgoing correspondence documenting the operation of Project Celescope, 1958-1967. Correspondents include Smithsonian Institution and National Aeronautics and Space Administration officers, electronics corporations, research firms, astrophysicists and astronomers, and colleges and universities. The correspondence concerns the technical development of Celescope; contracts for the production of instruments for the project; staff recruitment; and meetings and conferences. Also included are copies of monthly progress reports.

Box 1

Box 2

Box 3
Outgoing correspondence, July 1963-June 1964.

Box 4
Outgoing correspondence, July 1964-December 1965.

Box 5
Series 2: NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION, CORRESPONDENCE, 1958-1968. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY.

This series consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence documenting the role of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the operation of Project Celescope. The correspondence concerns NASA's Orbiting Astronomical Observatory (OAO) program; the installation of Celescope in the OAO satellite; NASA funding of the project; and conferences and meetings between SAO and NASA staff.

Box 6


Box 7

NASA correspondence, July 1964-April 1968.

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This series consists of incoming and outgoing memoranda between Project Celescope staff and other administrators and staff of SAO. The memoranda concern Project Celescope staff requirements; budget and fiscal matters; meetings and conferences; contracting for the production of instruments; and the technical development of Celescope. Also included are reports on trips taken by Project Celescope staff.

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Box 9
Interoffice memoranda, October 1961-June 1964.

Box 10
Folders 1-3 Interoffice memoranda, July 1964-June 1967.

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Series 4: TWX MESSAGES, 1959-1967. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY.

This series consists of TWX messages sent to and received by the staff of Project Celescope, 1959-1967. Most of the messages are directed to firms working on contracts for the project.

Box 10

Folders 4-7 TWX messages, November 1959-June 1963.

Box 11

TWX messages, July 1963-June 1965.

Box 12

Folders 1-4 TWX messages, July 1965-June 1967.

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Series 5: ELECTRO-MECHANICAL RESEARCH, INC., CORRESPONDENCE, 1961-1967. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY.

Electro-Mechanical Research, Inc. (EMR) was the primary contractor for the design and fabrication of the Project Celescope payload and ground support equipment. This series consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence with EMR concerning its work on Project Celescope, 1961-1967. Also included are EMR invoices for work performed.

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Box 13


Box 14


Box 15


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CHRONOLOGICALLY.

This series consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence between the staff of Project Celescope and
contractors (especially Electro-Mechanical Research, Inc.) concerning technical questions and problems.
The material usually consists of a directive issued by Celescope scientists and a response to the directive
from the contractor.

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Series 7: CONTRACTS FILE, 1958-1965. ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.

This series consists of correspondence, invitations to bid, bids, and proposals relating to contracts for the production of instruments and other requirements for Project Celescope. Correspondents include electronics companies, research firms, colleges and universities, government agencies, and individual scientists. Of special interest are records concerning the Westinghouse Electric Company's development of Uvicon television camera tubes for the experiment.

Box 16

Folder 5 General correspondence, A-Z.

Box 17

Folder 1 Aircraft Armaments Inc. Proposal for the construction of an antenna for the Aerobee-HI Missile, January 1961.
Folder 6 Bendix Aviation Corporation, Friez Instrument Division, 1958.
Folder 8 Boller and Chivens, Inc., 1958.

Box 18


Folder 5 A. D. Jones Optical Works, 1959.


Box 19


Folder 5 Radio Corporation of America, 1958-1962.


Folder 9 Rauland Corporation, 1962.


Box 20


