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Creating an Astronomical Library for a Small Community: The TNG Experience

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Abstract. We present the library in the sea level office of the *Telescopio Nazionale Galileo* in La Palma (Canary Islands) two years after its creation. The distribution of our collection is also briefly described and discussed.

1. Introduction

The *Telescopio Nazionale Galileo*[1] (TNG) is a 3.5-m Italian telescope located in the island of La Palma (Canary Islands, Spain). TNG is funded by the Italian Government through the *Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica*[2] (INAF) and operated by the *Fundación Galileo Galilei–INAF*. At the time of its first light (in 1998), the TNG sea level office was located in Santa Cruz de La Palma (capital of the island), in the same building as the offices of the Isaac Newton Group of Telescope and Nordic Optical Telescope. An agreement with the Isaac Newton Group allowed TNG staff to share some common facilities, including the John Whelan Library, established in 1985.

In 2007, the TNG sea level office moved to a nearby village, 5 km from the capital. Online journals could still be retrieved through a link from INAF, but the need to have easy access to books became an issue. At that time, TNG owned about 50 books, mainly about Computer Science, and more were slowly being acquired. A few years later, we realized the disadvantages of buying books in an uncoordinated way and it was time to make order out of chaos.

2. The Galileo Galilei Library

In 2011, the authors of this paper undertook the creation of a library at TNG, called the "Galileo Galilei Library." After setting up a room with some shelves, we had to gather all of the books and other media that were scattered around our offices and search for some software to adopt as online catalog.

[1] `http://www.tng.iac.es`

[2] `http://www.inaf.it`

2.1. The collection

Once we gathered all of the material, we classified it according to the Universal Decimal Classification.[3] Our collection was initially divided into eight main classes: Administration, Astronomy and Astrophysics, Computer Science, Engineering, Generalities, Language, and Optics. Due to the relatively small number of books involved, we decided to maintain a broad classification structure, and not use subclasses.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the material in our library according to class. The light bars indicate the number of items in May 2014 while the dark bars indicate the number of items by class at the end of 2011, just before our library started operations. This figure shows that the most populated class is Computer Science, followed by Astronomy and Astrophysics.

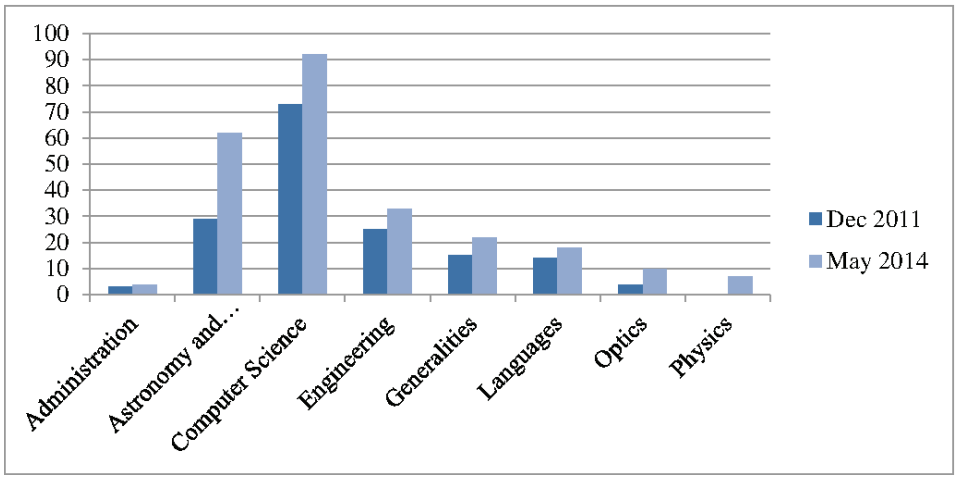

Figure 1. Distribution of the collection of the Galileo Galilei Library, as at the end of 2011 and at present.

2.2. The online catalog

We derived our online catalog from LibrarianDB,[4] an open source PHP/MySQL application powered by Xataface.[5] After extensive customization to meet our needs, we implemented an environment — easily managed and maintained — to browse the content of our library. The flexibility of this software will allow us to easily make adjustments in case of future requirements, such as the addition of new fields or the creation of users. At the moment, our catalog is for internal use only, but we are planning to make it accessible from everywhere.

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[3] `http://www.udcc.org`

[4] LibrarianDB, Ver. 0.3.2, `http://apps.weblite.ca/librariandb`

[5] Xataface, Ver. 1.3.2, `http://www.xataface.com`

3. Discussion

The recent growth of our collection is seen in Table 1, where we show the increase of books and other media since the creation of the library up to now. Note that some classes have been grouped together for clarity, and the Physics class was not present in 2012. The overall collection has grown by 55% compared to the end of 2011.

Table 1. Percentage increase of our collection

Class	%
Astron. Astrophys. + Physics	137.9
Computer Science	26.0
Engineering + Optics	48.0
Remaining classes	51.0

Figure 1 also shows that the mean acquisition rate in the last two years is about 2.5 times higher than in the period running from 2003 (when the first book was bought) to 2011. The existence of a library, initially thought to make some order in our books, seems to have boosted interest in increasing our collection. A further increase — both in number of users and requests to buy new books — may come from a recent agreement with the Nordic group, which is now sharing some common facilities with TNG. The future might bring the implementation of other services, like telescope bibliography and observatory metrics.

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