

BOOK REVIEW

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The Astronomer's Sourcebook

Bob D. Gibson, 1992, 304 pages. ISBN 0-933149-43-3, paperback \$19.95. Woodbine House, 5625 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

Bob D. Gibson has published a book which likely deserves a spot on the bookshelves of amateur and professional astronomers alike. The book, entitled, *The Astronomer's Sourcebook*, is simple in design, with information arranged much like an almanac. But what is significant about the book is that in just one volume, you can have at your fingertips organization and vendor names and addresses, equipment and supply descriptions, and other pieces of information of an astronomical nature that otherwise would take you hours and/or numerous phone calls to find.

The Astronomer's Sourcebook is arranged in ten chapters, a series of appendices, a glossary of astronomical terms, and three separate and extensive indexes. Chapter 1, "Armchair Astronomy", discusses popular books and periodicals pertaining to Astronomy. A small section is devoted to companies that search for rare and out-of-print Astronomy books. Astronomical software sources are discussed, and a list of computer bulletin boards with an inclination towards Astronomy is provided (one national computer bulletin board network conspicuously not mentioned in this list is the General Electric Network of Information Exchange: GENie).

Chapter 2, "Organizations", describes national, local, and professional astronomical organizations with appropriate names and addresses to write for further information. The local astronomical organization section is arranged by state, which is very convenient if you are looking for a club or organization in an area you might be visiting. In the national section, various organizations such as IOTA have provided a sample observation report form. Missing is one of our AAVSO Variable Star Report Forms, which would have been quite appropriate here.

Chapters 3 and 4, "Scopes and Accessories" and "Finding Your Way Around The Sky," contain comprehensive lists of descriptions of telescope equipment and vendors (including names and addresses). A page is devoted to "old" astronomical equipment vendors as well. Star atlases and observing guides receive appropriate descriptions.

Chapter 5, "Astrophotography", quite briefly spends just a few pages on what might be called "conventional" astrophotography, favoring instead to spend some seven pages on Charge-Couple Devices. Details on CCD selection and what to expect from CCDs are just a few of the topics discussed, along with CCD vendors and where to go for more information about them.

Chapters 6 and 7, "Observatories" and "Planetariums and Museums", list facilities in Canada and state-by-state in America. These listings are quite extensive though by no means absolutely complete.

Chapter 8, "U.S. Space-Based Astronomy Projects", briefly describes major NASA, unmanned, Astronomy related space missions, but more importantly, the names and addresses of major NASA "Points of Contact" are provided. As Gibson mentions, these NASA facilities are great sources for space related information and helpful resource centers for teachers.

Chapter 9, "The History of Astronomy", gives several one-sentence descriptions of major individuals in Astronomy over recorded history along with an "Astronomy Timeline" of important events. Devoting only 16 pages is an injustice to these topics, and probably should have been eliminated from the book or given substantially more space, particularly to contemporary astronomical events.

Chapter 10, "Astronomy Education", is an important information source on those

interested in an education in Astronomy. University and colleges offering majors in Astronomy and Astrophysics are listed, including their addresses. Important sources for scholarships, grants, and internships are listed, too. Locations for children's Astronomy summer camps and schools are also given. Finally in this chapter, a "Teaching Resources" section provides potentially useful contacts to find various kits and posters for teachers to promote Astronomy to youngsters.

For the final sections of the book, the Appendices contain a sprinkling of miscellaneous lists and tables such as lists of the Messier Catalog of objects and of astronomical constants. Of significant use are the three different indexes at the back of the book. Separate corporate, publication, and subject indexes make item searching throughout the book quite easy.

Everyone will find something he or she didn't know was available by reading through this book. Our hobby is changing and evolving too quickly to keep pace with all aspects of it, and Bob Gibson's book is quite a good attempt at a resource to help keep tabs on where we can go to keep up - although we must, of course, forgive him for the misspelling of our organization's initials on page 146!

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