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AstroWeb – Internet Resources for Astronomers

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Abstract. AstroWeb is a World Wide Web (WWW) interface to a collection of Internet accessible resources aimed at the astronomical community. The collection currently contains more than 1000 WWW, Gopher, Wide Area Information System (WAIS), Telnet, and Anonymous FTP resources, and it is still growing. AstroWeb provides the additional value-added services: categorization of each resource; descriptive paragraphs for some resources; searchable index of all resource information; 3 times daily search for "dead" or "unreliable" resources.

1. What Is AstroWeb?

The goal of AstroWeb is to be the most complete, up to date, and useful listing of Internet accessible astronomical resources available anywhere. AstroWeb currently contains 1123 WWW, Gopher, WAIS, Telnet, FTP, and Usenet News resources, and 1235 Universal Resource Listings (URL's). As a value-added service, AstroWeb also provides: (1) one or more standardized Categories for each resource, (2) descriptive text for many resources, (3) searchable index of all resource information, (4) thrice daily search for "dead" or "unreliable" resources, and (5) the most complete listing of Astronomical resources. These value-added services set AstroWeb apart from other, more static lists of Internet resources.

2. Where Is AstroWeb?

AstroWeb is available at: ST ScI[1], NRAO[2], CDS[3], ST-ECF[4], and MSSSO[5]. Each version is based on the same resource database, but each site has a different structure or format. For example, ST-ECF only displays the title and acronym for each resource, while ST ScI displays the descriptive text as well. Each site updates and formats their version daily from the central listing at ST ScI. Some sites, in addition, will have "mirror" copies of the other sites' versions.

3. When Was AstroWeb?

On 1994 January 24, Jackson sent e-mail to Wells and Adorf suggesting that they collaborate rather than maintain separate resource listings. A standard interface file format was defined and some software tools were written. Additional members joined the AstroWeb Consortium[6] and on 1994 April 6, AstroWeb was announced to the public via NCSA Mosaic "What's New[7]" and several Usenet newsgroups.

4. Why Was AstroWeb Created?

Jackson, Wells, and Adorf noticed that they and others had created largely overlapping lists of Astronomical resources. New resources were being discovered every day and it seemed more productive to coordinate efforts and use a common master resource listing. From the early size and growth rate of the listing, it was also clear that standardized categories and search tools would be needed to allow the user to quickly find the desired resource. The volatile nature of URL's required that resources be frequently checked for "aliveness" in order to prevent the listing from accumulating "pointers to nowhere". Most importantly, it was a fun and useful thing to do.

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[1] http://www.stsci.edu/net-resources.html

[2] http://fits.cv.nrao.edu/www/astronomy.html

[3] http://cdsweb.u-strasbg.fr/astroweb.html

[4] http://ecf.hq.eso.org/astro-resources.html

[5] http://meteor.anu.edu.au/astronomy.html

[6] http://fits.cv.nrao.edu/www/astroweb.html

[7] http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/Mosaic/Docs/whats-new.html

5. How To Add Or Change AstroWeb?

To preserve the homogeneity and integrity of AstroWeb, the central listing at ST ScI can be edited only by AstroWeb Consortium members. However, we welcome comments, suggestions, new resources, corrections to existing resources, etc. from everyone. Consortium members can be reached via e-mail at: *astroweb@nrao.edu*[8] There are also HTML forms available to: (1) add a Resource,[9] (2) add a Personal Resource,[10] (3) and submit a Correction.[11]

References

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[8] mailto://astroweb@nrao.edu

[9] http://fits.cv.nrao.edu/www/astroweb/aref.html

[10] http://fits.cv.nrao.edu/www/astroweb/paref.html

[11] http://fits.cv.nrao.edu/www/astroweb/adcrf.html