

Welcome to the University of Illinois Campus Observatory!

We've put together this flyer to answer some common questions about our 104 year old telescope. If you have further questions, just ask, or E-mail the club at uias@astro.uiuc.edu. We hope you have fun during your visit!

What is the history of the observatory?

The observatory was built in 1896 at a cost of just under \$15,000 (that's over \$290,000 in today's dollars). It was used by University of Illinois astronomers to do many projects, such as looking for stars that change in brightness over time. It was last used for research in 1967 and later became a National Historic Landmark.

What is the telescope used for today?

The telescope is too old and small to be very useful to astronomers today. (Not to mention all of the light pollution in Champaign-Urbana!) It is mostly used by astronomy classes at the University and by the Astronomical Society, a campus amateur astronomy club.

What kind of telescope is it?

Our telescope is 12 inches in diameter and is a refractor. Refracting telescopes use lenses to direct the starlight to the eyepiece. (This is similar to how eyeglasses work!) Most telescopes used by astronomers today are reflecting telescopes, which use mirrors to direct the light. Mirrors are lighter, and it is easier to build huge telescopes with them.

Can I come back again sometime?

Sure! The Astronomical Society has public open houses here the first Friday of every month if it's clear. If the first open house has to be canceled, we try to hold a make-up on the second Friday. If the weather is bad again, we wait until the first Friday of the next month. Our open houses are from 7-10 pm during the winter months, and from 8-11 pm during Daylight Savings time. If you're not sure about whether it is too cloudy or not, you can call the observatory at 333-8417 fifteen minutes or so before it's scheduled to start. If no one answers, the open house has been canceled. (Hopefully, soon we will install an answering machine that will have a recorded message.) During summer vacation (June, July, August) we may not be able to staff the open house, so please E-mail the club or call first to find out if we are having one or not.

How can I learn more about astronomy?

1. Check with your librarian to find books that would interest you!
2. *Sky and Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines both have monthly star charts and talk about current things to see in the sky.
3. If you have access to the internet, you might want to look up some of the many astronomy related web pages. Several good ones are listed below:

U of I Astronomical Society

<http://www.astro.uiuc.edu/~uias>

This is the Astronomical Society's web page. It has information about the club, our activities, and the observatory (including its history).

Skylights

<http://www.astro.uiuc.edu/~kaler/skylights.html>

This web page was created by U of I Professor Jim Kaler. He updates it frequently to show pictures and describe what's currently visible in the sky from Illinois.

Astronomy Picture of the Day

<http://www.antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

Each day a different astronomy-related picture is shown, along with a description by an astronomer.

Jet Propulsion Laboratory

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/>

You can find out about most spacecraft missions from here! Many of the pages for current missions have kids pages and activities.

Hubble Space Telescope

<http://www.stsci.edu/>

This site has links to all sorts of great pictures that have been taken with Hubble.

Students for the Exploration and Development of Space (SEDS)

<http://www.seds.org/>

This is probably the closest thing to an 'astronomy museum' on the web. You can access several exhibits and lots of great pictures. The Nine Planets solar system tour has won many awards.

Extra Solar Planets Encyclopedia

<http://www.obspm.fr/planets/>

Are you interested in the new solar systems that are being discovered around other stars? This site contains all of the stats for the new planets, and has a list of links to many other sites (some of which contain artists conceptions of them). Some of the links are easier to understand than others, you might have to look through the list to find the really good ones.

Sky and Telescope On-line

<http://www.skypub.com/>

This is Sky & Telescope's web page. It has current information on what to see in the sky and

links to other astronomy sites.