



NEWS! From the NAVAL OBSERVATORY

U.S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY

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**U.S. Naval Observatory
Press Release**

For Immediate Release

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USNO'S JAMES M. GILLISS LIBRARY JOINS CONSORTIUM

The U.S. Naval Observatory (USNO) is honored to announce the inclusion of its James M. Gilliss Library with the Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine, an organization that brings together educational, cultural and scientific institutions to promote public and academic understanding of the history of science, technology and medicine.

Founded in 2007 as a regional collaboration of eleven institutions in the Philadelphia area, the Consortium now consists of 27 institutions that span the country from the California Institute of Technology to Yale University.

The Gilliss Library joins other well-known libraries such as the Huntington Library, the Hagley Museum and Library, the Linda Hall Library, and the Newberry Library. Its specialized collection of astronomical literature is considered to be one of the most extensive in the United States, and its collection of 19th and 20th Century monographs and periodicals is considered to be one of the most complete in the world.

The USNO's library collection traces its roots to 1843, when Lieutenant James Melville Gilliss sailed to Europe to inspect the instruments being built for the newly-created U.S. Naval Observatory under construction in Washington, DC's Foggy Bottom district. Gilliss' earlier action spurred the appropriation of \$25,000 to fund the Observatory's first permanent home, and \$800 of that sum had been earmarked for buying books from the leading observatories and science libraries of the day.

Many of those books now make up the Library's collection of some 800 rare books that were printed between 1482 and 1800. Today the Library's total holdings number some 90,000 titles.

Among the more notable books in the Library's collection are a second edition of Nicolaus Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres) printed in 1566 and a first edition of Galileo Galilei's *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo* (Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems) dating to 1632. The collection also includes many seminal works by such noted early astronomical figures as Johannes Kepler, Johannes Hevelius, Tycho Brahe, Johannes Bayer, Isaac Newton, John Flamsteed, and Edmond Halley.

As a Federally-funded library, it is available to scholars and researchers of all backgrounds by appointment. More information on the James M. Gilliss Library may be found at <https://www.usno.navy.mil/USNO/library>.