

## THE HERITAGE OF THE STRASBOURG ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY

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**Abstract.** The history of the Strasbourg astronomical Observatory is an illustration of the political, cultural and scientific history of the country.

### 1 Introduction

The present Observatory is the third one in Strasbourg. The first one was erected in 1673 on a tower of the outer walls of the town. The second one was installed in 1828 on a building of the Academie. When Alsace was transferred to Germany in 1872, Emperor William 1st decided to use Strasbourg to promote its empire by including a prestigious university, with an astronomical observatory.

### 2 The heritage

This architectural set, built in the 1880s, occupies a strategic place in the new district built by the Germans. Alternately German or french, this observatory, which is still a place for university research, has been a witness of scientific and technical developments in astronomy since the late 19th century, and of the political history of Alsace as well. The richness of the architectural and instrumental heritage bears evidence of this prestigious past. This heritage, because it is probably less conventional and more unusual, is sometimes misunderstood by the public and especially astronomers themselves. To strengthen the knowledge and accessibility of such wealth, the instruments of observatories have been for a few years identified and studied by the Inventaire (Inventory Department of the French Ministry of Culture) in a partnership between French Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Research. The inventory work on the ancient instruments of the Strasbourg Observatory is part of this national program. But it is also based at the local level on a convention between the University of Strasbourg and the regional service of the Inventory of cultural heritage (Alsace). The aim is to study and document the scientific heritage of the University and then to identify its specificities. This allows the implementation of a appropriate policy to safeguard and promote both buildings and instruments, notably through a database accessible to all.

### 3 The database

The database is presently open at

[http://www.hp-physique.org/sdx/sriaulp/main.xsp?form=disc\\_query\\_form](http://www.hp-physique.org/sdx/sriaulp/main.xsp?form=disc_query_form)

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