

THE BAMBERG PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATE ARCHIVE - THE DIGITIZING
PROJECT

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Many collections of astronomical photographic plates are stored in German observatories; e.g. the Dr. Karl Reimis observatory in Bamberg accomodates about 40.000, the oldest amongst them date from the early 1910s.

The Bamberg plate archive hosts the legacy of two major sky patrols, which are routine surveillances of the visible night sky. The first one started in the mid of the 1920's in Bamberg, named "Felderplan" in collaboration with the observatories at Sonneberg and Berlin-Babelsberg. The second one targeted the southern sky and was carried out mainly at Boyden observatory (South Africa) and Mount St. John observatory (New Zealand) from 1962 to 1976, resulting in more than 20000 plates. The latter collection of plates is of great scientific importance, because the southern sky was not routinely monitored during the 1960s from elsewhere.

Although more than 1700 variable stars (so-called Bamberg variables) have been discovered from those plates, the plate archive contains a lot more information, that can be harvested by modern digitizing techniques, stored and made available to the scientific community by modern data bases only. Therefore, a collaboration with the Leibniz astrophysical institute at Potsdam and the Hamburg observatory, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, has been established to digitize the plates and publish these according to Virtual Observatory standards.