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P-1 ROSAT Implementation of a Proposed Multi-Mission X-ray Data Format

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Until recently little effort has been made to ensure that data from X-ray telescopes are delivered in a format that reflects the common characteristics that most X-ray datasets share. Instrument-specific data-product design hampers the comparison of X-ray measurements made by different detectors and should be avoided whenever possible. The ROSAT project and the High Energy Astrophysics Science Archive Research Center (HEASARC) have defined a set of X-ray data products ("rationalized files") for ROSAT data that can be used for distribution and archiving of data from other X-ray missions. This set of "rationalized files" has been defined to isolate instrument-independent and instrument-specific quantities using standard FITS constructs to ensure portability. We discuss the usage of the "rationalized files" by ROSAT for data distribution and archiving, with particular emphasis on discrimination between instrument-independent and instrument-specific quantities, and discuss application of this format to data from other X-ray missions.