

COMMISSION 6

ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS

TELEGRAMMES ASTRONOMIQUE

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Syuichi Nakano, Elizabeth Roemer,
Nikolaj N. Samus, Jana Tichá**

COMMISSION 6 WORKING GROUP

**Div. XII / Comm. 6 SERVICE Central Bureau for Astronomical
Telegrams**

PROCEEDINGS BUSINESS MEETING on 17 August 2006

1. Members present

K. Aksnes, A. C. Gilmore, D. W. E. Green, B. G. Marsden, S. Nakano, N. Samus, J. Tichá, H. Yamaoka.

2. Deceased members

Janet Mattei, Director of the AAVSO, had passed away during the triennium. The meeting stood in silence in her memory.

3. Organising Committee 2006-2009

The president proposed the following for the coming triennium: Alan C. Gilmore president, and Nikolai N. Samus vice-president. Members: Brian G. Marsden, Daniel W. E. Green, Syuichi Nakano, Elizabeth Roemer, Jana Tichá, Hitoshi Yamaoka, Kaare Aksnes. Supernova group representative: Hitoshi Yamaoka was invited on to the OC to provide a link with supernova observers.

4. New Member

A new IAU member, S. K. Mattila (United Kingdom) had asked to join the Commission. This was approved by resolution.

5. CBAT Director's report

Green, Director of the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams (CBAT), commented on the triennial report. The report had been circulated to Commission 6 members in October 2005 and will appear in *IAU Transactions XXVIA, Reports on Astronomy 2003-2006* (ed. O. Engvold, 2007, Cambridge: CUP).

Green noted that a large amount of time was spent on emails. With the Bureau's email address well-known, spam emails were an increasing problem. Answering news-media inquiries also took up much time. The Edgar Wilson Award would likely need a change of criteria soon

as amateur astronomers cease to discover comets. Problem objects were some comets on the 'NEO Confirmation Page' (NEOCP). A proposed solution is to set up an 'unconfirmed objects' webpage like the Minor Planet Center's 'NEO Confirmation Page'.

Demand for the printed *IAUCs* remains steady. Subscriptions pay for printing and postage. There are many requests for items to be printed in the *Circulars* and not just to appear electronically. Several editorial problems faced by the CBAT Director: use of non-permanent URL addresses (www...) for references; spam email, referred to above; disagreements between authors and referees; weighing automatic publication against editorial involvement. The big issues facing CBAT were: how best to serve the astronomical community via the WWW; how to counter the perception that CBAT is just a supernova announcement service; should the *IAUCs* continue as in both card and electronic form; and the function of CBAT as an archive.

Funding of the bureau is being reviewed. The administration of the Center for Astrophysics has proposed eliminating subscription and line charges. Funding to support the Bureau is being sought from the U.S., Europe, and Japan. Due to subscription lengths, a two-year lead time is needed before phasing them out. Printed *IAUCs* would still need income to cover printing and postal costs. The current link of computer services between CBAT and the MPC is a further complication.

Green has applied to the U.S. National Science Foundation for five-year funding of CBAT, but notes that 80% of NSF applications are rejected. Referee's reviews of the proposal were very supportive. Negative comments centered on the need to provide such things as internet search facilities to the website, the ability of recipients to receive announcements only of the type of objects that they are interested in, and concerns in being able to handle large quantities of information that should result from the pending all-sky surveys (with noted mention of the developing 'Virtual Observatory' concept). However, more automation diminishes the vital requirement to vet and review material. Mike Rudenko proposed bringing XML into CBAT; others noted that, while XML is used in simple Windows web pages, not all browsers can read it. Green is dialoguing with IAU members worldwide to determine how best to improve the services of the CBAT for the astronomical community at large.

There had been suggestions from Division XII outgoing president, Virginia Trimble, that Commission 6 become a Working Group in light of its small membership. Marsden suggested that Trimble had confused the Commission 6 OC list with the Membership list. He also noted that this was the 16th business meeting of Commission 6 that he had attended, showing it was an active and continuing commission. Originally the Commission reported to the Executive Committee. Given that Division XII had largely ignored Commission 6 in the past triennium, perhaps the original arrangement should be reconsidered. Discussion was needed with the incoming Division XII president, Malcolm Smith, to resolve this matter.

Kaare Aksnes
president of the Commission