

DIVISION III

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BODY NOMENCLATURE

CHAIR	Jana Ticha (Czech Republic)
MPC Rep.	Brian G. Marsden (secretary) (USA)
Div III Rep.	Karen Meech (USA)
CBAT Rep.	Daniel Green (USA)
WGPSN Rep.	Rita Schulz (Netherlands)
MEMBERS	Michael F. A'Hearn (USA), Edward L. G. Bowell (USA), Julio Fernandez (Uruguay), Pam Kilmartin (New Zealand), Syuichi Nakano (Japan), Keith Noll (USA), Lutz Schmadel (editor of DMPN) (Germany), Viktor Shor (Russia), Gareth Williams (USA), Donald K. Yeomans (USA), Jin Zhu (China).

The CSBN meeting held in Rio de Janeiro on August 11 was attended by just six members, including Pam Kilmartin as the acting chair, and several visitors. Since there was not a quorum of members, it was not possible to make any decisions. But there was a good discussion on many topics, from which several points emerged that should be more fully discussed by the whole committee during the next few months:

1. Membership

The list of members was accepted, but those present thought that more specialized and geographically diverse members were needed. The total committee now numbers 16, but members recommended that consideration be given to co-opting more members who can join in the committee's work. More still needs to be done especially with regard to Japanese and Chinese names. The Executive Committee may soon have a rule (by-law) that chairpersons should not serve more than two three-year terms. Members agreed that it might be useful to have an assistant chairperson as there is a long learning curve in this type of committee. There could also be a role for the outgoing chair. In order to ensure continuity, however, it would be useful to discuss with the EC if the CSBN, like the WGPSN, could come directly under the EC in future and therefore not be subject to this rule.

2. Guidelines

Suggestions for consideration as guidelines included (a) some limit on the number of minor planets named for family members of the discoverer; (b) some limits on how closely names can resemble other names (one, two, three letters? how about pronunciation?); (c) is the limit of 16 characters still relevant? Other ideas mentioned include doubling up (even quadrupling up) names of discoverer family members into a single minor planet name, a practice that would surely help produce names that are dissimilar to existing names. A fixed limit of family names allowed for each discoverer could be difficult. Some members still want the 16-character maximum, but we should encourage shorter names. Keith Noll suggested that we should form a subcommittee (task group) to reconsider the guidelines, reporting back in about three months, and that this should be a regular event every three years, so that the guidelines are reviewed and (re)accepted before each General Assembly. This suggestion was generally acceptable to those present.

3. Number of name proposals

Even though the “Sydney 2003 guideline” requesting individual discoverers and teams to propose no more than two names for each two-monthly naming batch is regularly broken by a few proposers, these batches have been limited to no more than 100 name proposals. Considering the increasing number of minor planet discoveries and likely increase in the number of name proposals, the CSBN will work in close cooperation with the MPC on preparing a web-based system for computer automation of the name-approval process and the editing of citations.

4. Priorities of naming

Considering that proper names are an important part of solar system nomenclature, the CSBN must set priorities for dealing with naming proposals and give more emphasis to naming frequently cited objects. The CSBN priority will be the naming of NEAs, TNOs, binary bodies, satellites of minor planets, space mission and radar targets, objects of significance to physical studies, etc. Keith Noll remarked that TNOs are not being named, as the mythological convention is seen to be too restrictive. Compilation of a namebank of suitable names for objects in some of the categories listed above would be a good start, especially for TNOs and their satellites. We should also have a task group to do this.

5. Selling of minor planet names

Dan Green suggested that, as the list of numbered minor planets is now very large and only 7% had been named, the IAU should give some thought to the possibility of allowing the public to pay a fee and have a main belt (H 15) minor planet given a name of their choice, with the proceeds going to education and research. Most of the other members present could not agree with this suggestion, which conflicts with the IAU EC’s views on organizations such as the “International Star Registry”.

Jana Ticha
Chair of the CSBN