

Commission 6: Astronomical Telegrams†

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1. Introduction

As is evident from Director Dan Green's detailed report below, the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams (CBAT) continues to function in a very reliable and efficient way. The electronic telegrams (*CBETs*) introduced in 2002 have proved to be a great success; they allow for very rapid dissemination of more extensive information than there is room for on printed *Circulars*, and they are frequently cited in the astronomical literature. The workload on the Director seems to be forever increasing. It is therefore gratifying that an Assistant Director, Gareth Williams, has been appointed. Since he also serves as Associate Director of the Minor Planet Center (MPC) and performs many of the computations on which the *CBETs* and the *Circulars* are based, the ties and mutual benefits between the CBAT and the MPC have been made even stronger.

K. Aksnes
President of the Commission

2. Report of the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams

There were 626 IAU *Circulars* issued during the 2002–2005 triennium:

Dates	<i>Circulars</i>
2002 July–Dec.	Nos. 7930–8040
2003 Jan.–June	Nos. 8041–8160
2003 July–Dec.	Nos. 8161–8260
2004 Jan.–June	Nos. 8261–8363
2004 July–Dec.	Nos. 8364–8458
2005 Jan.–June	Nos. 8549–8555

In December 2002, the Central Bureau began issuing electronic-only *Central Bureau Electronic Telegrams*, or *CBETs*, to aid in the rapid dissemination of reports, especially during travels outside of Cambridge by the Director, with most reports initially published later on the standard *Circulars*. During the course of the triennium, however, the *CBETs* evolved gradually into a stand-alone supplementary publication to the *Circulars*, notably to handle items that are much

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longer than can be handled by the space-constrained printed *Circulars*, with 174 *CBETs* issued through June 2005. This evolution can be seen in the increase of *CBETs* during the last part of the triennium, from 54 in 2003 and 46 in 2004 to 74 in the first half of 2005. Mention of all items requiring designation by the Central Bureau (supernovae, novae, comets, solar-system satellites) continues to be noted on the printed *Circulars*.

Subscribers may receive the *Circulars* in printed and/or electronic form, the latter being available by e-mail or by logging in to the Computer Service, either directly on the Bureau's computers or via the World Wide Web. Since 1997, the *Circulars* have been made freely available at the CBAT website, but following complaints by paying subscribers, the general delay in posting for non-subscribers is now about one year (expanded in late 2004 from the previous 4–6 weeks). The *CBETs* are also posted at the CBAT website, with the earlier *CBETs* also available freely (and, like the *Circulars*, are indexed via the web-based bibliographic "Astrophysics Data System", the ostensible replacement to the now-defunct *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts*). Funding is currently being sought to allow the CBAT to post all electronic *Circulars* and *CBETs* freely.

The number of subscriptions to the printed *Circulars* was 166 at the end of the triennium, down from 199 at the beginning. The number of subscribers to the joint Computer Service of the CBAT and the Minor Planet Center (MPC) has remained relatively stable at around 500. There nonetheless continues to be considerable interest to maintain having a printed copy of the *Circulars*, though subscription rates may need to increase to cover the increasing costs of printing and postage.

Supernovae and comets have continued to dominate the activities of the Bureau, as related in the annual reports of the Bureau as published in the *IAU Information Bulletins* and made available at the Commission-6 website (URL <http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iau/Commission6.html>).

The pattern continues regarding increasing numbers of comet discoveries from NEO surveys being first reported as objects of asteroidal appearance, where they are often posted on the MPC's "NEO Confirmation" webpage because of their unusual motion-follow-up observations then showing some of the objects to be of cometary appearance. The working link between the CBAT and MPC continues to be highly useful in the joint announcement of such objects.

Increasing numbers of supernova discoveries are expected with the increasing searches for high-redshift objects and also as a product of the new all-sky surveys; in this regard, the CBAT is working with the IAU Working Group on Supernovae to establish a website and e-mail-group venue for very rapid posting of discoveries and follow-up information (under a provisional designation scheme initially based on the object's position), with confirmed objects given standard designations and published as usual on *CBETs* and/or *IAUCs*. Meanwhile, the CBAT has expanded its website over the past triennium to include much information regarding supernovae, novae, comets, satellites of solar-system planets, etc.—a snapshot of which can be gleaned from the "Headlines" webpage: <http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iau/Headlines.html>. Plans are underway to complete the availability of all *IAUCs* back to No. 1 at the CBAT website, and to provide better indexing of the online *Circulars* as well as flexibility for subscribers in terms of what sorts of *CBETs* and/or *IAUCs* they would like to receive by subject or type of object.

Amateur astronomers in numerous countries are finding more supernovae during dedicated CCD surveys, and amateurs still dominate in finding Galactic novae. Their help with follow-up observations (astrometry, photometry) of new comets, novae and supernovae is also appreciated by the CBAT. The *IAU Circulars* have continued to serve as the official announcement medium for the annual Edgar Wilson Award for amateur discoveries of comets.

Since the *IAU Circulars* are in fact refereed (to a greater extent than many contributors realize), the CBAT benefits from regular consultation with members of Commission 6 in their various areas of astronomical expertise, as well as referees from the general astronomical community.

D.W.E. Green
Director of the Bureau