

6. ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS (TELEGRAMMES ASTRONOMIQUES)

(Committee of the Executive Committee)

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ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU: vacant

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS OF THE BUREAU: C.M. Bardwell, D.W.E. Green

I. INTRODUCTION

The Commission has been fortunate in being able to continue its work during the last triennium with a minimum of effort, and thanks for this should go largely to the Director of the Bureau, Dr B.G. Marsden, for his untiring dedication, as well as to the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory for its general support. If any question has arisen, it was where the line should be drawn between paid and unpaid contributions to the Circulars. This involves a somewhat delicate balance of interests between, on the one hand, the encouragement given to certain types of observations which have traditionally been published in the Circulars, (e.g. accurate positions of comets), and, on the other, the income on which the continued successful operation of the Bureau depends. The position will therefore have to be kept under review at all times. At present all evidence points to general satisfaction with current policy.

Today's rapid development of new methods of electrical communications are causing the title "Astronomical Telegrams" to become almost a misnomer, and one can foresee the day when it will disappear entirely. One of the important activities of the Commission in the coming years is likely to be the study of these new methods. In time this may well lead to a far more rapid and comprehensive dissemination of astronomical data than is available today.

J. HERS

President of the Commission

II. REPORT OF THE CENTRAL BUREAU FOR ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS

The Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams has operated much as usual during the triennium, the number of occasions on which "telegram books" and Circulars were issued being:

	Telegrams	Circulars
1978 (from 1 Nov.)	7	14 (Nos. 3298-3317)
1979	42	66 (Nos. 3318-3438)
1980	52	71 (Nos. 3439-3557)
1981 (to 23 Oct.)	33	51 (Nos. 3558-3641)

The slight reduction in the number of Circulars issued is an indication that researchers are publishing their mini-papers in more suitable places, a practice that Commission 6 has tried to encourage. This effect is in fact more real than the above figures indicate, since, contrary to the situation before 1978, all the Circulars now consist of only a single page. Further, the proper activity of the Bureau is more appropriately indicated by the number of telegrams issued; these are of course also followed up in the Circulars, and the number of telegrams and such follow-up Circulars was in fact somewhat greater than during the previous triennium.

The highlight of the triennium, amply documented in the Circulars published during 1980, has involved the new discoveries of satellites of Saturn. The fact that such discoveries should be made at this time was due to the passage of the Sun and the Earth through Saturn's ring plane. Following a recommendation by the IAU Working Group on Planetary System Nomenclature, the observations were registered with temporary designations until more detailed analysis could sort out the identifications among them. As many as 33 different provisional designations were supplied in 1980; these were found to refer to seven definite discrete objects and possibly more.

Inflation has made it necessary to increase the subscription rates in several stages, up to 50c for regular and 30c for special accounts as of June 1981. There has been a slight drop in the number of subscribers, down to 809 by November 1981. The line charges for non-essential items were increased to \$30.00 per item plus \$10.00 per line.

Z. Sekanina resigned as Associate Director of the Central Bureau on his departure from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in October 1980. C.M. Bardwell has continued as an Assistant Director, and D.W.E. Green was promoted to this same position in April 1981. The position of Associate Director is vacant at this time.

The TWX machines purchased by the Central Bureau in 1978 have continued to serve the process of telegraphic communication well, allowing messages to be received and transmitted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. F.E. Cook, at the Ionospheric Prediction Service in Sydney, has generously relayed messages to subscribers in Australia and New Zealand, and World Data Center A for Solar-Terrestrial Physics, Boulder, has relayed them to Moscow for distribution in the USSR.

B.G. MARSDEN
Director of the Bureau