

COMMISSION 6 : ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS

(TELEGRAMMES ASTRONOMIQUES)

Report of Meeting : 25 November 1985

PRESIDENT : M.P. Candy

SECRETARY : B.G. Marsden

The President announced the nominations of A. Mrkos and E. Roemer as President and Vice-President for the triennium 1985-1988, and these were confirmed by the members present. Although the Commission has traditionally not had an Organizing Committee, it was felt appropriate that B.G. Marsden, as Director of the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrammes, should now serve in this capacity. S. Nakano was elected a new member of the Commission.

Supplementing the information in the report in Transactions XIXA, Marsden affirmed that, after reaching a low point in 1983, there appeared to have been some improvement in the speed with which Circulars were received by subscribers ; it had been necessary to increase the 'regular' and 'special' subscription rates in late 1984 to 65c and 39c, respectively. On the other hand, the introduction of the 'dial-in' computer service had been in many respects the most significant event of the past triennium, and to encourage further use of this service there had been a reduction in the daily charges from 30c to 20c in late 1984. Following consultation with the Finance Committee, it had been agreed to restrict the request for IAU financial support during the upcoming triennium at the level of the preceding one, and this request was approved by the Executive Committee.

The Commission considered and supported a proposal by former President P. Simon that the IAU cosponsor a symposium on "The Contribution of Amateur Astronomers to the Discovery of the Universe", to be held in Paris in June or August 1987.

Nakano gave an account of the manner in which he makes use of the IAU Computer Service and how this led to his development of a similar computer service for the Oriental Astronomical Association. The O.A.A. service helps coordinate the observational and computational activities of many amateur astronomers in Japan, and it also provides immediate linkages to the Tokyo Observatory and back to the IAU Central Bureau.

Marsden gave a general description of the IAU Computer Service, which also involves Commission 20 and the Minor Planet Center. Noting that Nakano was indeed one of its most frequent users, he remarked that the resulting multi-way interaction with the Japanese astronomers was an excellent example of how astronomers ought to be conducting business in the 1980's. There exists the unfortunate problem of the general incompatibility of modem protocol in different countries, and frequent international telephone calls can soon of course become a prohibitive expense. P.B. Boyce suggested that use might be made of a linkage to GTE Telenet via the American Astronomical Society and the American Institute of Physics. On the other hand, while this linkage, as well as others of its type, can be very useful if only an electronic-mail system is required, the IAU Computer Service also involves logging in to a computer and actually performing computations on it. By making the computer a Telenet node the problem of international incompatibility could be removed, but that of expense clearly remained.