

COMMISSION 6

ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS (TELEGRAMMES ASTRONOMIQUES)

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J. Ticha, H. Yamaoka

PROCEEDINGS BUSINESS SESSIONS, 10 August 2009

1. Introduction

The President verbally reported that the only scientific matter that he dealt with during the triennium as an appeal over the withholding of a supernova designation from an object observed only in the infra-red with no supporting spectrum.

The new officers and Organising Committee for the Commission had been voted on by email in February 2009 and communicated to the General Secretary soon after, so were taken as read. The new Officers and Organising Committee are as follows: Nikolai N. Samus (President); Hitoshi Yamaoka (Vice President); Alan Gilmore (Past President); Kaare Aksnes; Daniel W. E. Green; Brian G. Marsden; Syuichi Nakano; Timothy Spahr; Jana Ticha; Gareth Williams.

2. Report of the Director

Dan Green referred everyone to his latest Report, included in *IAU Information Bulletin* No. 104 (p. 83; June 2009), distributed at the GA. The following points were noted: Postal circulars will continue into the coming triennium but subscriptions are slowly declining. The CBAT is still needed by the astronomical community as the most trusted source of information on discoveries and for designations of comets and supernovae. This point had been reinforced at a meeting with the VOEvent (Virtual Observatory) organisers, who acknowledged the need for the Bureau to highlight important astronomical discoveries, as automated surveys produce an ever greater flood of data.

Half of the funding of CBAT comes from United States sources. The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) is funding half of the Director's salary for two years, due to end in early 2010. [The former Director, Brian Marsden was a U.S. federal employee of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO), so did not receive a salary from CBAT.] The IAU EC has increased its support of CBAT to around ??? Euro for each of the calendar years 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Previously the CBAT and the Minor Planet Center (MPC) shared a part-time secretary who looked after subscriptions. The MPC will cease charging a subscription from 2009 October 1. This makes it uneconomical for CBAT to continue to employ the secretary. A proposal to hand subscription administration to a subscription agency is being considered.

The CBAT Director discussed seeking funding for a cometary science center, under which the running of the CBAT might fall, financially. The Director has run most of the day-to-day activities alone (with some help from Director Emeritus Marsden while travelling, and from Assistant Director Williams regarding computer issues). Assistance might come in the form of such a cometary science center, as a large amount of funding for CBAT alone has been difficult to realize. Collaboration with other educational institutions is also being explored, with CBAT as an online teaching tool. Perhaps funding from other national astronomical organisations can be more fully explored, as well.

3. Discussion

Some in the supernova (SN) community are ignoring the CBAT. The big surveys will yield many possible SNe that are unconfirmed. These can get PSN (possible supernova) designations, with the proposal that surveys assign PSN positional designations (good to $0^{\circ}.01$ in R.A. and to $0''.1$ in Decl.). IAU SN designations can then be given by the CBAT when spectroscopic confirmation is reported, in such cases. Traditionally the CBAT has assigned designations to objects brighter than 20th magnitude close to a host galaxy. Only 1% of designated SNe have proved to be non-SNe.

Following a request from the SN community SNe are now reported only on *Central Bureau Electronic Telegrams (CBETs)*. SNe are reported in the *Circulars* only when line-charges are paid. An unfortunate double-assignment of a SN designation caused problems in the NED database; steps are in place to ensure this does not happen again.

Comet names are issued in the *IAUCs*. The paid CBAT subscription infrastructure will continue after the MPC publications become free.

The new Division XII president (F. Genova) plans to call a meeting of presidents of the Commissions that are in DXII. There is a need to explain to the IAU Executive Committee the importance of supporting the CBAT, Minor Planet Center, and the General Catalogue of Variable Stars team in Moscow as important international centers for the astronomical community that are within the IAU — thus giving the IAU much good visibility, as something important that the IAU does in addition to holding meetings. Many in the astronomical community worldwide see the documenting functions of the IAU as highly important, and if they are not adequately supported, the worldwide community will not see the relevance and uniqueness of the IAU.

4. Closing remarks

Also present at this meeting of Commission 6 besides the outgoing and incoming officers and the CBAT Director were David Tholen, Françoise Genova (incoming Division XII president), and Marion Schmitz.

Alan C. Gilmore
President of the Commission