

COMMISSION 5: DOCUMENTATION

Report of Meeting, 19 August 1970

PRESIDENT: J. B. Sykes.

SECRETARY: A. J. Meadows.

1. *President's Report.* Pecker moved that the report be accepted; seconded by Heintz.

2. *Composition of the Commission, 1970–1973.* It was proposed that the present officers of the Commission should continue in office for another three years, with no organizing committee. These proposals were approved by Commission members. Five new members and four new consulting members were named.

3. *Primary publications.* Heintz mentioned that Commission 26 had discussed the increasing difficulty of publishing observational work. In particular, the publication of observational results in certain journals was being delayed, and the editorial requirements were felt to be too stringent. There was a tendency on the part of editors to think that observations should be published in catalogue form. A new journal might eventually be necessary. The President pointed out that associations of editors are under consideration in a variety of subjects, and enquired whether this might be done in astronomy. There was general agreement that such an association was not needed at present, but that closer association of editors with Commission 5 would be an advantage. It was pointed out that this idea had been suggested at Prague, but had not yet progressed very far. Feuillebois remarked that the Paris Observatory kept a file on names of editors, prices, page charges, etc., and agreed to circulate a list to Commission members.

4. *Secondary publications.* The Commission carried unanimously the following resolution:

Commission 5 recommends that the three principal abstracting journals in astronomy:

Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts

Bulletin Signalétique: Astronomie

Referativnyj Zhurnal: Astronomiya

be authorized to state that they are prepared under the auspices of the IAU. Further discussion of secondary publications was postponed to the meeting on *Desiderata for Abstracting Services* (see below).

5. *Tertiary publications.* Ogorodnikov described the new series of *Itogi nauki*: periodic reviews of restricted areas of astronomy, containing detailed bibliographies of some 150 items. These are now to be published at a rate of one per year. The series will repeat at intervals so that there will be a continuous coverage of subjects.

A discussion of review papers was mainly concerned with the reduction in coverage of the IAU Transactions. This led to the formulation of the following resolution, which was carried unanimously.

Commission 5 considers that the thorough and unbiased reports on the progress of astronomy as formerly published triennially in Vol. A of the IAU Transactions are of great value. It urges the Executive Committee to maintain this series of reviews in some form, despite the financial difficulties.

Commission 5 would welcome the opportunity of being consulted by the Executive Committee before further decisions are taken about the nature of the Reports of Commissions.

It was agreed that the Commission should not approve a proposal by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory for a subvention towards the distribution costs of *Observatories of the World*.

6. *ICSU Abstracting Board.* The President gave a review of recent activities of the Board relevant to astronomy. The following resolution was carried unanimously:

Commission 5 records its support for the recommendation of the ICSU Abstracting Board that

abstracts prepared by authors or editors in accordance with the UNESCO *Guide for the Preparation of Authors' Abstracts for Publication* should be published with all scientific papers.

7. *Subject Classification.* An extensive discussion on the correlation of subject classifications used by abstracting journals, the revision of the Universal Decimal Classification, and thesaurus construction led to the setting up of an *ad hoc* sub-committee, whose deliberations are recorded below.

8. *Current-awareness publications.* Ogorodnikov reported that a current-awareness journal for astronomy (the contents of which would later appear in the *Referativnyj Zhurnal*) was under consideration. He would appreciate comments on the possible style of publication and the likely demand for it. The project cannot start before 1972, but sample copies will appear in autumn, 1971.

Second Meeting, 22 August 1970

9. *Information use.* Meadows presented a description of the work which had been carried out at Leicester University on the usage and characteristics of astronomy and space science literature. The first report on this work – an analysis of a questionnaire on information usage by astronomers and space scientists in the U.K. – was published in 1969 (*Information Sources and Information Retrieval in Astronomy and Space Science* A. J. Meadows and J. G. O'Connor, Leicester University, 1969). The second report – a study of selected astronomical libraries in the U.K. – has just been issued (*Library Provision in Astronomy and Space Science* J. G. O'Connor and A. J. Meadows, Leicester University, 1970); and the third – a computer investigation of the characteristics of the main astronomical journals – will appear in 1971.

10. *Bibliography of Astronomy, 1881–1898.* The President announced that this bibliography was now available on microfilm, and that it was accompanied by an explanatory booklet written by himself.

11. *Ancient Books.* Grassi Conti described briefly the card index for astronomical books of the fifteenth and sixteenth century in European observatory libraries, which she was compiling. Cards were currently being prepared for relevant titles at Edinburgh. One card will be prepared for each title; this card will refer to each observatory library where a copy of the book is held. The results of this survey will eventually be published as a printed catalogue. Further details are given in *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 1, 165–6, 1970; *International Journal of Special Libraries* 5, 36–7, 1970.

12. *Transliteration.* In view especially of likely problems with machine readability in the future, the President proposed the following resolution, which was passed unanimously:

Commission 5 recommends to the Executive Committee that the scheme for the transliteration of the Russian alphabet shown on page 13 of *Transactions XIVA* be adopted by the IAU.

Wilkins enquired whether there should not be a common computer code for different alphabets, so that tapes might be exchanged. The President suggested that Wilkins might like to circulate a specific proposal to members of Commission 5 for comment.

13. *List of non-commercial publications and catalogues from observatories.* Rosenberg reported on the current state of this project. It is intended that the compilation should be loose-leaf, and arranged to show both current and ceased publications from observatories. Any future changes in the status of observatory publications will be circulated as amendments. Rosenberg suggested that many observatory publications were becoming simply reprint series, and that it would be better, therefore, if they ceased publication. There was general agreement that this was true in some cases, but that, in others, the publication of an observatory series was still valuable: no general rule concerning the need to discontinue such publications could be laid down.

14. *Library holdings.* The President noted that, at a recent meeting of U.S. astronomical librarians, it had been decided to draw up a list of the serial holdings of their respective institutions.

15. *Title abbreviations.* It was agreed that, until new proposals regarding such abbreviations had been formulated, the proposals contained in the *Astronomer's Handbook* should be adhered to.

16. *Notation.* It was agreed that this was a matter which should be kept under surveillance by Commission 5.

17. *Data centres.* The President commented on their current status, as discussed in Brighton by the Working Group on Numerical Data.

18. *Working Group of Astronomical Librarians.* It was agreed that this Working Group should be allowed to lapse, since the Commission now included five observatory librarians as consulting members, and it was undesirable to duplicate the work of the corresponding sub-section of the International Federation of Librarians' Associations.

Third Meeting, 24 August 1970

Desiderata for Abstracting Services in Astronomy

The President explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss whether the current abstracting services sufficiently covered the needs of astronomers, and whether review reports, such as had been previously produced by the IAU, would still be valuable (a resolution to this effect having already been passed at an earlier meeting of Commission 5).

Dewhirst enquired to what extent *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts* covered report literature such as NASA special publications. Henn said that some reports were included, but not all; there were no holdings of STAR at AAA in Heidelberg. Merrill (Commission 42) suggested that other Commissions should follow the example of his own, which published a twice-yearly list of relevant papers. These were collected by astronomers from different countries who were working in the field. The lists were circulated to all members of the commission, and to anyone else who was interested. Such lists were very useful in drawing up draft reports. Dewhirst suggested that IAU members should again be reminded of the need to send reprints of publications appearing in uncommon journals to *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts*. The President replied that he would be sending a note on abstracting services to the *IAU Information Bulletin*, and that he could add an appropriate statement to that. Wray described a personalized computer file which he had prepared for himself. This included all papers on extra-galactic research listed in the *Astronomischer Jahresbericht* since 1950 (it was being updated at intervals). Authors and titles are included (not abstracts), and items can be recalled by author, source, word-in-title, or added keyword (there is no standard thesaurus, however). Some 2000 items are currently on file, and each search costs \$3-4. Wray suggested that members at every institution might find such personal files useful. Henn noted that *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts* would be publishing a cumulative index in terms of authors and keywords every 3-4 years. There followed some discussion of the problem of abstracting fringe fields. The President remarked that there would hopefully be an exchange of abstracts of mutual interest to different subject areas through the ICSU Abstracting Board. The problem was more important for *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts* than for the other two main abstracting services, since each of these formed part of a larger system. It was noted that *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts* was on punched cards, and therefore not available for distribution on tape. Feuillebois emphasized that there was a current international system for putting bibliographical information on tapes (MARC) and that astronomy should follow this if possible. She and Kemp agreed that the system was at present unsuitable for information searches, but might well be improved, from this point of view, in the immediate future. Wilkins suggested that, since INSPEC tapes had been designed with information retrieval in mind, it might be better to make an astronomical system compatible with these. Dewhirst remarked, amidst general agreement, that, whatever search methods were devised, they might be found eventually to be too expensive for astronomers to use. Finally, Heintz proposed that the habit of referring only to abstracts in review articles should not be pressed until such time as the various abstracting services' classifications were unified.

Meeting of Sub-Committee on Classification (20 August 1970)

The President summed up the discussion at the meeting of 19 August. He pointed out that classification was required for: (1) Abstracting systems; (2) UDC; (3) Thesaurus development for machine retrieval.

Kemp remarked on the need to keep the current research on classification – as by the Classification Research Group in the U.K. – in mind. Feuillebois described the keyword system being developed in Paris. The NASA thesaurus is used as a basis, and the keywords are gradually compiled by machine. Both broad terms and narrow terms are used; the former can be used for shelf placement. There was a general feeling that this scheme might be used for all three purposes outlined by the President. It was agreed, however, that the UDC and keyword systems would need to be fully inter-related; it was therefore necessary to hasten the current UDC revision. To this end, it was agreed to establish a Working Group on Universal Decimal Classification 52 (Astronomy), to work with the FID. The members suggested were Kemp, Wilkins, Lavrova and an astrophysicist.

JOINT MEETING OF COMMISSIONS 5, 9, 38 AND 46

The meeting took place on 25 August under the chairmanship of J. Rösch. Its purpose was to consider the construction and publication of a listing of observatories, astronomers, instruments and programmes in a form suitable, in particular, for the needs of Commissions 9 and 46.

Existing documents of this kind serving as a basis for discussion were Rigaux' *Les observatoires astronomiques et les astronomes*, last published in 1959, and Page's *Observatories of the World*, revised in 1970, of which the compiler had sent 100 copies for distribution at the General Assembly.

The need for up-to-dateness was emphasized and it was agreed that this would have to be given precedence over completeness.

The following information was agreed to be desirable (list compiled largely by Heintz):

1. Name and address of observatory or institution, followed by its stations elsewhere (these being noted also under their country of location, with cross-reference to the parent foundation).
2. Geographical coordinates and altitude.
3. Names of permanent research and teaching staff, with their astronomical interests.
4. Number of temporary staff, students, etc.
5. Brief listing of instruments (including computers), fuller details being available on request from some specified location.
6. Research and teaching programmes.
7. Titles of publications and reports issued.
8. Names of those responsible for providing information about facilities for observation and study.
9. Indexes.

Radio observatories and data centres should be included, but not private and amateur observatories. Müller showed a specimen listing of Swiss observatories. Velghe showed a computer print-out prepared at Brussels and described a plan whereby each country would be responsible for issuing updating sheets in respect of its own observatories, using an agreed computer programme, and distributing these updatings at appropriate intervals. The need to computerize the system was questioned but was thought to be defensible having regard to the advantages of uniformity, ease of index preparation, and selective print-out of data.

Velghe said that the Brussels Observatory was willing to compile the complete world list for the initial distribution, but thereafter could accept responsibility only for the Belgian lists. The responsibility for the completeness and correctness of the information given for each other country would lie with the respective National Committee for Astronomy. It was agreed that Velghe should in the first place send to Sykes copies of papers describing the proposed system, for forwarding to the Chairmen of National Committees together with a copy of the present minutes and a covering letter explaining the matter under discussion and requesting comments. The plan will be carried through as far as possible and the situation will be reviewed at the next General Assembly.