

6. ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS (TÉLÉGRAMMES ASTRONOMIQUES)
(Committee of the Executive Committee)

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I. INTRODUCTION

The commission has been able to continue its work during the last triennium with a minimum of effort. Thanks for this and for the untiring dedication are due to the Director of the Bureau, B. G. Marsden. We are also grateful to the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory for its general support.

According to the announcement published in the IAU Information Bulletin no 58, K. A. Thernøe died on 1987 March 7. He was the director of the Central Telegram Bureau during the years 1960 - 1964 in Copenhagen and for many years he served as principal substitute for Julie Vinter Hansen when she ran the Bureau.

Commission 6 was the principal sponsor in IAU Colloquium "The Contribution of Amateurs Astronomers to the Astronomy". The Colloquium took place in Paris from June 20 to June 24, 1987. Nine commissions of IAU supported the meeting which stressed the importance of amateurs for astronomy.

A. Mrkos
President of the Commission

II. REPORT OF THE CENTRAL BUREAU FOR ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS

During the triennium the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams issued telegram books and Circulars on the following occasions:

	Telegrams	<u>Circulars</u>
1984 (from 1 Nov.)	14	16 (Nos. 4003-4024)
1985	35	59 (Nos. 4025-4156)
1986	41	61 (Nos. 4157-4191)
1987 (to 30 June)	26	(Nos. 4292-4412)

Much of the Bureau's rather high activity was due to Halley's comet, news of which was published in the Circulars at a steady rate during the first two years of the triennium. The appearance of supernova 1987A in the Large Magellanic Cloud in February 1987 resulted in a record-breaking surge in the rate of publication of the Circulars, with as many as 31 being issued during the 20 days following the discovery, and the above tabulation shows almost as many Circulars during the first half of 1987 as during a normal complete year.

It is clear that SN 1987A has had a permanent effect on the manner in which the Central Bureau operates. As mentioned in the last triennial report, early in 1984 the Bureau initiated its computer service, one of the features of which allows subscribers to see the Circulars as soon as they are issued.

However, the incompatibility of international modem protocols and the expense of commercial telephone lines meant that by February 1987 there were only five non-North American subscribers out of a total of about 50. Although it had been hoped shortly to make the computer service accessible over the SPAN network anyway, the extreme interest in the supernova accelerated the process, and with the support of NASA arrangements could be quickly made for international tie-ins to SPAN. By mid-1987 the total number of subscribers to the computer service had doubled, and the number of subscribers outside North America had quadrupled, as had the total actual usage of the service. As a concession to the computer-service users Circulars would no longer be issued only when they could be printed; they are now prepared as appropriate on any day of the week and at any time, and unless they are particularly urgent they can be delayed several days before printing.

Although the electronic dissemination of the Circulars tends to obviate the often need for the Bureau's telegram service, the latter is still essential for astronomers outside North America, western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as for astronomers who choose not to check the computer service every day. In March 1987 the per-message charges for receipt of the telegrams by domestic public message were increased from \$7.00 to \$9.00, by domestic mailgram from \$3.00 to \$4.00 and by overseas full-rate cablegram from \$11.00 to \$14.00 (with a possible surcharge for very long messages). For subscribers in Australia and New Zealand the charge remains at \$2.00, thanks to the generosity of the Ionospheric Prediction Service in Sydney, whence P. Davies redisseminates the telegrams.

Following an increase in the per-issue subscription rates for the Circulars in November 1984 to 65c for 'regular' accounts and 39c for 'special' (not-invoiced) accounts, the number of subscribers dropped from 780 to 760, where it remained until April 1986, when the billing system was instead put on a monthly basis. The monthly subscription rate is \$7.50 for regular accounts, \$4.50 per special accounts, and there are additional charges of the same amounts for the computer service. Although the billing change was in response to many requests, the number of subscribers then dropped to 730 and below. Following the appearance of SN 1987A the number increased to 750.

B. G. MARSDEN
Director of the Bureau