

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA : FUTURE OF MNASSA

Minutes of a Subcommittee Meeting held on Tuesday 27th August 1974 at 8 p.m. at the S.A.A.O., Observatory, Cape.

Present

Dr. Wild (in the Chair), R. G. Barnard, Dr. A.D. Thackeray, Dr. C. Turpin. Mr. W.G. Griewood provided some written comments and joined the meeting at approximately 9.15 p.m.

Agenda

It was agreed that the Report on the future of MNASSA prepared by Dr. Wild be taken as the basis of discussion.

After full discussion of each item, it was agreed to recommend as follows:

Recommendations

1. That no attempt be made to compete with the major astronomical research journals for research material emanating from South African observatories.
2. That Research Notes should continue to be accepted as and when they are submitted to MNASSA. These should be properly refereed so that the authors receive due credit for these publications.
3. That the research side of MNASSA be maintained by way of brief news items on current research in South Africa, rather than by way only of formal papers and reports.
4. That efforts should be made to publish high-quality review articles and brief digests of important papers appearing in the research literature. These should be written at a level suitable for a wide cross-section of MNASSA's readers.
5. That CENTREPIECE should be expanded both in scope and quantity so that amateur and student members are fully catered for. That to this end, Council be requested to
 - (i) consider whether the present rules for Membership of the Society should be amended so that all Centre members would be members of the Society and would receive the Society's publications.
 - (ii) consult Centre Representatives (through their alternates on Council) to obtain their opinions on whether CENTREPIECE should be integrated into the body of MNASSA, and whether they can guarantee a certain level of contribution to CENTREPIECE each month.
6. That the new Editorial Board give early consideration to the possibility of saving expense and time by
 - (i) reducing the annual number of issues of MNASSA to six
 - (ii) doing away with the "hard" cover.
7. That attempts be made by the new Editorial Board to increase revenue by
 - (i) selling more advertising space
 - (ii) increasing circulation to a wider readership when improvements such as those mentioned in paragraph 5 above have been made.
8. That Council be asked to investigate the possibility of obtaining Government subvention for the production of MNASSA and whether this could be done without having to submit the Society to undesirable controls.
9. That the Editorial Board be expanded to include

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- Mr. J. Churms (SAAO)
- Dr. David S. Evans (University of Texas)
- Dr. A.P. Fairall (U.C.T.)
- Mr. R.F. Hurly (Cape Centre, ASSA)
- Mr. M.D. Overbeek (Transvaal Centre, ASSA)
- Mr. J.E. Penfold (SAAO)
- Dr. R.H. Stoy (Royal Observatory)
- Dr. A.D. Thackeray (U.C.T.)
- Prof. Brian Warner (U.C.T.)
- Dr. P.A.T. Wild (U.C.T.)

Of these, the following would be listed as Editors of MNASSA:

Dr. Wild, Dr. Thackeray, Mr. Churms, Mr. Hurly and as editor of the HANDBOOK: Dr. Fairall.

The remaining members would serve as Correspondents, Journal Digesters, Advertising Managers, etc.

- 10. That, if the current delivery date of Sky and Telescope continues, the date of issue of MNASSA be changed to the 15th of each publication month.

The meeting closed at approximately 10.30 p.m.

Confirmed at the meeting of

 held on

3rd September 1974.

P.A.T. Wild
CHAIRMAN

2.

There is another way in which I have to be relieved - immediately - as I no longer have my car at work. This concerns the collection of Sky and Telescope from Observatory Post Office and the transport of the envelopes for posting, normally at Rosebank Post Office. The collection also involves liaison with the postmaster at Observatory to find out when they have arrived (they generally, but not always, come in a single batch). The posting involves transporting and twenty minutes or so at the post office, including a bit of stamp licking. I would like to get somebody to take over the responsibility of getting Sky and Telescope to the Physics building and someone else for taking the packaged envelopes away (maybe even paying and claiming for postage) - it would have to be persons who can take a few minutes off during working hours for this. Ideally the first should be at the SAAO, the second at UCT. Any volunteers?

A. P. FAIRALL

August 1974



Report of the Sub-Committee on Distribution of Sky and Telescope & MNASSA

As Chairman, I wish to apologise to my subcommittee members, Messrs. Larmuth, Molyneux and Roberts, for not organising a formal meeting due to difficulties in "logistics" (chiefly mine). However, I have contacted each member in turn and I think we are more or less agreed on the contents of this report.

First note that distributing goes to

- (1) ASSA MEMBERS who get both Sky & Telescope and MNASSA
- (2) MNASSA SUBSCRIBERS who are not members of the Society and get only MNASSA - they are chiefly overseas astronomical institutions. (Hereafter when I refer to MNASSA SUBSCRIBERS, I infer only this second category).

ASSA MEMBERS number almost 500 and this is getting on for double what it was four years ago.

MNASSA SUBSCRIBERS number about 130, only increasing (if at all) very slowly.

The job of stamping, filling and closing envelopes amounts to many man hours each month. At present it is carried out by coloured staff in the Physics Department, working within official university time but when not required for other duties. Godfrey Christians who organises this team is very competent. However addressograph plates can easily be got out of order and are rarely quite up to date and so each envelope is individually checked against a master card index, missing or adjusted members are added, and the lot prepared for posting. This task can only be done in the same building since a few hundred pounds worth of packaged magazines cannot be sent elsewhere very readily; and this is what I currently undertake. For efficiency, the job must also involve the maintenance of the master card index and the handling of all correspondence and queries concerning distribution.

At present, no other institution or department appears prepared to take on the packaging and no other individual in this department is prepared to be distribution manager - so for the moment I am stuck with the job! However, it is both my own wish and that of my professor that I should be completely relieved of this job since it is drastically cutting into my research time. I would welcome Council discussing this matter although we as a sub-committee do not see any alternative.

There is a way in which I could be partially (say 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %) relieved - that is for the entire MNASSA SUBSCRIBER distribution to be removed from this department and put in the care of a competent individual who is either retired or a bachelor. Since the number is much smaller, and the load physically much lighter, the task of stamping envelopes (with the simplest addressograph machine) is not so formidable. Then if the individual is still keen, he could probably take over the business side of the distribution as this would make the system more efficient - perhaps Mr. Bentley would comment on this, I know he is also feeling the load.

We have discussed the possibility of splitting the ASSA members into regions operated by similar individuals but we think the system would be too clumsy with multiple postage claims, etc., and in any case it will be hard enough to find one willing person (for MNASSA), let alone several.

