

Preface

to the First Edition

In the history of natural sciences it is a common procedure to give any newly detected object an individual proper name. But the increase of similar objects in the course of time makes it more and more difficult to choose adequate proper names. So any new object is given an individual number. This system, however, will soon cause confusion and even provoke mistakes. To prevent this, it is best to combine both the name and the number of an object, thus getting a sufficient redundancy no matter how many objects there may be. This system has been realized in an exemplary manner in the assignment of names to the minor planets.

It was the first night of the 19th century when Giuseppe Piazzi established a new era in the exploration of the Solar System. His discovery proved the existence of a body between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter which had been expected for a long time. The naming of this body, however, caused the first controversies. During the second half of the last century the number of discoveries grew dramatically. The naming or the assigning of a special sign as had been done in the beginning could no longer be continued. The practice was started to add an ordinal number to the planets related to the dates of their discovery. However, this procedure was to fail as well, because more and more discoveries were made. Numbers had to be corrected subsequently, and there were fierce arguments about some of the names proposed by the discoverers. The honor of science seemed to be endangered. The violent discussion about the assignment of names did decrease with the exorbitant increase in discoveries, but on the other hand the amount of numbered yet unnamed objects grew rapidly. Great confusion was to come.

The necessity of assigning an adequate name became as apparent as the request for a short explanation of its origin. Not very often could one learn from literature who should be honored and for what reason. After the end of World War II, Antonio Paluziè-Borrell, a librarian from Barcelona and General Secretary of the “Sociedad Astronómico de España y America”, started a first investigation on the origin of some of the names of the first 1650 numbered planets. It is entirely owing to Paul Herget, however, that after the foundation of the Minor Planet Center at the Cincinnati Observatory he demanded of the discoverer that the assignment

of each name should be accompanied by an explanation of its meaning. He also suggested that a compilation should be prepared which would indicate the meanings of the names which had already been assigned in the past. A first short list was published in 1955, a more explicit one in 1968. The first newly numbered minor planet after the interruption of World War II was (1565). Since then all newly assigned names have been more or less appropriately described in the Minor Planet Circulars along with their announcement. Herget’s successor Brian G. Marsden has strived in an unprecedented manner to meet this demand. His work, based in part on some resolutions of IAU Commission 20, became more and more complex with the constantly growing flood of proposals for naming.

During the XXth IAU General Assembly in 1988 in Baltimore, U.S.A., Edward Bowell (chairman 1988/89) and some other colleagues suggested the establishment of a “Study Group on the Origin of Minor Planet Names”, with the aim of thus not only obtaining a database containing the names of all numbered planets, but also, and in particular, of learning about the meaning of many names from the early beginnings of our science. Members of the Study Group (1988-1991) were

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I want to express my deepest appreciation to Ingrid van Houten-Groeneveld, who has worked for decades on the nomenclature of minor planets, for the many months she spent going over many entries in this compilation.

Some other colleagues and amateur astronomers contributed to this work or served as Consultants to the Study Group:

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It is my special pleasure to thank Richard M. West, 1988-1991 President of Commission 20, for his encouragement throughout the project. I am deeply indebted to the past General Secretary Derek McNally for the financial support of this book by the IAU.

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Lutz D. Schmadel

Preface

to the Sixth Edition

This new edition permits an overview of the development in the field of minor planets within the last two decades. At the 1988 Baltimore IAU General Assembly the foundation of a *Study Group on the Origin of Minor Planet Names* was decided. As result of common work we were able to present a 1st edition of this *Dictionary of Minor Planet Names* in 1992. Until the end of 1991 we knew 5,012 numbered planets of which 3,957 already had been provided with a name. It was possible to publish all information on 700 pages.

Seven years later we were confronted with 10,666 numbered planets and 6,730 named one. It was only just possible to put this 4th edition with 1,330 pages in one single volume. The consequence arose to tackle in the 5th edition only the numbered planets whose number has already risen on 10,039. At the end of 2002 we counted 52,224 numbered objects. The *Dictionary* got the status of an official IAU publication at the 2000 Manchester General Assembly. In order to take the stormy development of new minor planet detections into account we issued two supplements to the 5th edition in 2006 and 2009, respectively. Meanwhile, a huge collection of altogether 207,942 objects were numbered from which the nomenclature of 15,054 minor planets could be provided.

This 6th edition of this monograph on hand elucidates the meaning of 16,683 minor planet names which were named until December 2011 – for the first time in two parts. The total number of already detected numbered objects reached the gigantic size of 310,376. An at-

tempt to present information on all these minor planets in our old format would require the publication of an impressive library with more than 10,000 pages!

The fundamental structure of the *Dictionary* has been left unchanged. However, it is a thoroughly revised and considerably enlarged data collection and every effort has been made to check and correct each single piece of information again. For detailed information of the discovery circumstances of numbered but unnamed planets the reader is referred to the extensive data files compiled by the Minor Planet Center.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Ingrid van Houten-Groeneveld for her enthusiastic encouragement and to the late Brian G. Marsden for his everlasting support of this common project of all interested astronomers. The kind assistance by the IAU General Secretaries Hans Rickman, Oddbjørn Engvold and Karel van der Hucht during the last decade is highly appreciated. My gratitude is also due to Ramon Khanna and Birgit Münch from Springer-Verlag for their kind cooperation. I would like to thank again my colleague Gernot Burkhardt who participated with an everlasting engagement in the preparation of all editions of this *Dictionary*. His indefatigable support with much data crunching work and an extensive T_EX processing was extremely valuable. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Anna, for her loving support and varied assistance which permitted me to realize this labour through many years.

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