

## **IBVS CD-ROM, Konkoly Obs., Budapest, Hungary, 2000**

### Short history of the Information Bulletin on Variable Stars

At the meeting of the IAU Commission 27 (Variable Stars) held during the Berkeley General Assembly in 1961 the participants expressed their wish for quicker ways of communicating data on newly discovered variables and special phenomena connected with variable stars. After some discussion the meeting decided to establish an Information Bulletin on Variable Stars, and accepted the offer of Prof. L. Detre that the Konkoly Observatory would undertake the editing and publishing of this bulletin. Nevertheless the Commission has followed the fortune of IBVS with keen attention and throughout the years one of the most important functions of the Commission has been the sponsoring of this bulletin.

Originally the IBVS did not intend to be a new journal for articles on variable stars, instead its main purpose was the rapid communication of discoveries, interesting observations, requests for photometric and spectroscopic observations, etc. However, it turned out soon that there was a real need for publishing short notes and results on variable stars of current interest and besides its original aims the IBVS had a journal-like function too. Although the Variable Star Commission brought the IBVS into existence, it has been a forum for the observers of eclipsing binaries too. This policy was always wholeheartedly supported by the members of the IAU Commission 27. About half of the published issues dealt with close binary stars. This fact was de jure acknowledged in 1992, when the IBVS became the official publication of IAU Commission 42 (Close Binary Stars) as well.

From the very beginning speed was essential in editing and publishing the IBVS. The editors strived for promptness of publication which was of importance to authors and readers alike, and much effort was made to maintain the turn-around time of three to four weeks. The co-operation of authors helped, most of the manuscripts were submitted in camera-ready form in the pre-electronic era. Of course, this resulted in non-uniform type setting. Moreover, the printing technique was very poor in the beginning. Usually lengthy tabular material was not accepted and the authors were always asked to be concise and not to exceed the one-two page limit, otherwise promptness would be jeopardized.

In the meantime the IBVS was entrusted with an important task. During the Prague meeting of Commission 27 (General Assembly in Prague, 1967) a proposal was presented by W.J. Miller that the Moscow bureau for GCVS should modify its procedure of assigning variable star designations: the new variables should be named already before a new Supplement to GCVS was completed and these new designations should be made available for the interested observers. It was suggested that use might be made of the IBVS for this purpose. This notion proved to be a very useful idea: since 1968 the IBVS has regularly published the Name List of Variable Stars.

According to the original intention of the founders the issues of IBVS were mailed, free of charge, to all members of IAU Commissions 27 and 42 and to the astronomical institutes and observatories. At the time of the Berkeley General Assembly in 1961 there were only about 75 commission members, but this number was growing continuously. At the end of the eighties the bulletins were mailed (mostly airmailed) to more than 600

addresses. This proved to be a heavy burden and the financial resources of the Konkoly Observatory did not allow to continue this service. A way out had to be found. In this respect the meeting of the Variable Star Commission during the 1988 General Assembly in Baltimore proved to be crucial. The Commission took in the situation, and the new President of the Commission, M. Breger made serious efforts and gave support to overcome the difficulties. The meeting of the Variable Star Commission during the Buenos Aires General Assembly in 1991 came to a serious decision. E. Milone suggested that the Commission might wish to appoint an editorial board to assist with the publications of the Bulletin. This motion was seconded and accepted by the members, and the Editors proposed an Editorial Board of L. Balona, M. Breger, M. de Groot, D.S. Hall, R. Koch, J.M. LeContel, J. Percy, M. Rodono, J. Smak and C. Sterken (chair). The constitution of the Board also reflected the fact that IBVS was co-sponsored by Commission 42. Following the first meeting of the Editorial Board in Vienna, November 1991 a new circulation policy was introduced in 1992. Instead of free circulation, the IBVS could be obtained on a subscription basis for a nominal fee which covered only the mailing cost. This unavoidable measure did not cause any interruption in the publication of the Bulletin: the number of subscribers was around 300 at the beginning. The IAU Executive Committee kindly provided a grant of 1000 US\$, a sum that allowed to keep 25 East-European and Asian astronomy libraries on the mailing list for two more years.

C. Sterken gave enormous help with handling the financial and administrative matters related to the IBVS through the international Working Group "Astronomy Research and Education Support" for five years until the Editors could organize the necessary financial and administrative conditions in Hungary.

At the introduction of the new circulation and publication policy the variable star community was worried about the Bulletin's future. However, it turned out soon that the reforms were reasonable and rational, and everybody gained of the change. From the end of 1994 on, two fully identical versions of the Bulletin have been available: the conventional printed one (intended for libraries) and the electronic version which is accessible via the WWW for any reader free of charge.

The scientific level of the IBVS has always been a vexed question discussed at each meeting of the Variable Star Commission. In order to minimize the duration of the publication process, the majority of the manuscripts submitted for publication have been refereed by the Editors. They have always strived for prompt editorial decisions concerning the acceptance of a paper and have considered the original intention, the rapid communication of vital importance. A formal referee system would have certainly caused undesirable but unavoidable delay. Some measures, however, had to be introduced for the protection of the scientific level of the IBVS. Visual observations impossible to verify were not accepted and in questionable cases an informal referee system was used. In the past several years the internet has allowed quick exchange of views among authors, referees and editors and the papers can be refereed immediately without jeopardizing the promptness of publication. The new possibilities certainly guarantee that the IBVS will serve the variable star community in the years to come.

Bela Szeidl  
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#### The Editors of the IBVS

year	issues	Editor(s)
1961-1968	1- 300	L. Detre
1968-1975	301-1000	L. Detre and B. Szeidl
1975-1983	1001-2400	B. Szeidl
1983-1987	2401-3000	B. Szeidl and L. Szabados
1987-1990	3001-3500	L. Szabados and B. Szeidl
1990-1999	3501-4800	L. Szabados and K. Olah

#### The Editorial Boards

(1991-1997)

L. Balona, M. Breger, M. de Groot, D.S. Hall, R. Koch, J.M. LeContel,  
J. Percy, M. Rodono, J. Smak and C. Sterken (chair)

(1997- )

E. Budding, H. Duerbeck, E. Guinan, P. Harmanec (chair), D. Kurtz, K.-C.  
Leung,  
C. Maceroni, N.N. Samus (advisor), C. Sterken (advisor)