

3.2 Central Bureau

The IERS Central Bureau (CB), hosted and funded by Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie (BKG), organized and documented two IERS Directing Board (DB) meetings: No. 37, April 2, 2003, Observatoire de Paris, Paris, France; No. 38, December 8, 2003, Marriott Hotel, San Francisco, USA (see Section 3.1). Between these meetings the CB coordinated the work of the DB.

The CB organized an IERS Retreat, held March 31 - April 1, 2003, at Observatoire de Paris, Paris, France. It was convened to determine the future direction of the IERS focusing on the improvement of the consistency and accuracy of its products. The Minutes of this meeting were published on the IERS web site. For more information see Section 4.1 in this Annual Report.

The CB prepared an IERS Workshop on site co-location, held October 23–24, 2003, in Matera, Italy. About 30 participants took part in this workshop. The main results were published at the IERS web site. For a summary see Section 4.2.

The CB was also involved in the organisation of a GGFC meeting held during the AGU Fall Meeting on December 8, 2003 (see Section 3.5.6).

A CB staff member took part in the Colloquium on the UTC Timescale (May 28–30, 2003, Torino, Italy). Requests from journalists concerning the basics and the future of the UTC timescale were answered.

The CB presented the activities of the IERS and the CB with oral and poster presentations at the IAU General Assembly, the IUGG General Assembly, and the Geotechnologien Statusseminar 2003. A description of the IERS was sent as input for the IAG Geodesist's Handbook. The CB prepared an IERS report for 2002 to FAGS and compiled together with J. Vondrak the IERS report for 1999–2003 to IAG.

IERS components maintain individually about 20 separate web sites. The central IERS site <www.iers.org>, established by the CB, gives access to all other sites, offers information on the structure of the IERS, its products and publications and provides contact addresses as well as general facts on Earth rotation studies. It contains also electronic versions of IERS publications, a list of meetings related to the work of the IERS, and a large link list for IERS, Earth rotation in general and related fields. Throughout 2003 the web site was regularly enlarged and updated. FAQs and a Glossary were added, based mainly on draft FAQs for the IAU 2000 resolutions prepared by Chopo Ma with comments, suggested answers and a few corrections from P. Wallace, B. Guinot, N. Capitaine and D. McCarthy. Also an online list of acronyms related to IERS was compiled.

IERS Technical Notes (TN) No. 30, containing the Proceedings of the IERS Workshop on Combination Research and Global Geophysical Fluids (edited by the Central Bureau), and No. 31 (The ITRF2000, by C. Boucher, Z. Altamimi, P. Sillard, and M. Feissel-Vernier) appeared as online versions in November 2003. Work started on reformatting the IERS Conventions (2003) to be published as TN No. 32.

The CB edited and published also the IERS Annual Report 2002 in online and printed form. It appeared in June (online) and October 2003 (printed). Besides the reports of the IERS components, it contains information on the IERS compiled by the CB. Funds for printing the Annual Report were provided by BKG and by FAGS.

During the year 2003, 13 IERS Messages (Nos. 38 – 50) were edited and distributed by the CB. They contain news from the IERS and from related services as well as announcements of conferences.

The CB continued to maintain its address database of IERS users. There were about 2000 users in 2003 with valid addresses who subscribed to IERS publications for e-mail and regular mail distribution. Address and subscription information has regularly been updated.

The implementation of the new IERS Data Center and the reorganized IERS Information System has been started. The goal is to realize a dynamic and database-driven system to maintain the data and information flow between the participating institutions and the users of the IERS. The IERS Data Centre will store and archive all IERS products as well as all data which are necessary for the IERS products and also those which are necessary to re-compute the IERS products (cf. Minutes of DB Meeting No. 32). Also information related to the IERS and its products will be presented. The new system provides the central access point to search within the data, to work with the data and to download the data. Therefore, all products are converted into a general format using the eXtensible Markup Language (XML) that can be regarded as the future standard format for data and information exchange over the Web. From the transformed data files extended meta information are extracted and stored in the database for search. Using XML the heterogeneous products of the IERS in their various formats can be easily described. Aside the original standard file output, the data and information can be presented multiformly.

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