Foreword

The IERS established in 2001 an ,,ICRS Center", responsible for the maintenance of the International Celestial Reference System and Frame (ICRS, ICRF). This Center is operated jointly by the Paris Observatory (OP) and the U.S. Naval Observatory (USNO), with an agreed share of tasks. It accomplishes these tasks in coordination with the International VLBI Service for Geodesy and Astrometry (IVS) and the IAU Working Group on Reference Frames. It has two co-directors (one from each institution), and a representative to the IERS Directing Board, which rotates between institutions on a four-year term. The representation for the first term (2001-2004) was by the Paris Observatory. In addition to service activities reported yearly through the IERS Annual Reports, research was conducted concerning the various tasks of the Product Center. This Technical Note presents a number of studies in the fields of the maintenance of the International Celestial Reference System and Frame, future realizations of the ICRS, the monitoring of extragalactic radio sources, the link to celestial reference frames at other wavelengths, and information dissemination.

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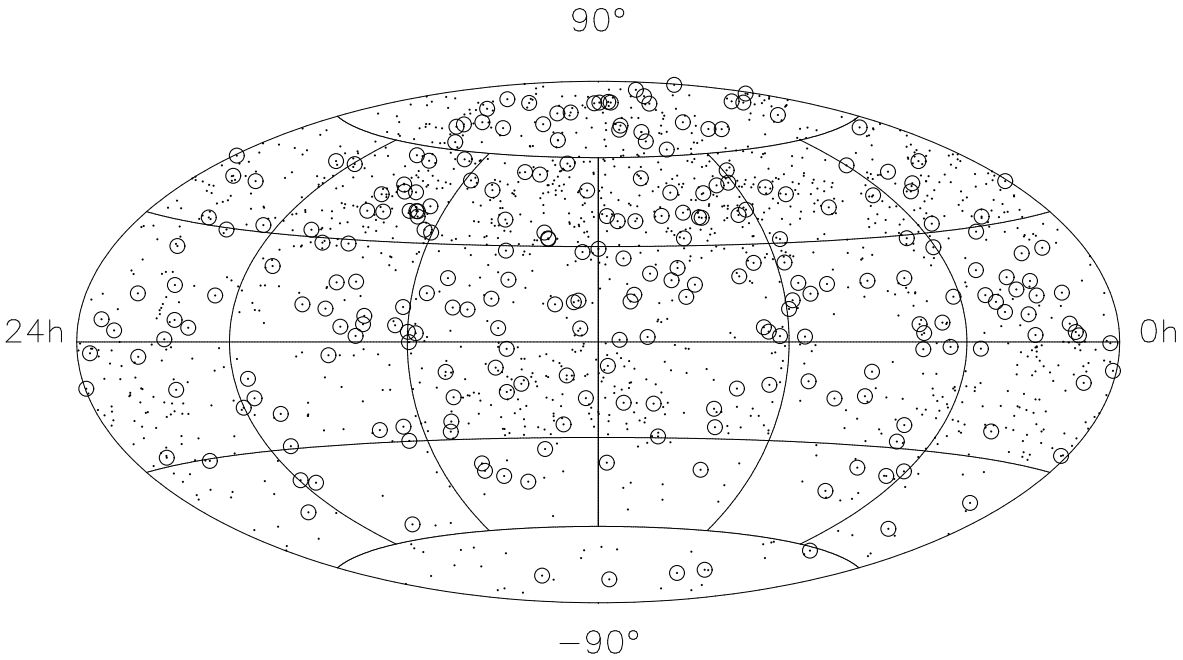

Fig. 1. Sky distribution of the 1500 extragalactic radio sources whose VLBI positions are available for the International Celestial Reference Frame ICRF. The circled dots are the 250 sources that are considered stable on the basis of the ICRS Center studies.