

COMET AND NOVA SECTION  
1961-1970

The Comet and Nova Section was formed by National Council in 1961, and the undersigned was appointed National Coordinator. The first Bulletin was mailed to all Centres in November of that year. Up to the end of 1962, three Bulletins and four Announcements were sent to all Centres and selected individuals who indicated some interest. During that period, replies were received from twelve of the sixteen Centres: Halifax, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Montreal, Niagara Falls, Ottawa, Quebec, Vancouver, Victoria, Windsor, and Winnipeg.

Several Centres indicated interest in taking part in this program, while others indicated that while no work was being done along this line, the information would be passed on to other members. During the first few years, members of about six Centres reported observations or searches of some kind. In addition, several unattached members reported work. Montreal was the most active Centre with a number of observers reporting regularly. One member in Niagara Falls made regular reports between 1962 and 1969. Several other Centres reported at irregular intervals, or regularly for only short periods. A number of observers started searching, but became inactive after a few months.

Observations were often made of Comets, and sometimes novae, which were never reported to the National Coordinator, even in a summary form. Several times, the National Coordinator would attend a General Assembly and see some Centres and-or observers had prepared a Comet or Nova display, but nothing had been reported to this section.

Bulletins and Announcements were issued fairly regularly between 1961 and 1968. Ten Bulletins and Fifteen Announcements were issued. Activity decreased somewhat after 1965.

At the General Assembly in 1969, several Coordinators felt that the present programme was not satisfactory. At this time, the Standing Committee on Observational Activities (SCOA) was apparently disbanded, but the National Coordinators were asked to continue until a re-organized committee could be formed. The new Committee on Coordination of Centre Activities (COCOCA) was set up by National Council later. It appears that some of the Coordinators of SCOA were unsure of their status at this point. Were they to continue as National Coordinators under the new COCOCA, or was COCOCA to appoint Coordinators, since this was a new committee? Since the 1969 General Assembly, the Comet and Nova Section received two letters, and replies were sent, giving information on this section.

A paper on the Comet and Nova Section was published in the Journal in 1963. Only one letter arrived as a result of this paper, indicating that just because the information gets to all members does not mean the problem will be solved.

### Comments, Problems, and Recommendations.

Generally, each Bulletin and Announcement was sent to the President and Secretary of each Centre, and to others who requested it or who appeared to be in a position to get the information to members. However, it appears that information was often filed away. The situation may improve by publishing future Bulletins in the National Newsletter. Even though it will reach all members this way, this alone may not be enough to increase activity as shown by the case of publication in the Journal as stated on the first page.

Many amateurs probably make observations for their own personal satisfaction and wish to keep copies for their own records. Making copies for someone else can be time consuming and with photography, expensive. Perhaps COCOCA should not try and collect detailed reports, but only request members to send in a summary every month or so. Copies of selected observations could be requested. The summary of work, and methods used could be published in the National Newsletter to keep Centres and members informed as to what each other is doing.

While some observations made by amateurs may be of value to the professional, such as variable stars and occultation observations, many amateurs probably observe only for their own personal satisfaction, without considering the Scientific value. Consideration should be given of encouraging observing for "fun" even though it may not have much scientific value. Any form of observing has some value anyway, because it trains an observer.

COCOCA should not compete with well organized scientific programs of other societies such as the AAVSO.

Consideration should be given to re-organizing some of the Observational Sections to eliminate overlapping of similar fields. It is suggested that Novae be taken over by the Variable Star Section, and Comets come under Planetary, along with asteroids and planetary satellites. The Comet and Nova Section should cease to exist.

A survey should be taken of Centres and/or members to determine what activity actually exists before setting up Observational Sections. Remember, too, that replies may indicate more activity than there actually is. No one wants to say he's not interested in taking part in a programme, but when it comes down to observing and reporting, it may be a different story. Perhaps a section called "Arm-Chair Astronomers" should be formed. This could well be the most active section!

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