

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RADIOCARBON DATABASE WORKSHOP

RENEE KRA

The Chair, Renee Kra, opened the Workshop with the announcement that the IRDB will be officially located at the Geosciences Department, University of Arizona, Tucson, and will begin operating on January 2, 1989.

REGIONAL DATA BASES

The following individuals presented information on the progress of regional data bases:

1) Jill Walker, Harwell, UK, described the two UK data bases presently in operation or development. The first, established at Harwell, contains ^{14}C results for archaeological sites in the UK and Eire, irrespective of the laboratory in which they were measured; the second, being currently set up at the Nort Staffs Polytechnic, will contain all ^{14}C results for every discipline measured by the UK laboratories. Walker also stressed the importance of an internationally accepted transfer format for easy transfer of data among national or regional data bases (for more details, see Walker & Otlet, this issue).

2) Henry Polach, ANU, Australia, reported that a data base is being established at ANU to hold ^{14}C results for all Australian material.

3) John S Vogel, The RIDDL Group, Canada, reported on the Canadian Radiocarbon Data Base meeting called by Roger McNeely, Geological Survey of Canada (GSC), Ottawa, on June 13, 1988. A unanimous decision was reached on forming a National (Canadian) Data Base centralized at the GSC, under the direction of McNeely. The GSC Data Base presently operates on a 29-field format for all Canadian materials, including US border states and Greenland, but will comply with the minimum structure in transferring data to the IRDB. Focus will be placed on dates from the present forward. Previously measured determinations will be entered when time and resources permit. No monetary support for the IRDB will be forthcoming from Canadian laboratories that are contributing data. Laboratory histories will be included in the Canadian Data Base, an idea proposed at the American Workshop, which will also be pursued by the Editors of *Radiocarbon*.

4) Bogomil Obelić, Rudjer Bošković Institute, Zagreb, described the interdisciplinary 39-field Data Base format that he has designed for Yugoslavia and is operating at Zagreb. His Data Base will easily fit into the international scheme. Although language may present some problems, his suggestion for the use of standardized key words was given top priority by the participants and will be the focus of immediate attention.

5) Willem Mook, Groningen, The Netherlands, stated that his laboratory's 15,000 entries are fully compatible with the IRDB format. The Groningen Data Base is presently maintained on an Apple hardware

system, which will soon be replaced by IBM-compatible equipment. Telecommunications are possible through BITNET.

PILOT PROJECTS

The pilot projects chosen by the American Advisory Board (Kra, 1988) were unanimously accepted by the participants:

- 1) New World Quaternary Vertebrate Localities
- 2) Paleoenvironment and Human History in the Southeast Mediterranean. The second project will be of primary interest to international collaborators. Hendrik Bruins, Desert Research Institute, Beersheba, Israel and Roy Switsur, Godwin Laboratory, Cambridge, will join the task force for this project, which includes Herbert Haas, Dallas, Fekri Hassan, Washington State, and James Weinstein, Ithaca, New York.

Participants stressed that the IRDB should be clearly multidisciplinary and include data on oceanography, hydrology, global change, etc. This point strongly corroborates the consensus reached at the Yale Workshop.

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

The International Commission also acquired some new members:

- 1) Gilberto Calderoni – Italy
- 2) JF Garcia-Martinez – Spain
- 3) André Gob – Belgium
- 4) Yannis Maniatis – Greece
- 5) Martin Manning – New Zealand
- 6) Birgit Faber Morse – The Caribbean
- 7) Kunio Omoto – Japan

They will join other commissioners, Renee Kra, RE Taylor, Roger McNeely, AJ Walker, RL Otlet, Jacques Evin, Bernd Kromer, Willem Mook, Steinar Gulliksen, Bogomil Obelić, JC Vogel, Henry Polach, Arie Boomert, Alberta Zucchi and Omar Ortiz-Troncoso.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

A discussion on proprietary rights (ownership of ^{14}C dates) and dissemination of information via the Data Base led to general agreement on an upper limit of five years for privacy, *ie*, radiocarbon data can reasonably remain unpublished for five years, after which time it should become publicly accessible through the IRDB. For commercial labs, such a time limit may be difficult to enforce, but permission to publish the data via the IRDB could be sought from the submitter upon delivery of the result.

FORMAT

The minimum data-entry format (which henceforward will be known as “Otlet’s Maximum”) was unanimously accepted as the standard for the IRDB. It consists in the following fields, for which key-words will be selected:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1) Lab code* | 8) Site |
| 2) Sample name | 9) Submitter** |
| 3) ¹⁴ C determination (\pm) | 10) Discipline |
| 4) ¹³ C value | 11) Association |
| 5) Sample material | 12) References |
| 6) Country | 13) Comments |
| 7) Lat, Long | |

*Subsequent work at Tucson has led to the division into two fields of fields nos. 1 and 7.

**Although this field was not actually taken up at the Workshop, subsequent discussions have led to its inclusion.

FUNDING

Several funding schemes were proposed and discussed, which include:

- 1) Chemical and equipment companies
- 2) Federal and private foundations
- 3) Self-funding schemes, such as the sale of compact disks, subscriptions and search charges.

MF Pazdur, Gliwice, Poland, suggested that the IRDB seek permanent funding from INQUA, especially since the interdisciplinary nature of the Data Base, as it relates to studies of global change, would fit into the aims and scope of this international organization. INQUA would be the most appropriate source of funding for continuing operating costs of the IRDB.

Concern was also expressed by participants of the Workshop that a system should be established by which countries with hard currency problems should have access to the Data Base. The Chair agreed that this would be examined once the Data Base was established.

GOVERNING COMMITTEE

The Chair will select an International Board of Directors or Governing Committee to set policy and represent a minimal governing structure. The board will consist in a Chairperson and Executive Committee.¹ Such an organization is needed primarily for official status, recognition and credibility in seeking funding and cooperation.

¹*Note added in proof:* The Governing Committee has been appointed. Members are: J Evin, G Frison, S Gulliksen, H Haas, F Hole, A Long, R McNeely, W Mook, B Obelić, R Otlet, M Pazdur, H Polach, R Raylor, JC Vogel, A Walker and J Weinstein.

REFERENCES

- Kra, R, 1988, The first American Workshop on the International Radiocarbon Data Base: Radiocarbon, v 30, no. 2, p 259–260.
- , 1989, The International Radiocarbon Data Base: A progress report: Radiocarbon, this issue.
- Walker, AJ and Otlet, RL, 1989, Operation of the Harwell UK ¹⁴C Database and its expansion through data exchange with other laboratories: Radiocarbon, this issue.