

IGY WORLD DATA CENTER A, OCEANOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE
Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas
College Station, Texas
June 24, 1960

Department of
Oceanography & Meteorology

Memorandum to: Members of the Working Group on World Data Centers, SCOR

Subject: Comments on the Report to SCOR prepared June 18, 1960 by
J. R. Lumby

In consideration of future international exchanges of oceanographic data there are certain features of the present IGY-IGC Data Center which were not mentioned in the above report but are of considerable importance. First are the basic reasons which led to the establishment of two centers. To quote Dr. Sidney Chapman, IGY Annals Vol. 7, Part 2, p. 146: "It was decided that there should not be less than three centres for each kind of unpublished data, to insure against loss or destruction, and for geographical convenience."

It seems important to mention also that an international medium for exchange of oceanographic information is only one element in the larger problem of international exchange in all the geophysical sciences, and for that matter, in all sciences. Thus, the recommendations previously made by various groups under ICSU should carefully be taken into account by SCOR so that any arrangements made for oceanography fit into the larger international problem.

Some comments on specific items of the Lumby report follow:

2.6 (i) Although funding of the IGY WDCs is national there is no way in which the activities of the centers have emphasized national utilization. Although prices may be higher than some nations can afford, there is no evidence that similar data may be made available at less cost. An international agency would have to bear full costs of any center it might establish whereas the present centers are subsidized, except for the actual copying of data, by the nations in which they are established. Total costs to date have totaled \$80,000 for WDC-A. Of this the data users have had to pay only about \$5000, the balance being paid by the USA.

2.6 (iv) As to numbers of copies to be furnished, the agreement now is that the collecting institution need only furnish one copy of data to one data center. This center is then obligated to make copies available to the other established centers. In cases where the collecting institution has mimeographed or published its data, it has been relatively easy for them to furnish copies for each center thus eliminating the necessity for more expensive photo copying and at the same time providing better copies for use of the centers.

Provision has been made in the present centers for rearrangement and analysis of the data. It is of course necessary for any institution making a request to finance any work which is done for them. For example, computations of dynamic heights have been programmed for the IBM 650 machine which is available to the WDC-A and these can be run at cost whenever they are requested.

The implication is that the proposed international center could provide many services without cost, yet the budget in 2.16 for the proposed new center is but slightly more than is available for operation of the present center.

2.7 It is not obvious why undesirable features of the present centers cannot be eliminated. Also it would seem that most of such features mentioned would remain under the new scheme as proposed.

2.15 The locations of the present WDCs were chosen for a number of reasons. In the case of WDC-A in Oceanography one important factor was location in an active research unit in oceanography. Another was ready access to a good research library and to facilities for computation, analysis and publication. Still another was the convenience of visiting investigators in such matters as accessibility and housing.

2.16 In the light of the indicated activities of the proposed international data center, it would appear that a very careful budget estimate should be made before it is concluded that the services considered could be provided for anything comparable to the \$50,000 figure mentioned for an annual budget.

3.4 The idea that the proposed center should be 'primarily co-ordinatory' in nature does not seem to provide any solution for the difficulty mentioned in item 2.6 (v) that present centers provide 'meagre services.'

3.8 This service can easily be rendered by the present WDC if the same subsidization were arranged as would be needed for the proposed center.

Appendix

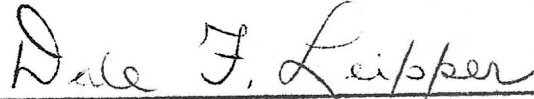
2.2 Two copies or more are requested only when the collecting institution can prepare them much more readily than the WDC and is willing to do so.

2.3 These cost comparisons mean very little. For example the charge of WDC-A which is quoted as '\$1.75 a page for photographic prints' concerns the reproduction of sheets up to 36 by 60 inches in size. (See WDC-A Catalogue.)

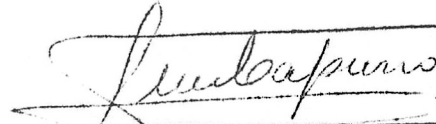
3.3 As previously mentioned, rearrangement and analysis work will be undertaken by the WDC-A at cost by special request.

WDC-A and B are existing data centers containing an increasingly valuable collection of world wide oceanographic information. Both sponsoring countries have declared their intention of continued sponsorship of the programs of the centers. In the case of WDC-A, funding for the next year will be at the same level as it has been in the past and plans have been made for funding at an almost comparable level for the year after that. Those of us associated with the Centers expect to be able to be of increasing service to the International Scientific Community. If some better means of carrying out international exchange comes into existence we shall assist in developing that program. Meantime, however, we will continue to serve as the only official exchange mechanism which is actually in operation and which provides good possibilities for future growth.

We have prepared the above comments for your consideration prior to the meetings in Helsinki. Captain Luis Capurro plans to attend this meeting and will be happy to discuss the activities and plans of the present WDC-A with you.



Dale F. Leipper
Director, World Data Center-A



Luis Capurro
Associate Director