Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Membership Survey Committee
Interim Report
February 6th, 1993

General Comments

The final deadline for the acceptance of surveys (December 31st, 1992) is now past, and serious data work can now begin. 447 surveys have been received, for which data entry for the multiple choice questions up to number 60 is complete on the first 424 surveys. The comments have also been transcribed from the first 400 of them. Work continues on the rest of the data entry. A final report may be expected at the Halifax General Assembly in July 1993, although much of the data can be made available to interested parties before this date.

The French language version of the survey was completed and distributed to the two francophone centres last autumn by Damien Lemay and Marc Gelinas. It was requested that those who had already submitted the English version not also fill out the French one. There has, however, been no attempt to be absolutely certain that no one has submitted two surveys. Not only is this considered unlikely, but at most only 7 could possibly have done so, thus the risk of error is small enough to be ignored. The written comments from these are being made available in the original French, and also as translated into English.

Also in regard to the written comments; every attempt has been made to render them exactly as they had been written. The only exceptions are some rather derogatory ones made with respect to certain members. The gist of these comments remains, but the members' names have not been transcribed.

Data Format

Since all the data were prepared on a PC clone, they are in DOS formatted files on a 1.4Mb floppy disk. The data files should be readable by newer Mac's after having been unpacked. Access from other platforms has not yet been addressed. The distribution file for the shareware data compression utility PKZIP is included with the files, as is the distribution file for a shareware file browser called LIST. One more file, called survey.zip, contains a stripped-down version of the original survey for reference purposes. Finally, an unpacked file called readme.1st contains instructions on how to access the rest of the files.

Each incoming questionnaire has a sequence number, referred to as the questionnaire index. Thus, although individual respondents are not identified by name, each person's replies can be grouped together as needed for data analysis. The multiple choice raw data are stored in Quattro Pro spreadsheets named according to the question number(s) dealt with in each one. (eg- Q14_19 contains replies to questions in the range 14-19). They are in Lotus 123 compatible format, and packed using PKZIP into a file called question.zip. Each spreadsheet contains a header with information as to the contents of the various columns, and one column is reserved for the questionnaire index. The written comments are stored in individual files named according to the question number and the questionnaire index (eg- C51B_169 contains a comment written in space 51B by the respondent with index number 169). All of these have also been packed with PKZIP into a file called comments.zip.

Data Analysis

The Membership Survey Committee needs feedback from the people who will be using the data to decide what sort of analyses to undertake. Those of you who are familiar with the PC spreadsheets should have no trouble to find out what you need to know from the raw data available on floppy disk. Those who do not have access to PC's, however, or who do not have a spreadsheet program, will have to wait for the Halifax General Assembly, where it is intended that a detailed final report be given.

Between now and then, it is hoped that the rest of the data entry can be completed, and some analyses done. Responses can be considered by themselves, or in relation to other responses. For example, one might ask how the percentage of those who like the Journal varies from centre to centre. Or, whether the proportion of those who say that they like French and English in the Bulletin varies depending on how frequently they say they read it. Results for one question can be weighted according to answers in other questions. For example, the opinions of those who are active in Centre or National council might be given more importance than the opinions of those who are not active. These are only a few examples of data analysis and manipulation. Tell us what you need to know, and how you need it to be organized.

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Or use the RASC FidoNet discussion link,
Or the Astronomy international echo on FidoNet,

Or, on the Genie information service:
to: G.Hawley

Or phone   (403) 237-STAR to leave a message,
or   (403) 238-2332 at home,
or   (403) 266-1011 at work (12:00 - 13:00 Mountain time)

Or you can even just scribble some notes and give them to Don Hladiuk before he leaves for home.