

in xerographic copy show that the cover-to-cover translation of *Astronomicheskii Zhurnal* is the second most heavily used journal out of a total of 57 astronomical journals used during 1964-66. Of the 119 users of these 57 astronomical journals, 29 users (15 per cent) requested 106 articles from this fully translated journal. In this case, response time and costs would be greater for an abstract and translation cycle than for a cover-to-cover subscription, as the approximately \$50 subscription cost would hardly cover the cost of one translation.

The current difficulties encountered by the American Geophysical Union in its cover-to-cover translation programme may therefore be difficulties specific to an individual discipline rather than to all disciplines. Among factors that appear relevant are reader population sizes among different disciplines and the related number of institutions carrying programmes in these disciplines. This raises some interesting questions about the relationship of disciplines to the need for subsidizing cover-to-cover translation programmes.

Yours faithfully,

OLE V. GROOS

AFCRL Research Library.

### Numerical Notation: Decimalization

SIR.—The suggestion of Molyneux (*Nature*, **224**, 1237; 1969) that a number such as 12,300,000 could conveniently be written as “1.23 D7” and spoken as “one point two three deka seven” supports the earlier suggestion of Duffin as reported by Synge<sup>1</sup> and differs from it only in the use of “deka” and “deci” rather than “up” and “down” to indicate respectively positive or negative powers of ten.

Such systems, however unpalatable at first sight, lead to a great simplification in numerical notation avoiding both the need to devise<sup>2</sup> new prefixes to indicate multiplication by powers of ten higher than the current tera ( $10^{12}$ ) or lower than atto ( $10^{-18}$ ) and also the ever present and regrettable urge to invent new names for multiples or sub-multiples of the primary *Système International* (SI) units. Equally, the current ambiguities<sup>3</sup> of the terms billion and trillion could disappear from the international scene.

The indicators “up” and “down” are probably more graphic and therefore more readily assimilated than “deka” and “deci”. On the other hand, the classical derivation of the latter would render them readily recognizable in other languages: but this is not likely to be material as the indicators “up” and “down” would always be better translated into the language used for the associated numerals in order to form a unified whole for the number expressed.

We are already accustomed to breaking down numbers into groups of three numerals and this facility could be retained by using powers of 10 in multiples of three only, thus

12,300,000	would be said as “twelve point three up six”.
1,230,000	would be said as “one point two three up six”.
but 123,000	would be said as “one hundred and twenty-three up three”.

Yours faithfully,

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<sup>1</sup> Synge, J. L., *Relativity: the General Theory*, 421 (North-Holland Publishing Co., 1960).

<sup>2</sup> Derwent, F. W., and Oakland, W. H., *Nature*, **220**, 311 (1968).

<sup>3</sup> Cuckow, F. W., *The Director*, **18**, 390 (1966).

### University News

Mr Denis R. Towill has been appointed to the newly established chair in engineering production in the **University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology**.

### Appointments

Philip E. Culbertson has been designated director of the **Advanced Manned Missions Program** in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Office of Manned Space Flight.

### Announcements

The **Neill Prize of the Royal Society of Edinburgh** for 1967-69 has been awarded to **Dr Ann R. Sanderson** for her contributions to taxonomic zoology.

The president and council of the **Royal Astronomical Society** have made the following awards: the Gold Medal to **Dr Horace W. Babcock**, director of the Mount Wilson and Mount Palomar Observatories; the Eddington Medal to **Professor Chushiro Hayashi**, professor of physics, Kyoto University.

ERRATUM. In the paper “Genetics of NADP Isocitrate Dehydrogenase in *Paramecium aurelia*” (*Nature*, **225**, 181; 1970), line 16 on page 182 should read “heterozygote pattern ( $IDH_m 1-2$ ) is consistent with”.

ERRATUM. In the article “The Moon at Houston” (*Nature*, **225**, 321; 1970), the second sentence under the sub-heading Chemical Composition on page 326 should read: “Of the ninety-two elements in the periodic table, results are now available for seventy-nine”.

### Sabbatical Itinerants

In the hope of providing some practical assistance in the good cause of mobility between laboratories, *Nature* advertises the needs for housing of families about to take up periods of sabbatical leave. To begin with, no charge will be made for advertisements like this. It is hoped that a period of experiment will show what form these advertisements could most usefully take and whether they are effective.

**Vacant:** House in London, Ontario, Canada, for 12 months from mid-August 1970. Fully furnished, 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, den, playroom, utility room. All necessary appliances, linen, dishes, etc. On 100 foot x 150 foot lot about 1 mile from University of Western Ontario. Please contact Professor Miles H. A. Keenleyside, Department of Zoology, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.

**Vacant:** Large 3-bedroom, well furnished flat in Brooklyn, New York, with modern kitchen. Rapid transit time 30 minutes to mid-Manhattan. Opposite Park, Botanic Gardens, Public Library and Museum. For 9-12 months from September 1, 1970. \$215/month. Please contact R. Pollack, 135 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11238.

**Wanted:** Furnished house or flat for New Zealand lecturer and family, 3 double bedrooms minimum, from beginning of March to mid-April, in Oxford, Wantage area. Please contact Dr J. Loutit, MRC Molecular Genetics Unit, Department of Molecular Biology, University of Edinburgh, King's Buildings, Mayfield Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JR.