

An Interim Policy on the Interfaces of the Minor Planet Center

*The International Astronomical Union's (IAU's) Minor Planet Center (MPC) is the international clearing-house for astrometric measurements of solar system small bodies. It serves a critical role in assessing the dynamical and type classifications of newly discovered bodies in our solar system and so has an important additional role in hazard mitigation of NEOs and distant comets. Therefore, the means of interfacing with the observing and dynamical-assessment communities are vital to the provenance of small body discoveries and the realization of possible impact threats. With this in mind, we propose the following interim policy for the change in interface structures through which these communities actively submit and obtain data through the MPC. This policy is the **first step** in implementing a broader change control policy for the MPC's interface, analysis, and operational structures. The idea of change control is not meant to hamper positive progress, but rather to provide an effective means verification and of communicating changes to the community, allowing for adequate time intervals for members of the community to adapt to the changes and so not interrupt the critical network of international observation and analysis that supports the MPC's operations and goals in turn. These interim changes are broad in scope (encompassing all interfaces) while limited in topic (interfaces only).*

- (1) Changes to interfaces now in place shall include any change in current web or internet access addresses, standardized protocols, and formats for outputs and inputs, that are used by surveys, analysis centers, or regularly used by the broad base of the user community.
- (2) Changes to the interfaces shall be first proposed by the MPC to NASA's Planetary Data System's Small Body Node and include:
 - a. A detailed description and justification of the changes (the new address, standards and protocols, or new formats), such that the user base members may reasonably adapt their automated routines to the change in interface based on the description.
 - b. A schedule for the implementation of the change.
 - c. A plan for notification to the community.
 - d. When feasible and appropriate, an advisement should be issued to the MPC Users Group (MUG) of the change in a timely manner prior to publication and implementation.
- (3) All changes should include an announcement, preferably in the form of a Minor Planet Electronic Circular (MPEC) issued in advance of the interface change implementation.
- (4) Interface changes should be posted as an "interface change" to the main MPC web pages.
- (5) The MPC Director and the SBN PI should approve the change and inform the NEOO Program Manager.
- (6) New augmentations, specially isolated testing, and voluntary usages of "beta-test" alternatives, so long as they do not effect on-going in-place operations, are necessarily EXCLUDED from these interface change restrictions, such that advanced formats, standards, and interfaces may be developed and/or gradually incorporated into the MPC's operations.