International Tree-ring Data Bank

Report of informal meeting at Greenwich, July 1977

H. C. Fritts introduced the discussion, outlining the funding of the
data bank and the basic principles on which it operates:-
(1) Data stored in the data bank must be the highest quality data
(2) By being stored on a computer system its accessibility is
enhanced (3) The ITRDB is governed by a Chairman and Board
(4) The system is run by contributors, for contributors (5) It
is not part of either the Tree-ring Society or the Tree-ring Labora-
tory at Tucson.

D. Eckstein asked what exchanges of data had there been so far?

H. C. Fritts in reply pointed out that the data bank consists
principally of raw ring-widths. Currently workers are most interested
in derived chronologies. To meet this need a separate file for
derived chronologies is being set up. Currently retrieval of data
is 'manual', but within two years the retrieval software will be
working and contributors will be able to access data (where permissable)
at nominal cost.

B. Becker made a proposal for a use of the ITRDB by European workers.
It arose from a problem in dating. Many are using oak without know-
ing the regional range of validity of a chronology. Chronologies of
living trees should be collected on an agreed basis at a range of sites
in, say, the next year. These would then be submitted to the ITRDB and
become available for the application of a simple test, such as W or T ,
of cross-dating. This would, in addition to its intrinsic interest,
have the advantage of making Europeans feel they need to use the ITRDB.

D. Eckstein asked what was new in this suggestion?

B. Becker replied that the novelty lay in the systematic collection
of modern oak material and the use of the ITRDB so that different
laboratories could contribute comparable data.

The discussion then returned to the ITRDB in the narrower sense.

B. Becker raised the question of the level of site information
required.

H. C. Fritts reported that when the first, very full site information
sheet was required it was either incompletely filled out or questions
were simply unanswered. Hence the new, shorter, site information
sheet.

D. Eckstein felt that the new sheet was a good one, being of moderate
length and available in different languages.

Dr. Bräker asked about the acceptance of one-site chronologies.

H. C. Fritts defined these as consisting of trees of the same species
in the same habitat in a restricted region.

M. K. Hughes asked about the minimum acceptable number of trees in
a chronology.

H. C. Fritts replied that a 'B quality' category allowing for as few
as three trees had been opened, but that it would be discontinued if
that was thought necessary.

Dr. Bräker pointed out the limited number of timbers often found
for a particular period of years in archaeological material.
Neolithic and late Bronze Age chronologies may contain only 5 posts.

H. C. Fritts said that the criteria for archaeological materials needed
working out. He also emphasised that the ITRDB stored raw ring-widths
so that a worker, once having accessed these data, could standardise
them by his own chosen method if he so wished.

P. Denne asked if other measures than ring-width could be entered.

H. C. Fritts replied yes.

M. K. Hughes, August 1977