Foreword

The National Standard Reference Data System is a Government-wide effort to provide for the technical community of the United States effective access to the quantitative data of physical science, critically evaluated and compiled for convenience, and readily accessible through a variety of distribution channels. The System was established in 1963 by action of the President's Office of Science and Technology and the Federal Council for Science and Technology.

The responsibility to administer the System was assigned to the National Bureau of Standards and an Office of Standard Reference Data was set up at the Bureau for this purpose. Since 1963, this Office has developed systematic plans for meeting high-priority needs for reliable reference data. It has undertaken to coordinate and integrate existing data evaluation and compilation activities (primarily those under sponsorship of Federal agencies) into a comprehensive program, supplementing and expanding technical coverage when necessary, establishing and maintaining standards for the output of the participating groups, and providing mechanisms for the dissemination of the output as required.

The System now comprises a complex of data centers and other activities, carried on in Government agencies, academic institutions, and nongovernmental laboratories. The independent operational status of existing critical data projects is maintained and encouraged. Data centers that are components of the NSRDS produce compilations of critically evaluated data, critical reviews of the state of quantitative knowledge in specialized areas, and computations of useful functions derived from standard reference data. In addition, the centers and projects establish criteria for evaluation and compilation of data and make recommendations on needed modifications or extensions of experimental techniques.

Data publications of the NSRDS take a variety of physical forms, including books, pamphlets, loose-leaf sheets and computer tapes. While most of the compilations have been issued by the Government Printing Office, several have appeared in scientific journals. Under some circumstances, private publishing houses are regarded as appropriate primary dissemination mechanisms.

The technical scope of the NSRDS is indicated by the principal categories of data compilation projects now active or being planned: nuclear properties, atomic and molecular properties, solid state properties, thermodynamic and transport properties, chemical kinetics, colloid and surface properties, and mechanical properties.

An important aspect of the NSRDS is the advice and planning assistance which the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences–National Academy of Engineering provides. These services are organized under an overall Review Committee which considers the program as a whole and makes recommendations on policy, long-term planning, and international collaboration. Advisory Panels, each concerned with a single technical area, meet regularly to examine major portions of the program, assign relative priorities, and identify specific key problems in need of further attention. For selected specific topics, the Advisory Panels sponsor subpanels which make detailed studies of users' needs, the present state of knowledge, and existing data resources as a basis for recommending one or more data compilation activities. This assembly of advisory services contributes greatly to the guidance of NSRDS activities.

The NSRDS–NBS series of publications is intended primarily to include evaluated reference data and critical reviews of long-term interest to the scientific and technical community.

A. V. Astin, *Director.*

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