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Preface
The main section of this report summarizes the state of approved virus nomenclature and taxonomy as it was following the Plenary meeting of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) at The Hague in September 1978. There are now fifty approved families and groups of viruses. In addition, I have included three proposed or possible families or groups. The data on the viruses, the lists of member viruses, and the literature references have been updated. The information given under the ‘Main characteristics’ section has been substantially expanded. For convenience the data are presented in a standard order under a series of headings. Three pages of outline drawings are included as a visual index to remind the reader of the main morphological features of the various families and groups. I hope that this will increase the value of the report, especially for teachers of virology.

No official names for individual viruses (species) have yet been approved by ICTV. I have included a summary of the problems involved, which I hope will serve as a basis for further discussion among virologists.

I wish to thank all members of the Executive Committee of ICTV for their help and support over the past three years. I thank especially the Secretaries, Dr. J. Maurin and Dr. V. Va-lenta, for their hard work and wise counsel; and the chairmen of subcommittees, Dr. H.-W. Ackermann, Dr. J. Atherton, Dr. R.L.B.

Francki, Dr. M. Hollings, Dr. F.A. Murphy, and Dr. T. W. Tinsley. ICTV could not progress without their enthusiasm and their knowledge of both viruses and virologists.

The virus descriptions came from the work of many members of Study Groups and their colleagues, too numerous to name; I thank them all most sincerely for their help and their support for the work of ICTV.

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Auckland, 1978

R.E.F. Matthews

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