

INTRODUCTION

The idea of the organization of a Symposium on Spiral Structure came at a special meeting of Commission 33 on Spiral Structure during the 12th General Assembly of the IAU in Prague, 1967.

So much interest was shown during this meeting that one of us proposed a special Symposium on the 'Spiral Structure of Our Galaxy' for 1969. The response was immediate and it was finally agreed upon holding the Symposium in Basel, a center of galactic research in the center of Europe.

During the next months a special 'List of Problems', related to this Symposium, was sent to many prospective participants by the president of Commission 33. This stimulated an increase of interest in problems of galactic spiral structure and a concentrated effort on some problems.

The organizing Committee of the Symposium was composed of Drs. L. Woltjer (president), W. Becker, A. Blaauw, B. J. Bok, G. Contopoulos, F. J. Kerr, C. C. Lin, S. W. McCuskey and S. B. Pikel'ner. Most of the work for the organization of the Symposium was carried by Dr. L. Woltjer.

The Local Committee, composed of Drs. W. Becker, U. W. Steinlin, R. P. Fenkart, and G. A. Tammann, made every effort to secure the success of the Symposium. Most of the credit goes to Dr. Steinlin.

The Symposium was supported financially by the IAU and by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The meetings took place at the University of Basel, which provided also secretarial help and many other facilities.

The Basel Symposium marked the 50th anniversary of the IAU. A special celebration took place at the Opening of the Symposium, during which the President and the General Secretary of the IAU, Drs. O. Heckmann and L. Perek, as well as Dr. J. H. Oort spoke about this happy event.

The scientific meetings lasted from August 29 to September 4, 1969, and were attended by 145 participants from 23 countries.

Eighty-five papers were presented, followed by discussions. Some papers served as Introduction to general subjects. At the beginning there was a general 'Survey of spiral structure problems' by Dr. J. H. Oort, and at the end a comprehensive 'Summary and outlook' by Dr. B. J. Bok. The final discussion of 'Desiderata for future work' was introduced by Drs. Oort, Becker, Burke and Lin.

We have decided to avoid the publication of discussions, except in cases where the participants wanted their remarks to be inserted. This simplifies the edition of the Proceedings; on the other hand many of the most interesting discussions took place outside the meetings, and this is one of the most important functions of any Symposium.

In preparing this Volume for the press we have been helped considerably by Dr. J. Hadjidemetriou in Thessaloniki and by Dr. R. Fenkart in Basel.

In closing this Introduction we would like to thank all those that have contributed to the success of the Symposium.

The Editors:

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