

## INTRODUCTION

Colloquium 127, *Reference Systems*, was proposed by the U.S. Naval Observatory during the XX General Assembly in Baltimore. The proposal was accepted by the IAU Executive Committee and the dates, 14-20 October 1990, and the venue, Virginia Beach, were given in the First Announcement mailed in February 1990.

This Colloquium was somewhat unique in that its primary purpose was to serve as a meeting opportunity for the IAU Working Group On Reference Systems (WGRS). In conjunction with this pivotal animus however, the meeting also provided an excellent forum for the presentation and discussion of matters essential to the concerns of the WGRS by individuals whether members of the WGRS or not. Thus both invited oral and poster papers were presented on topics ranging from theoretical relativistic considerations to new observational programs and results. The oral contributions are printed here in the order in which they were presented at the meeting. The poster papers are given in alphabetical order by the first author's name.

The Colloquium was characterized by the inclusion of several discussion periods. Some of these were closed sessions of the WGRS, but most of the discussions were open to all participants. The final recommendations of the WGRS evolved from these discussions. The starting points for this evolution are contained in the opening papers given by the four leaders of the sub-groups of the WGRS, namely, B. Guinot, J. Kovalevsky, T. Fukushima and D. McCarthy. It is interesting to compare these papers with the final form of the recommendations as they appear in the Appendix of these Proceedings.

Recordings were made of the exchanges which took place after the presentations of the oral papers, and the original intention was to publish this material as is usually done. However, due to the high level of interest and the associated disinclination to curtail discussion, the length of the transcription was overwhelming. Straightforward question and answer exchanges were rare, with long commentaries being more the rule. Thus, to keep these Proceedings to a reasonable size, it would have been necessary to severely edit the commentary. The first editor made a few attempts at such a procedure, but it soon became clear that such editing, without detailed discussions with the speakers, was not likely to faithfully reproduce the ideas expressed. Therefore, with some reluctance, it was decided to forego printing this material.

In general, it is fair to say that the meeting has been deemed a success by the vast majority of the attendees. Certainly from the point of view of the SOC and the WGRS it may be said that the objectives of the Colloquium were well met. It is equally true that the LOC did an admirable job, and the thanks and appreciation expressed by so many are repeated here. Thanks are also due those who refereed papers both at Virginia Beach and subsequently.

Attention is drawn to the final Recommendations of the WGRS which, together with a copy of the letter forwarding them to the IAU, appear as an Appendix to this volume.

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