

WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE PARTICIPANTS

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Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to welcome you at Asiago for this Second Conference on the Schmidt telescopes and their role in Astronomy. The previous Meeting was held at the Hamburg Observatory, the same place where Barnard Schmidt invented and built his new telescope. After twelve years of intense activity, it was time to promote a new Conference in order to make the point on the results hitherto achieved and discuss the prospectives of future work with Schmidt telescopes.

I like to express my gratitude to the Executive Committee of the International Astronomical Union for having accepted my proposal that a Colloquium would take place at Asiago, in the site and under the patronage of the University of Padova. After all, Padova has a privilege unique in the world: under her sky 374 years ago with his "canocchiale" Galileo started the exploration of the heavens, which is now continued, in a much larger scale, by the Schmidt telescopes. We shall be very glad and honoured to receive and to show our instruments, among which there are two Schmidt telescopes, to the Colleagues who wish to visit our Observatory.

Two powerful Schmidt telescopes have entered in operation in the southern emisphere after the Hamburg Conference: the ESO 1-m at La Silla in Chile and the UK 122-cm, equipped with an objective prism of the same size, at Siding Spring in Australia. They are both used to extend the Palomar Sky Atlas to the southern emisphere. Professor Woltjer, Dr. West, Dr. Cannon will certainly give us information on those surveys and on the programmes carried out with these and other Schmidt telescopes. What I can say is that I had the opportunity of examining some of the films of the survey now in distribution and I was impressed by the high quality of the images and the deepness of the sky photographs.

High sensitivity emulsions and new photographic techniques have in fact increased the efficiency of the Schmidt telescopes which can operate from the ultraviolet to the infrared. Moreover, several proposals have been made to put large Schmidt telescopes into orbit

around the Earth so that they may scan the whole of the sky in the far ultraviolet.

Since a Schmidt telescope can produce a very large amount of material, techniques have been introduced for the automated fast reduction of wide field plates with the highest possible precision. The programme of this Colloquium indicates that all the topics, together with the prospectives of astrometry, spectroscopy and space research with Schmidt telescopes, will be amply discussed.

In conclusion, I express my gratitude to the Colleagues, some from very distant countries, who accepted to participate actively in this Conference with review papers, communications and posters. I am also grateful to the sponsoring organizations: the International Astronomical Union, the University of Padova, the Italian National Council of Researches and to the public and private institutions who have given their support and assistance to this Colloquium; in particular to the Regione Veneta, the cities of Padova and Asiago, the Provincia of Vicenza, the Comunita' Montana, the Banca Cattolica del Veneto. My deepest thanks to all of them and to the Rector of the University of Padova who has accepted our invitation to be with us at the opening of this Conference. Finally, I am particularly thankful to the Colleagues of the Scientific Organizing Committee,

R.Cannon, K.Freeman, K.Henize, E.Khachikian, E.Kibblewhite, F.Macchetto, S.Marx, M.McCarthy, W.Sargent, A.Savage, J.Sersic, B.Takase, A.Tyson, R.West and B.Westerlund,

and to the members of the Local Organizing Committee,

M.Capaccioli, R.Barbon, F.Ciatti and P.Rafanelli,

who have taken care of the organization.

To all the participants I express my best wishes for a fruitful work.