

Closing Comments

William I. Hartkopf

Astrometry Department, U.S. Naval Observatory, Washington, DC, United States
email: wih@usno.navy.mil

So at last we come to the end of our meeting! I have the honor of being the last speaker at Symposium 240, and apparently the last speaker of the GA itself! I will keep my comments very brief, so that you all may experience a few more minutes of sightseeing or perhaps another fine Czech beer before beginning your travels home.

In matters monetary and logistical: I first wish to thank the IAU for its decision to support our symposium proposal and for the travel grant which accompanied that decision. Surprisingly, the United States Office of Naval Research Global graciously agreed to match those IAU funds; together these two grants enabled us to provide at least partial support for 50 astronomers — mostly students — who wished to attend. Remaining funds will also enable us to send copies of the proceedings to several people who were unable to attend.

Our sincere thanks to the Czech National Committee for providing us with this most pleasant meeting facility, and to the many technicians and volunteers who kept our equipment running smoothly throughout the meeting, handled all our absurd demands, and still managed to keep smiles on their faces through it all. [*A hearty round of applause for the technicians and volunteers followed.*]

In matters scientific: Thank you to our Scientific Organizing Committee, who assisted us tremendously in merging our two original proposals into one coherent program, suggested many of our speakers, and read through all the submitted proposal abstracts to vote for our “poster highlight” talks.

Thank you to some 220 speakers and poster presenters, who over the last four days gave us interesting talks and displays, kept for the most part to our tight schedule, and allowed us glimpses into the many exciting topics that comprise the field of modern binary star research. Thank you, Virginia and Colin, for tackling the daunting task of trying to summarize such a wide range of topics. Thank you as well to the audience members for their intelligent questions and comments, which further stimulated the discussions.

Special thanks must go to my co-chairs, Petr Harmanec and Ed Guinan. Before this symposium was born I knew Ed only slightly, and had never met Petr. Over the past two years and 2,000 emails, however, we have worked together remarkably smoothly, discussed and compromised on thousands of details major and minor, and even gotten to the point where we understand and tolerate each others' senses of humor!

Finally, a most heartfelt thank you to the people of Prague, both those we see on its busy streets today and those who walked those cobblestones centuries ago, for giving us such an amazing, breathtaking city in which to gather together. The memories of this place will remain with us long after the details of particular talks are forgotten, and we are most grateful to have had this once-in-a-life opportunity.

I wish you all safe journeys home.