

CONCLUDING REMARKS

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This symposium was the first interdisciplinary conference devoted solely to applications of VLBI. Even its most jaded practitioners could hardly help being impressed by the broad sweep of these applications to astrophysics and geophysics. In 20 years, we have advanced from bare detections of the brightest compact radio sources to making inferences on the shape of the core-mantle boundary within the earth, monitoring the motions of the earth's continents, mapping the radio emission around stars, measuring the relative positions of compact sources across the sky with uncertainties under one milliarcsecond, and producing detailed polarization information on the radio emission from the hearts of quasars. Superluminal motion, merely a gleam in Martin Rees' eyes 20 years ago, is now a household word, with VLBI being used to follow virtually every twist and turn in the motion of superluminal jets that appear to be ejected from the cores of quasars. The sheer enormity of the current VLBI research discussed at this symposium defies simple summary. As a corollary, the number of people using VLBI as a research tool has also undergone nearly exponential growth; no longer do any of us know all of the others. By its very nature VLBI, of course, requires cooperation and the trend in all sciences towards increased numbers of authors per paper has always been much in evidence with VLBI. A newer trend, evidenced in this symposium, perhaps for the first time, is toward an ever larger number of papers per author; surely ten papers at one symposium co-authored by a single person must be a record.

Although VLBI, along with the rest of astronomy (and biology and physics and ...) is in a "golden age," the end is by no means in sight; one could predict with reasonable confidence a host of new extensions. When we or our descendants gather here, in 2007, for the fortieth anniversary of VLBI, the sophistication of the applications may compare to ours about as the Concorde compares to the horse and buggy. I hesitate to comment on the quantity.