

## Preface

IAU Symposium 192, the first IAU sponsored Symposium in Africa, was held at the Arthur's Seat Hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, from 7 to 11 September 1998. The meeting was attended by 81 astronomers from 23 countries. The papers presented fell into four main categories: several major introductory reviews; a dozen more specialised reviews or invited papers; 21 contributed papers and 39 posters. There were also two general discussion sessions of about an hour's duration. One very positive outcome of the relatively small number of attendees was that the programme was not too crowded and people had plenty of opportunity to interact with each other.

This volume contains an account of all but three of the papers presented, an edited account of the general discussion sessions and a final scientific summary. The order in the Proceedings follows almost exactly the actual order of presentation at the meeting, with the papers grouped into four main topics: The Database; Star Formation Processes and Chemical Evolution; Morphology, Kinematics and Dynamics; and Wider Implications and Future Prospects.

On the Saturday following the Symposium a Workshop was held for about 75 educators from all over South Africa. This was organised by Case Rijdsdijk (SAAO) at the South African Museum and attended by various of the Symposium participants.

From the organisers' point of view, the meeting ran very smoothly and it seems that many participants found it a stimulating and enjoyable Symposium. It succeeded in its primary aims of reviewing the current state of knowledge about the Local Group, revealing problem areas and pointing the way for critical future work. We hope that readers of this compilation will find it interesting and useful. We thank all our sponsors for their support, and the participants themselves for the effort they put into their contributions, and for being so co-operative in writing up their talks promptly.

### **Sponsors:**

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