

A WORD FROM THE EDITORS

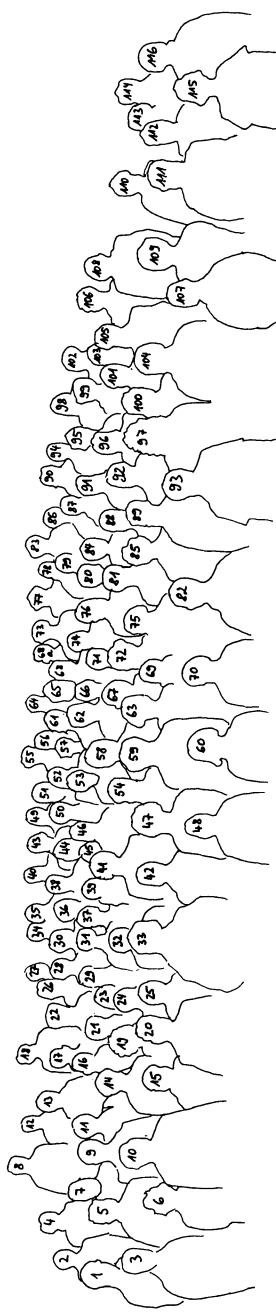
The study of the diffuse astronomical background has a long history in astronomy. During the last 25 years, this field has taken new dimensions with the discovery of diffuse backgrounds in the γ -ray and X-ray bands, and with the discovery of the 3 K cosmic background. These discoveries are of keen interest, and studies of these backgrounds have been the subject of numerous meetings and symposia. During this same period, studies of the diffuse optical, ultraviolet, and near-infrared backgrounds have also undergone a renaissance with substantial new data acquired and sophisticated methods of analysis employed. Surprisingly, although substantial work on these backgrounds has been reported in the scientific literature, no international symposia have been devoted to these topics. The symposium conceived by Kalevi Mattila and sponsored by the International Astronomical Union was organized to rectify the situation and to allow researchers contributing to this field to interact and share new techniques, results, and insights. The symposium, by unanimous opinion of the participants, was an outstanding success.

The editors of this volume have attempted to produce conference proceedings which are consistent with the quality of the meeting. To this end, all of the articles were refereed, and all were edited for clarity of presentation by at least one of us. Revised manuscripts were then cast in a common editorial format and sent to the authors for their final review. These author-approved manuscripts were then read again by one of us for overlooked technical and typographical errors.

The technical editing and formatting were carried out by Ms. Brenda Hatfield and her staff at the University of California Center for Extreme Ultraviolet Astrophysics. We are greatly appreciative of their contributions to this volume. We explicitly acknowledge and thank Anne Marchant and Shannon Ludovissy for their extensive contributions. Graphics, editing, and formatting were performed by Joan Loran, Lisa Danchi, Katherine Butterfield, Karin Hernandez, and Katherine Reese. Valuable assistance was also provided by Cathie Jones and her staff.

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