Comets to cosmology

edited by A. Lawrence


During an eleven-month period in 1983, the Infrared Astronomy Satellite (IRAS) detected infrared signals from a quarter of a million celestial objects. They included asteroids, comets, stars, interstellar clouds, galaxies and quasars. This conference, the third to be centered around discussions of IRAS data and the follow-up studies it has engendered, was held at Queen Mary College, London, in July 1987. It followed earlier meetings in the Netherlands and the USA, the two countries which, with Britain, were responsible for the creation and operation of the IRAS survey.

The title of the conference indicated the enormous breadth of phenomena which are now studied by infrared techniques. The four main themes of the book are the Solar System, the Galaxy, infrared galaxies and cosmology. The book will probably have a limited readership outside of astronomical libraries. Most of the papers are too technical for the general reader, while the range of the subject matter is considerably broader than most professionals can assimilate. The volume nevertheless provides a splendid picture of the current excitement in infrared astrophysics, a science which is only now at the brink of maturity.

Gareth Wynn-Williams

Gareth Wynn-Williams is a professor of astronomy at the University of Hawaii.

Other books received

(Mention here does not preclude a fuller review later.)


Sixty-three papers on the geology and chemistry of lunar rocks, meteorites and asteroids, extraterrestrial grains, Venus, Mars and icy satellites.


An account of the lives of the first two generations of a famous astronomical dynasty.


Proceedings of a workshop held at Erice, Italy, in June 1987. Thirty-nine papers on the physical processes that operate in galaxies, recent observational work of relevance and ideas for future observations.


Thirty-five review papers and about a hundred two-page poster papers on Shapley and on many aspects of globular clusters.


Proceedings of a workshop held in Torino, Italy, IAU Symposium No. 157. Fourteen invited papers and fifty-three contributed papers on all types of astrophysical outflows, such as solar and stellar winds and jets.


Proceedings of the meeting held in Finland in June 1987. Sixty-three papers on aspects of the problem, which concerns the gravitational interaction between three or more bodies. Subjects covered include, general theory, the solar system, stellar systems and groups of galaxies.


A companion volume to the Nearby Galaxies Atlas, consisting of a table of information about the 2267 galaxies mapped in the Atlas. The information includes positions, morphological descriptions, sizes, luminosities, red shifts, neutral hydrogen properties, distance estimates and characteristics of each galaxy’s environment.


Based on a BBC Radio 3 documentary, including interviews with all the main physicists involved in this aspect of the search for a unified physical theory. The interview format is retained, with an extended introduction to set the scene. Written for non-specialists, with a minimum of jargon and no mathematics.


Proceedings of the Commission held every three years, to correspond with the General Assembly. The reports are intended to summarise the results relating to the work of the Commissions since the last report and are prepared by the Commission Presidents. The volume contains 39 Commission reports together with a list of approved names of planetary features and small Uranian satellites. Well worth dipping into for an overview of what currently preoccupies professional astronomers.


A completely new edition of Zirin’s classic text. It combines an introduction to astrophysics with comprehensive treatment of the Sun. Suitable for undergraduates and research students.


Proceedings of a workshop held at the George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, in October 1987, with over 70 papers.


A serious but non-technical study of the evolution of the concept of Laws of Nature and a philosophical examination of the notion of such laws.

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