

P R E F A C E

The Highlights of Astronomy, volume 7, as presented in November 1985 at the XIXth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union, in Delhi, India, contain the texts of all three Invited Discourses, of the numerous talks given during seven Joint Discussions and five Joint Commission Meetings, as well as two additions that I decided to incorporate here. Except for the latter, the discourses were arranged by the IAU Executive Committee, and the joint sessions by their respective chairmen. I am indebted to the organizers and editors of the individual sections for having provided me with all the material for publication in due time. The presentation of the various contributions is obviously slightly uneven (in style, language,...), and remains the responsibility of the authors : however, the most important point, to my mind, is that these Highlights, as those in volume 6, are rapidly made available to the astronomical community, as a useful research tool, not as a museum piece.

Although an author index is printed at the end of the volume, I have taken the liberty not to prepare a subject index for the proceedings published here : I felt that, because of the large number of different subjects discussed, and after discussing the matter with several colleagues, it would be preferable to include a detailed table of contents at the very beginning of the Highlights rather than to divide the book into separate fairly unrelated sections. This should, I hope, enable each astronomer to rapidly select the up to date contribution(s) he or she wishes to read, analyze, or use for teaching and/or conference purposes.

An appreciable fraction of the organization of the scientific sessions held during the General Assembly in Delhi was the responsibility of my predecessor as IAU General Secretary, Dr. Richard West (1982-1985) : on behalf of the astronomical community I warmly congratulate him for the success of the meetings. It is also with pleasure that I thank Denise Fraipont for her help in the editing phase of this volume.

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