

**IAU Symposium No. 349 –
Under One Sky: The Centenary Symposium**

Report

IAU Symposium No. 349, Under One Sky, was the IAU centenary symposium, which was held during the XXXth General Assembly in Vienna, 28-31 August 2018.

The IAU and its history were the main topics covered by this symposium. It was not so much a celebration, but more an opportunity to reflect on what had been achieved, or in a few instances, on what had not been so successful, and to have a vision of what might be in store for the future. This last theme was opportune, given the recent publication of the IAU Strategic Plan 2020-30, as approved at the General Assembly.

Part of the symposium entailed reminiscences of past Presidents and General Secretaries of the Union, who reflected on some of the broader issues they dealt with while in office. All living past presidents and general secretaries were invited to contribute, and four of the former and eight of the latter did so. A few (including Jean-Claude Pecker, GS 1964-67 and Norio Kaifu, President 2012-15) presented their talks by pre-recorded video.

There were two invited plenary talks given at the symposium. One was by Malcolm Longair from the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge. In one hour he summarized the scientific achievements of astronomy, astrophysics and cosmology over the last 100 years. It was one of the symposium highlights. The other was by former IAU president Catherine Cesarsky, who reviewed the entire history of the IAU in an equally notable contribution.

The IAU has undergone a remarkable evolution over its lifetime. At first it was an inward-looking club for about 200 professional astronomers, who set criteria for standards and classification schemes used in astronomy. Today, it is a large organization of some 13500 astronomers who are engaged not only in research but also in education, outreach and promoting astronomy in society in general, including interacting with the media. This remarkable transformation began more than 50 years ago, and was a major theme of the symposium.

The IAU has had many notable successes, but also some crises, and these were in some cases described at Symposium 349. The question of admittance of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey) after the Great War was an issue that was only resolved after World War II; it was described at S349 by Roland Wielen. The crisis posed by mainland China leaving the IAU for some 20 years after the admission of Taiwan in 1960 was discussed in an article by Xiaowei Liu.

In spite of these temporary setbacks, the Union is now much stronger, perhaps in part as a result of resolving the difficulties that arose from time to time. The future is indeed exciting

and the importance of the Union as a force for the benefit of astronomy and international science generally is evident for all to see, especially for the several hundred participants in this symposium, and for those who read the volume of S349 proceedings (Sterken, Hearnshaw and Valls-Gabaud 2019).

Finally I wish to thank the scientific organizing committee of seven women and nine men from 13 different countries who put the programme of the Centenary Symposium together, and also my two co-editors, Chris Sterken (Merelbeke, near Brussels) and David Valls-Gabaud (Paris), who worked very hard to edit almost 70 papers for the proceedings volume in the months following the General Assembly in August 2018. The proceedings were published by Cambridge University Press in April 2019, just in time for the IAU's centenary celebration in Brussels on April 11.

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Christchurch, New Zealand

Reference

Sterken, C, Hearnshaw, J.B. and Valls-Gabaud, D. (eds.) 2019. *Under One Sky: The IAU Centenary Symposium*, IAU Symposium 349, pp xii + 542, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K.

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