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Ground-based and Airborne Telescopes II

Larry M. Stepp
Roberto Gilmozzi
Editors

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Contents

Part One

Part Two

Part Three

POSTER SESSION: SEGMENTED MIRROR ALIGNMENT AND PHASING

7012 3A **Design and performances of the Shack-Hartmann sensor within the Active Phasing Experiment** [7012-124]
R. Mazzoleni, F. Gonté, I. Surdej, C. Araujo, R. Brast, F. Derie, P. Duhoux, C. Dupuy, C. Frank, R. Karban, L. Noethe, N. Yaitskova, European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere (Germany)

7012 3B **ASM: a scaled down Active Segmented Mirror for the Active Phasing Experiment** [7012-127]
C. Dupuy, F. Gonté, C. Frank, European Southern Observatory (Germany)

7012 3C **Large capture range cophasing with the Liquid Crystal Tunable Filter** [7012-128]
M. Bonaglia, E. Pinna, F. Quiros-Pacheco, A. Puglisi, S. Esposito, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri (Italy)

7012 3D **The Pyramid Phasing Sensor (PYPS)** [7012-129]
E. Pinna, F. Quirós-Pacheco, S. Esposito, A. Puglisi, P. Stefanini, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri (Italy)

7012 3E **Double segmentation control with a single phasing sensor** [7012-130]
F. Quirós-Pacheco, E. Pinna, S. Esposito, A. Riccardi, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri (Italy)

7012 3F **Development of a novel actuator concept for position control of segmented mirrors of ELT** [7012-131]
H. Janssen, R. Geurink, M. Teuwen, B. v. Bree, Janssen Precision Engineering B.V. (Netherlands)

7012 3G **SALT segmented primary mirror: commissioning capacitive edge sensing system and performance comparison with inductive sensor** [7012-132]
S. Buous, J. Menzies, H. Gajjar, Southern African Large Telescope, South African Astronomical Observatory (South Africa)

7012 3H **Progress of LAMOST wavefront sensing** [7012-133]
Y. Zhang, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics and Technology (China)

POSTER SESSION: FUTURE GIANT TELESCOPES

7012 3I **Ultra low wind resistance enclosure for a 100 m telescope** [7012-134]
T. D. Ditto, DeWitt Brothers Tool Co., Inc. (United States); J. M. Ritter, Institute for Astronomy, Univ. of Hawaii (United States)

7012 3J **A preliminary design for the E-ELT enclosure** [7012-179]
J. Cross, J. Lyle, Arup (United Kingdom); M. Schneermann, European Southern Observatory (Germany)

POSTER SESSION: TELESCOPE ALIGNMENT AND CONTROL

7012 3K **Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, Victor M. Blanco 4-m Telescope: an upgrade to the telescope control system** [7012-135]
T. M. C. Abbott, G. Schumacher, M. Warner, E. Mondaca, R. E. Schmidt, R. Cantarutti, M. Martinez, O. Estay, F. Delgado, A. Walker, National Optical Astronomy Observatories (United States)

7012 3L **VST telescope azimuth and altitude axes control hardware** [7012-136]
C. Molfese, VSTceN, INAF (Italy); P. Schipani, Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte, INAF (Italy); M. Capaccioli, VSTceN, INAF (Italy) and Univ. degli Studi Federico II (Italy); G. Sedmak, Univ. degli Studi di Trieste (Italy); D. Mancini, Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte, INAF (Italy); S. D'Orsi, VSTceN, INAF (Italy)

7012 3M **VST hydrostatic bearing system control hardware** [7012-137]
C. Molfese, VSTceN, INAF (Italy); P. Schipani, D. Mancini, Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte, INAF (Italy); S. D'Orsi, VSTceN, INAF (Italy)

7012 3N **Adaptive periodic error correction for Heidenhain tape encoders** [7012-138]
M. Warner, Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory (Chile); V. Krabbendam, LSST Telescope Project (United States); G. Schumacher, Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory (Chile)

7012 3O **One direct drive system for telescope** [7012-140]
C. Ren, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China) and Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (China); Z. Zhang, D. Wang, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China); X. Shuai, W. Hu, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China) and Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (China); G. Wang, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China); Z. Zhu, Nanjing Univ. of Aeronautics and Astronautics (China)

7012 3P **The use of primary mirrors as Hartmann masks for in situ alignment of segmented mirror telescopes** [7012-141]
S. M. Crawford, South African Astronomical Observatory (South Africa); M. Wells, UK Astronomy Technology Ctr., Royal Observatory (United Kingdom); H. Gajjar, South African Astronomical Observatory (South Africa)

POSTER SESSION: AIRBORNE TELESCOPES

7012 3Q **Sub-arcsecond pointing for balloon-borne telescopes** [7012-142]
A. Kraut, K. Swartzlander, E. Wong, G. Orr, T. Wimer, Harvey Mudd College (United States); Y. Nakaya, Kogakuin Univ. (Japan); M. Bullock, E. Young, Southwest Research Institute (United States); P. Little, Harvey Mudd College (United States)

7012 3R **THz balloon-borne telescope: Tera-GATE project** [7012-143]
T. Kamizuka, The Univ. of Tokyo (Japan) and Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (Japan); H. Kataza, K. Watanabe, T. Wada, H. Murakami, Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (Japan)

7012 4A **Comparison of the atmospheric properties above Dome A, Dome C, and the South Pole** [7012-166]
S. Hagelin, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, INAF (Italy) and Uppsala Univ. (Sweden); E. Masciadri, F. Lascaux, J. Stoesz, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, INAF (Italy)

7012 4B **Sampling the ground layer of the atmosphere at Dome C using fast sonic-anemometers** [7012-167]
T. Travouillon, California Institute of Technology (United States); E. Aristidi, E. Fossat, UMR 6526, Univ. of Nice-Sophia Antipolis (France); J. S. Lawrence, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia); D. Mekarnia, UMR 6526, Univ. of Nice-Sophia Antipolis (France); A. M. Moore, California Institute of Technology (United States); A. W. Skidmore, TMT Observatory Corp. (United States); J. W. V. Storey, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia)

7012 4C **Wide-field performance gradient at a mid-latitude site and at Dome C** [7012-168]
J. Stoesz, E. Masciadri, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri (Italy); S. Hagelin, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri (Italy) and Uppsala Univ. (Sweden); F. Lascaux, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri (Italy)

7012 4D **Meso-Nh simulations of the atmospheric flow above the Internal Antarctic Plateau** [7012-169]
F. Lascaux, E. Masciadri, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, INAF (Italy); S. Hagelin, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, INAF (Italy) and Uppsala Univ. (Sweden); J. A. Stoesz, Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, INAF (Italy)

7012 4E **PLATO power: a robust low environmental impact power generation system for the Antarctic plateau** [7012-170]
S. Hengst, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia); G. R. Allen, Solar Mobility Pty Ltd. (Australia); M. C. B. Ashley, J. R. Everett, J. S. Lawrence, D. M. Luong-Van, J. W. V. Storey, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia)

POSTER SESSION: NEW ANTARCTIC FACILITIES

7012 4F **PILOT: a wide-field telescope for the Antarctic plateau** [7012-171]
W. Saunders, P. Gillingham, A. McGrath, R. Haynes, J. Brzeski, Anglo-Australian Observatory (Australia); J. Storey, J. Lawrence, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia)

7012 4G **Chinese Small Telescope Array (CSTAR) for Antarctic Dome A** [7012-172]
X. Yuan, X. Cui, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China) and Chinese Ctr. for Antarctic Astronomy (China); G. Liu, F. Zhai, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China); X. Gong, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China) and Chinese Ctr. for Antarctic Astronomy (China); R. Zhang, L. Xia, National Astronomical Observatories, Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics & Technology (China); J. Hu, National Astronomical Observatory (China) and Chinese Ctr. for Antarctic Astronomy (China); J. S. Lawrence, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia); J. Yan, National Astronomical Observatory (China) and Chinese Ctr. For Antarctic Astronomy (China); J. W. V. Storey, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia); L. Wang, L. Feng, Purple Mountain Observatory (China) and Chinese Ctr. for Antarctic Astronomy (China); M. C. B. Ashley, Univ. of New South Wales (Australia); X. Zhou, Z. Jiang, National Astronomical Observatory (China) and Chinese Ctr. for Antarctic Astronomy (China); Z. Zhu, Purple Mountain Observatory (China) and Chinese Ctr. for Antarctic Astronomy (China)

POSTER SESSION: TELESCOPE STRUCTURES

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1 Project Reviews
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4 Solar Telescopes
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6 Radio Telescopes and Their Technology
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7 Wind Loading on Telescopes
F. Javier Castro López-Tarruella, Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (Spain)

8 Segmented Mirror Alignment and Phasing I
Philippe Dierickx, European Southern Observatory (Germany)

9 Segmented Mirror Alignment and Phasing II
Jean-Gabriel Cuby, Observatoire Astronomique de Marseille-Provence (France)

10 Future Giant Telescopes I
Donald W. Sweeney, LSST Corporation (United States)

11 Future Giant Telescopes II
Masanori Iye, National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (Japan)

12 Future Giant Telescopes III
Torben E. Andersen, Lund Observatory, Lund University (Sweden)

13 Telescope Alignment and Control I
Jason Spyromilio, European Southern Observatory (Germany)

Introduction

The 2008 Ground-based and Airborne Telescopes conference brought together a large number of participants from around the world, and their oral and poster papers are contained in these proceedings. In this year's conference we had more invited papers than usual (16), reflecting the large number of significant telescope projects currently active, and the results were favorable—the invited talks were very well attended and generated a lot of interest.

The conference offered outstanding geographical and technical diversity, with reports about astronomy projects on all seven continents, involving both ground-based and airborne telescopes working in the UV, visible, IR, and radio wavelengths, and engaged in night-time and solar astronomy. It covered a full range of activities including planning, designing, constructing, integrating, commissioning, and upgrading new and existing telescopes, from portable telescopes used for site testing to extremely large telescopes with collecting areas up to a square kilometer.

The conference sessions included project reports on ground-based optical-IR telescopes, radio and sub-mm telescopes, airborne telescopes, solar telescopes, Antarctic telescopes, and future giant telescopes. There were also sessions on a number of technical subjects, including site testing, integration, and commissioning; telescope alignment and control; telescope structures; wind loading, and segmented mirror alignment and phasing.

It is gratifying to see that the high level of telescope-building activity that developed in the 1990s has continued strong into the 21st century, with successful completion of many projects and the initiation of many more that offer exciting scientific prospects for the coming decade. As many of the projects get bigger, finding funding for them will be a continuing challenge, but we are encouraged to see the emergence of strong astronomy programs in many of the rapidly developing countries of the world that offer the promise of broadening the base of astronomical facilities to serve this expanding community.

The conference chairs would like to thank the authors and conference attendees, the program committee members who devoted many hours to planning the conference and who served as the session chairs, and the conference organizers at SPIE.

Larry M. Stepp
Roberto Gilmozzi