PREFACE

The Third International Meeting of Dynamic Astronomy in Latin America, (Tercera Reunión sobre Astronomía Dinámica en Latino-América) which we named ADeLA-2004, was held on November 22-24, 2004 in Mérida. It represents the consolidation and continuity of a series of meetings about Astrometry and related topics. The first meeting took place in 2001 in San Juan (Argentina), followed by the second meeting in 2002 in Araraquara (Brazil).

Astrometry, after an original and basic contribution not only to Astronomy as a branch of science but also to the direct development of society, starts declining when in the middle of the twentieth century it gets far from astrophysical research and the human mind finds alternative ways to solve the upcoming development problems. This fact has progressively made the financing models for scientific projects focus on and expand towards the more "productive" areas of Astronomy, leaving aside Astrometry, which we consider a vital area. Even when preparing themselves academically, the astrometrists with their meticulous work, do not find easily government support and ways to compete.

The rapid development of detectors and observation techniques during the last decade has almost completely transformed Astronomy. The data collected from observation are once again the main source for the theoretical development of this science. Moreover, observations have often changed many theoretical concepts.

Astrometry has not been left behind and the future, almost magical, observations include the space projects such as GAIA and SIM. These projects should be seen as the spur for the adaptation of Astrometry to the new era, making this area a basic one in the professional training of any astronomer. The astrometrist is the one who must enlarge his scope to encompass data interpretation, taking advantage of the meticulous and craftsmanlike character that this work has always had in order to access the big data bases that will be generated and are in danger of being considered as sources of statistical information. This concern for the future of Astrometry was discussed in this meeting.

ADeLA-2004 had two additional innovations. The first one consisted in including a workshop, or a series of conferences on topics related to Astrometry, addressed to students interested in astronomy. This meeting has offered the opportunity to gather important foreign researchers. The participation of ESO Vitacura (Chile) researchers in ADeLA 2004, as well as the usual ADeLA meeting participants, facilitated a wide and diverse series of lectures on related topics. These lectures were addressed both in a pedagogical and a professional atmosphere which encouraged Venezuelan undergraduate, and graduate students interested in or majoring in astronomy, to participate in both events. The so-called "Taller de ADeLA-2004" took place after the meeting on November 25 and 26. The workshop improved the relationships between the Venezuelan scientific and student communities. Today, it represents the spur for further events that will be planned later in 2005.

Regarding the second innovation, it is important to underline the fact that a video conference, as a solution to a last minute problem, was delivered from the University of Barcelona in Spain by a member of the GAIA space project. This project is, of course, of paramount importance for the future of Astrometry. In spite of the haste and some external problems, the lecture was successful. This situation demonstrates that, with no intention to replace live lectures, it is possible to palliate the physical absence of the lecturer if the topic merits such consideration.

Venezuelan Astronomy has been well represented and developed by Dr. Jurgen Stock (1923-2004), its precursor. He was an astrometrist par excellence, the founder and the first director of the "Llano del Hato"

National Astronomical Observatory, as well as the first president of the Foundation of Centro de Investigaciones de Astronoma (CIDA), which is today the most important for astronomy research institution in this country.

From the beginning of the preparations for this meetings, Dr. J. Stock participated in the scientific committee as the Honorary President. Unfortunately, his death in April turned this homage into a memorial for him. For that reason, a solemn ceremony was held in his honour on November 24; his family, old friends and colleagues from CIDA attended. During this ceremony, the Schmidt telescope was dedicated as the Jurgen Stock Telescope. It was Stock's favorite tool for his astrometric and spectroscopic work, which were his central scientific interests during his career.

We would like to thank all the people that from the First Meeting in 2001, have pursued the continuity of them and, even if we do not name them all, the Scientific Organizing Committee is a very good representation of them: C. Abad (Venezuela, Chair), C. Allen (México), C. López (Argentina), R. Méndez (Chile), J.L. Muiños (Spain), R. Teixeira (Brasil), W. Van Altena (USA), and R. Zalles (Bolivia).

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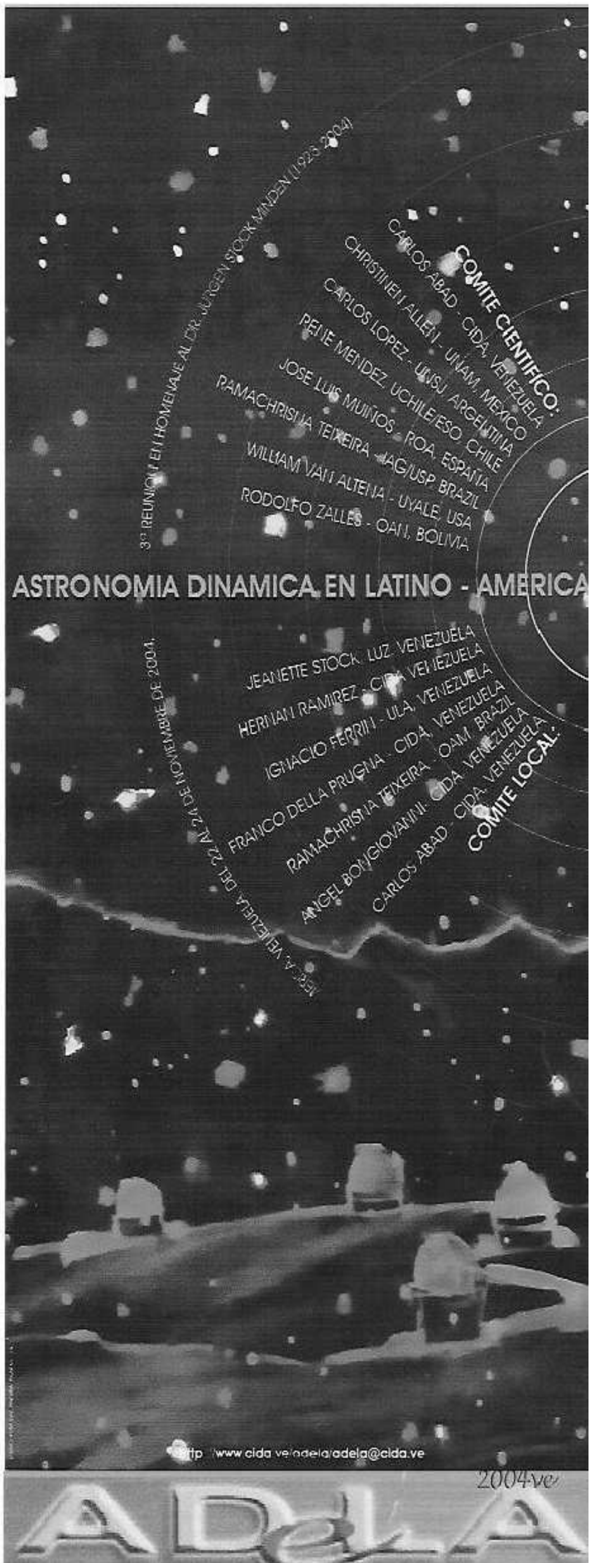

"... Y me parece que es una ciencia que os apasiona tanto que se introduce en vuestro día a día como si estuviera siempre presente. De ahí que la noche "baje" hasta el suelo, como inundándolo, y traspase las montañas, las paredes, todos los edificios, todos los caminos, hasta llegar a vuestras mentes, a vuestras manos."

Pilar Millán (artist)