Editor's Note

The Working Group on 'Wide-Field Imaging' has now been running for 3 years, since its conception at the XXIst General Assembly meeting of the IAU in Buenos Aires in 1991. Richard West took on the daunting task of being the very first Chairperson, and managed to organise the Working Group into the highly successful operation it is today. Much has happened in the past 3 year period. We have seen a threat to the continued supply of traditional photographic emulsions, and the discontinuation of some completely. New fine-grain emulsions (in particular Tech Pan 4415) have made an appearance and have provided fresh stimulus to the further potential of photographic emulsions. Techniques of photographic and digital stacking and amplification have been perfected, leading to further possibilities of using photographic materials for performing very deep, wide-field surveys.

Undoubtedly, the high point of the past 3 years (from the WG point of view) was the highly successful IAU Symposium on 'Astronomy from Wide-Field Imaging' held in Potsdam, Germany, during August 1993, at which some 200 participants attended. The Proceedings of the conference (IAU Symposium No. 161, published by Kluwer Academic Publishers) has been produced, and by the time people receive this Newsletter will be appearing on shelves as tangible evidence of the performance of the Working Group over the past 3 years.

It is now time, however, to look forward to the next 3 years, and already a new committee has been elected. The membership of the new committee is published also in this Newsletter. We have also been active in trawling the wide-field astronomy community for membership of the WG for the coming 3 years, and a list of persons who have actively joined the WG or continued their membership accompanies this Newsletter. If your name is not on this list and you wish to be a member, then you should write to me as soon as possible. Only those persons listed will continue to receive future Newsletters and correspondence.

The next 3 years promises to continue with regard to new and exciting developments in our field. In particular, planned large-scale deep CCD surveys of the sky will be beginning to happen, and first results should be expected. Following rapidly on the heels of these will be a mass of wide-field spectroscopic data, produced from advancements in the use of large numbers of fibres (several hundreds at a time) which can be positioned to feed the light from individual objects into highly efficient spectrographs. The sheer quantities of data pose new problems in the areas of mass storage and bulk processing, all of which rely heavily on developments at the forefront of technology. We are truly on the verge of an era which promises to be extremely exciting and richly rewarding.

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