

ESO, the European Southern Observatory, was created in 1962 to . . . establish and operate an astronomical observatory in the southern hemisphere, equipped with powerful instruments, with the aim of furthering and organizing collaboration in astronomy . . . It is supported by eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. It operates the La Silla observatory in the Atacama desert, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile, at 2,400 m altitude, where thirteen optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m and a 15-m submillimetre radio telescope (SEST) are now in operation. A 3.5-m New Technology Telescope (NTT) will become operational soon and a giant telescope (VLT=Very Large Telescope), consisting of four 8-m telescopes (equivalent aperture = 16 m) is under construction. Eight hundred scientists make proposals each year for the use of the telescopes at La Silla. The ESO Headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, FRG. It is the scientific-technical and administrative centre of ESO, where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the La Silla observatory with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive facilities which enable the scientists to analyze their data. In Europe ESO employs about 150 international Staff members, Fellows and Associates; at La Silla about 40 and, in addition, 150 local Staff members.

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A Slice of Swiss Cheese Made Out of Steel . . .

is suggestive of the main supporting structure of the EMMI spectrograph/imager for the NTT shown in these two photographs taken at two phases of the manufacturing at the De Pretto-Escher Wyss factory in Schio, Italy. The left-hand picture, taken before welding of the covering plate, shows the inner structure with the complex net of ribs to increase the rigidity. The long poles were inserted temporarily to align the apertures. The right-hand picture shows the welded, cleaned piece mounted on a measuring machine for the check of the dimensions. The openings correspond to the main optical components to be inserted: collimators, filter and grism wheels, folding mirrors, etc.

The dimensions of EMMI's main structure are 240 cm in length, 160 in height and 28 cm in depth; the weight is about 800 kg.

The structure will arrive at ESO in February. Mounting of the different functions (now being integrated and tested in Garching) on the main body and testing of the overall instrument will take place within the summer of this year.

S. D'ODORICO, ESO

Contents

H. Schwarz: The Southern Crab	1
H. van der Laan: Key Programmes on La Silla: First Allocations	2
V. de Lapparent et al.: Profile of a Key Programme: A Redshift Survey of Galaxies with $z \leq 0.6$ Using Multi-Object Spectroscopy	5
R. Bender et al.: Profile of a Key Programme: Towards a Physical Classification of Early-type Galaxies	6
J. Surdej et al.: Profile of a Key Programme: Gravitational Lensing	8
H. van der Laan: The New Research Student Programme of the European Southern Observatory	12
B. Marano: The Users Committee (UC)	13
Tentative Time-table of Council Sessions and Committee Meetings in 1989	14
A. Blaauw: ESO's Early History, 1953-1975. II. Searching for a Site in South Africa	14
L. Zago and F. Rigaut: Wind Turbulence in the Dome of the 3.6-m Telescope	22
Visiting Astronomers (April 1-October 1, 1989)	24
T. Le Bertre et al.: IRC+10216: a Peanut Nebula!	25
List of ESO Preprints (December 1988-February 1989)	28
Guidelines for Authors of Articles for the ESO Messenger	28
W. C. Keel: A Distant View of La Silla	29
Staff Movements	29
C. Madsen: The Changing Skyline of La Silla	31
B. Reipurth and C. Madsen: Signposts of Low Mass Star Formation in Molecular Clouds	32
E. Bajaja and E. Hummel: Observation of the ^{12}CO ($J = \rightarrow 0$) Line in NGC 613 with the SEST	37
R. Bandiera and P. Focardi: High Resolution $\text{H}\alpha$ Spectroscopy of Nova Centauri 1986: Tracing a Transient in the Spectral Evolution	39
G. Mathys et al.: The European Working Group on Chemically Peculiar Stars of the Upper Main Sequence: The First 10 Years	41
J. Andersen et al.: AK Scorpii: A New Pre-Main-Sequence Spectroscopic Binary	45
B. M. Shustov: Supershells and Galactic Fountains	47
F. Paresce: Searching for Light Echoes from Circumstellar Dust Shells Around SN 1987 A	49
G. Burki et al.: The Geneva Photometric Monitoring of SN 1987 A	51
Is there a Pulsar in Supernova 1987 A?	52
H. Butcher and T. Schoenmaker: Squeezing the Most from the CES	52
G. Meylan et al.: What is the Mass-to-Light Ratio of the Old Magellanic Globular Cluster NGC 1835?	55
H. Barwig: High-tech Telescope on Top of Mount Wendelstein	59
E. Giraud: Spatial Resolution Imaging on the Radio Source 3C 255	60
R. Haefner: The Spectacular Binary System PG 1550+131	61
NEWS ON ESO INSTRUMENTATION	
G. Avila et al.: Report on the Last Observing Run of Multiobject Spectroscopy: OPTOPUS is Alive and Kicking	62
H. Dekker: Optics and Grisms of EFOSC 2	64
ESO Image Processing Group: MIDAS Memo	65
D. Chittim: Ethernet at ESO Headquarters	66
S. D'Odorico: A Slice of Swiss Cheese Made Out of Steel	68