

Retirement of Klaus Banse

Pascal Ballester¹

Michèle Péron¹

¹ ESO

On 30 April 2012, after 34 years of service, Klaus Banse left ESO to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. Klaus joined ESO in Geneva in December 1977, when ESO had only about 80 employees. He was initially recruited to develop “algorithms for the astronomers”, but really started his career at ESO by developing control software for the ESO measuring machines (Crane, 1979).

In 1979, ESO began the planning and development of a new image processing system to fulfill increasing data analysis and image processing needs, and Klaus became the main architect of ESO-MIDAS (originally the Munich Image Display Analysis System), first released in 1982 (Banse et al., 1983). The MIDAS Memo column in *The Messenger* docu-

mented progress during the first decade of development, during which time Klaus and the MIDAS team adapted the system from Fortran 77 to the C programming language, and from VAX/VMS to a variety of Unix platforms, and later to Linux-based operating systems. By the end of 1992, MIDAS had been distributed to 160 astronomical institutes in 37 countries, and Klaus was in permanent contact with its many users, while consolidating the system standard interfaces and the core display functionalities. The system remained the foundation of data reduction processes for the VLT first light in 1998 and for the first instruments of the VLT. A new architecture for the VLT pipelines was developed in 2000, relying fully on C-based data reduction chains, and in 2004, Klaus became the team leader of the ESO Common Pipeline Library remaining in this position until his retirement. Over his 34-year career at ESO, Klaus was a key resource in the field of astronomical data analysis, as techniques in astronomy evolved from scanning photographic plates to handling

hundreds of gigabytes of data on multi-threaded architectures.

A very well attended leaving party was held at ESO Headquarters on 3 May 2012 attended by the ESO Director General Tim de Zeeuw (see Figure 1), many colleagues and members of the ESO swimming club, of which Klaus was a founding member. We were honoured to present Klaus with a book on the historical vistas of information handling in astronomy, signed by colleagues from Europe, the USA and Canada, in recognition of his contributions to the international development of astronomical data reduction systems (see Figure 2). We will not only miss Klaus’s technical skills but also his congenial personality and his dedication. We wish Klaus all the best for his retirement.

References

Banse, K. et al. 1983, *The Messenger*, 31, 26
Crane, P. 1979, *The Messenger*, 19, 31



Figure 1. The ESO Director General Tim de Zeeuw offering Klaus Banse his hand in appreciation of Klaus’s many years of service to ESO.



Figure 2. Klaus Banse enjoying the good wishes of colleagues in the book presented to him at his retirement party.