

568. E. Brocato and V. Castellani: Evolutionary Constraints for Young Stellar Clusters. II. The Case of NGC 1866. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. January 1988.
569. R. Arsenault et al.: A Circumnuclear Ring of Enhanced Star Formation in the Spiral Galaxy NGC 4321. *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. February 1988.
570. G. Contopoulos and A. Giorgilli: Bifurcations and Complex Instability in a 4-Dimensional Symplectic Mapping. February 1988.
571. J. Surdej et al.: Search for Gravitational Lensing from a Survey of Highly Luminous Quasars. *P.A.S.P.* February 1988.
572. R. Buonanno et al.: CCD Photometry in the Metal Poor Globular Cluster NGC 7099 (M30). *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. February 1988.

From the Editors

In accordance with the new management of ESO, it has been decided that the *ESO Messenger* shall above all be a vehicle of communication between ESO and the user community. It is therefore the intention to bring the fullest possible information about new developments at ESO, technical and scientific, as well as those of a more administrative nature. In a similar spirit, we herewith invite contributions from users, in the form of articles and also as shorter Letters to the Editor.

Tentative Time-table of Council Sessions and Committee Meetings for First Half of 1988

May 2	Users Committee
May 3	Scientific Technical Committee
May 4-5	Finance Committee Oberkochen
May 31-June 1	Observing Programme Committee, Liège
June 6	Committee of Council
June 7	Council
All meetings will take place at ESO in Garching unless stated otherwise.	

SN 1987A: Spectroscopy of a Once-in-a-Lifetime Event

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When Supernova 1987A in the Large Magellanic Cloud was discovered by Ian Shelton at Las Campanas Observatory in Chile on February 24, 1987, it immediately became apparent that this would turn out to be one of the most important astronomical events in this century. The timing of the supernova could not have been better – although the light from the site of the stellar collapse had to travel a distance of as much as 170,000 light-years before reaching our planet Earth, it arrived precisely when state-of-the-art photoelectrical detectors had become available at modern telescopes situated at the best observing sites all over the world, together with highly sophisticated spaceborn instruments working in the X-ray and ultraviolet regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. Even elementary particle physicists were well-prepared (except for some problems with their clocks) to catch two dozens of the neutrinos emitted by the dying star thereby providing for the first time the precise date of the collapse. (Only gravitational wave astronomy has still to wait to be born: all potential detectors had been switched off or did not work properly.)

To render the combination of privileges for earthbound observers even more impressive, SN 1987A is just at the optimum distance for convenient measurements in the optical window: a galactic supernova would be too bright for professional astronomical instruments such as photometers and spec-

trometers which are especially designed to achieve the highest possible sensitivity for extremely faint radiation sources, and which therefore are in great danger to be destroyed when exposed to a naked-eye object. This problem has been discussed in greater detail in two papers by Michael Rosa and O.-G. Richter (*Observatory* **104**, p. 90 [1984]) and by Theodor Schmidt-Kaler (same volume, p. 234). Furthermore, a nearby supernova could not tell us very precisely its distance due to the strongly varying amount of dust in the galactic plane.

If SN 1987A were a distant supernova such as they are detected almost once per month, nobody would have ob-

tained enough observing time at large telescopes in order to study and monitor it in sufficient detail for a long time. And again, the distance to a supernova beyond our Local Group of galaxies would be quite uncertain as compared to the well-defined and well-known distance to the LMC.

So it is not surprising that starting on February 25 literally every telescope in the southern hemisphere was directed towards the newly-born supernova (unfortunately enough, no spectrum exists from the night before when Ian Shelton made his discovery). This was of course also the case at the European Southern Observatory in Chile at La Silla where

The Proceedings of the ST-ECF Workshop on

Astronomy from Large Databases – Scientific Objectives and Methodological Approaches

which was held in Garching from 12 to 14 October 1987, have now been published. The 511-page volume, edited by F. Murtagh and A. Heck, is available at a price of DM 50.– (prepayment required).

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