

hemisphere. It then moved to the north where it peaked around 1994. In July 1998, as can be seen on the Figure, the cloud activity had grown again in the south. The causes of these changes are unknown.

6. Conclusions

This first Conference centred on Astrophysics with AO was a success, and the common wish at the end was to have such a Conference on "Astronomy

with Adaptive Optics" every 1.5 years.

The Adaptive Optics systems expected to be routinely operating in the near future are growing in number. The observers are getting more and more familiar and proficient with their "new tool" and define new strategies to observe efficiently. We can expect a large growth of striking results in the coming years as well as a continuation of the technology maturation process. This continues to motivate ESO's effort to equip the VLT with several AO systems in the near future.

Moreover, these efforts pave the way to the road to the Giant Optical Telescopes of the next century.

The paper version of the Proceedings can be obtained by writing to Christina Stoffer at ESO, cstoffer@eso.org. On-line version of the papers is available at <http://www.eso.org/gen-fac/meetings/eso-osa98>

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Award for the ESO VLT Project

Naturally, 'First Light' for the first of the VLT Unit Telescopes has not gone unnoticed by the astronomical community. However, also newspapers, magazines, radio and TV have reported widely about this new facility and about the first, fascinating pictures that were obtained with UT1. Another sign of the world-wide attention that the VLT has caught was the fact that the well-known US magazine Popular Science chose the project for one of the coveted "The Best of What's New Awards" for 1998, given to the 100 most important technology developments in the course of the year. The construction of the VLT was recognised as an "outstanding achievement" within the "Aviation and Space" category.

The Award was formally handed over to ESO, represented by Prof. Massimo Tarenghi, during a luncheon at the Tavern on the Green in New York on November 13. On the same occasion, about 500 invited guests from industry, the media and



M. Tarenghi, posing for the official photo at the ESO Stand.



Popular Science editor Cecilia Wessner speaking at the award ceremony.

government agencies had the opportunity to inform themselves about the individual prize winners through project and product presentations by means of small exhibitions. Here, ESO found itself in the company of a great variety of organisations and enterprises working in different high-tech areas, ranging from NASA (International Space Station and the Mars rover "Sojourner"), Airbus Industrie (A-340-500) and various experimental aircraft manufacturers, through IBM (copper-based computer chips), Apple Computer (iMac), and Iridium Satellite telephones to the latest products in medicine and medical research.

Given the audience and the extremely high technological level of the projects and innovations presented, this was undoubtedly a good occasion for ESO to inform US media and the technologically interested public about the VLT as major European science project.

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