

TRANSACTIONS OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL UNION  
VOLUME XXVIII B

PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
TWENTY EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
BEIJING 2012

*COVER ILLUSTRATION*

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*Chief Editor*

THIERRY MONTMERLE, IAU General Secretary  
*Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris,  
98bis, Bd Arago, 75014 Paris, France  
montmerle@iap.fr*

*Editor*

PIERO BENVENUTI, IAU Assistant General Secretary  
*University of Padua, Dept of Physics and Astronomy,  
Vicolo dell'Osservatorio, 3, 35122 Padova, Italy  
piero.benvenuti@unipd.it*

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**THIERRY MONTMERLE**

*Editor-in-Chief*



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One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
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PRESIDENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL UNION

Présidents de l'Union Astronomique Internationale



Robert Williams  
2009–2012



Norio Kaifu  
2012–2015

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## Preface

Traditionally, the IAU *Transactions B* series report the Proceedings of General Assemblies, for their non-scientific, administrative activities. These activities are essential to the life of the IAU: business sessions, admission of new members (countries and individuals), finances, committees, Division and Commission reports, resolutions, etc.

But each General Assembly (GA) has its own specificity that everyone present will remember. At the 2006 GA in Prague, there were famous Resolution on the definition of planets and dwarf planets (B5), and the status of Pluto (B6), that still remains controversial to a very vocal minority. The 2009 GA in Rio de Janeiro took place in the middle of the IAU-UNESCO International Year of Astronomy (nicknamed “IYA2009”), which drew the attention of hundreds of millions across the globe. It was also the place where the IAU “Strategic Plan”, with the creation of the Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) as its backbone, was approved (Resolutions A1 and B1) and launched, and with the adoption of a Resolution to defend “the right to starlight” (B5).

From that point of view, the business meetings highlights of the 2012 GA in Beijing are different, but nonetheless crucial for the future of the Union: a Resolution was voted almost unanimously to approve a new Divisional structure for the IAU, reducing their number from 12 to 9, and, more importantly, giving a clearer image of the spectrum of activities of the IAU, including the creation of a new Division “Education, Outreach and Heritage”, also in contact with the public. This vote opens the door to an even deeper reform for Commissions and Working Groups, to take place in the present triennium (2012-2015).

Another highlight has been the welcome address by Mr. Xi Jinping, Vice-President of the People’s Republic of China at the time, and who is now President of his country.

The Executive Committee report is very rich in achievements over the past triennium, in particular the consolidation and aftermath of the IYA2009, and the first steps of the OAD and the selection of its location in Cape Town (South Africa). In parallel, a new position of Public Outreach Coordinator, co-funded by the IAU and several other institutes, has been created in Tokyo: the IAU goes global !

This *Transactions B* volume is the third and last companion volume published by Cambridge University Press related to the Beijing General Assembly. The other volumes are the *Transactions A* volume, also called *Reports of Astronomy*, edited by my predecessor Ian Corbett (2012), which contains the triennial reports (2009-2012) of Divisions and Commissions, and *Highlights of Astronomy*, vol.16, edited by myself (2015), which contain the papers presented at the Special Sessions and Joint Discussions of the GA.

The eight Symposia that took place during the GA (IAU Symposia 288 to 295) are published separately by Cambridge University Press.

To finish, a sincere word of thanks to our Chinese colleagues, who organized an exceptionally rich General Assembly, and who demonstrated that the millenary Chinese tradition of astronomy is still very much alive today, with a vibrant and young community, and exciting telescopes and instrumental developments on the ground and in space.

*Thierry Montmerle*  
*General Secretary*