

## FOREWORD

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From 26th to 30th of September 2005 San Lorenzo de El Escorial, a small town about 50 km northwest of Madrid, hosted the symposium "The X-ray Universe 2005" which was organized by the XMM-Newton Science Operations Centre at the European Space Astronomy Centre (ESAC).

The main focus of the meeting was on high energy astrophysics reflecting the fascinating results from orbital observatories. The XMM-Newton and Chandra space observatories have been operating for about half a decade and are continuing to provide superb data which is changing our view of almost every aspect of the Universe at high energies. The launch of Suzaku (former Astro E-2) provides enhanced capabilities for medium resolution spectroscopy, and Swift recently joined HETE-2 in making detailed studies of gamma-ray bursts. Significant new insights are emerging from INTEGRAL's view of the sky at hard X-ray and gamma-ray energies. With this backdrop the "The X-ray Universe 2005" symposium encompassed a broad range of high energy astrophysics topics providing a showcase for results and discoveries from current missions and a forum for the discussion of astrophysical themes with a high-energy connection.

About 360 scientists from 25 countries attended the symposium and enjoyed very much their stay in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, which is located at the foot of the Sierra de Guadarrama mountain range. The town's beautiful historic centre is declared an Artistic Historical Monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The symposium itself took place in the Euroforum Conference Center, which is located in the "Casa de Familias" of the Infantes Carlos Maria de Isidro and Francisco de Paula, a historic building erected towards the end of the 18th century. Its foyer provided a wonderful setting for the breaks and scientific discussions.

When the SOC announced the symposium the response was so overwhelming that it was decided to have parallel sessions. The final programme consisted of 17 invited

talks, organized in plenary sessions, and 120 contributed talks, organized in three parallel sessions in each afternoon, supplemented by some 230 excellent posters.

The meeting was accompanied by three social events: the welcome in the foyer of the historic "Casa de Familias" on Sunday evening, a flamenco performance "Convivencia" in the historic theatre of the monastery of El Escorial on Wednesday evening and the conference dinner on Thursday night. All three events were extremely well attended and the atmosphere was always very good.

The many positive remarks about the meeting, which we received during as well as after the symposium, were very encouraging. The success of the meeting was based on four pillars: the scientific organising committee chaired by M. Watson, the local organizing committee chaired by M. Ehle, the conference Bureau in the European Space Technology Centre (ESTEC) lead by Mrs. Y. Spaans and some invisible co-workers from the European Space Astronomy Centre. They did an excellent job in running the symposium in a very smooth and pleasant way. We are all very grateful to all of them. The symposium would not have been possible without the sponsorship of the European Space Agency (ESA) and of the XMM-Newton Project. I want to take the opportunity to thank F. Jansen, the XMM-Newton Mission Manager, for this.

Finally a word should be said on the proceedings. As our knowledge in high energy astrophysics is very rapidly progressing we found a very quick publication mandatory. This we could only reach through a very tough deadline for submitting the contributions only four weeks after the symposium and by waiving any editing work or referee system, i.e. each contribution is reproduced as it was sent by the author. We thank all authors for their efficient cooperation.