ESO, the European Southern Observatory, was created in 1962 to "... establish and operate an astronomical observatory in the southern hemisphere, equipped with powerful instruments, with the aim of furthering and organising collaboration in astronomy..." It is supported by nine countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, soon to be joined by the United Kingdom. ESO operates at two sites in the Atacama desert region of Chile. The new Very Large Telescope (VLT), the largest in the world, is located on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain approximately 130 km south of Antofagasta, in the driest part of the Atacama desert where the conditions are excellent for astronomical observations. The VLT consists of four 8.2-metre diameter telescopes. These telescopes can be used separately, or in combination as a giant interferometer (VLTI). At La Silla, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile at 2,400 m altitude, ESO operates several optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m and a submillimetre radio telescope (SEST). Over 1300 proposals are made each year for the use of the ESO telescopes. The ESO headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, Germany. This is the scientific, technical and administrative centre of ESO where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the Paranal and La Silla observatories with the most advanced instruments. There are also extensive astronomical data facilities. ESO employs about 320 international staff members, Fellows and Associates in Europe and Chile, and about 160 local staff members in Chile.

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- 1467. T.-S. Kim, R.F. Carswell, S. Cristiani, S. D'Odorico, E. Giallongo: The Physical Properties of the Ly α Forest at z > 1.5. *MNRAS*.
- 1468. L. Vanzi, L.K. Hunt, T.X. Thuan: Near-infrared properties of Blue Compact Dwarf Galaxies: the link between solar and low metallicity. A&A.

A Note from the New Editor

It is a pleasure to serve as editor of *The Messenger*, and to work with my colleague Kurt Kjär, the technical editor, in this endeavour. This task is made easier by the fact that *The Messenger* has been developed to such high standards over the years, and for this I am most grateful to my predecessors, in particular Marie-Hélène Ulrich who has served in this position for the last eight years.

PETER SHAVER

Contents

Catherine Cesarsky: United Kingdom Becomes Tenth Member of ESO 1
TELESCOPES AND INSTRUMENTATION
G. Monnet: Status of VLT 2nd Generation Instrumentation2R. Hanuschik and D. Silva: VLT Quality Control and Trending Services4Recent NAOS-CONICA Images9L. Germany: News from La Silla10
REPORTS FROM OBSERVERS
 G. Hasinger, J. Bergeron, V. Mainieri, P. Rosati, G. Szokoly and the CDFS Team: Understanding the sources of the X-ray background: VLT identifications in the <i>Chandra/XMM-Newton</i> Deep Field South
of Fornax
L. Pentericci, H.W. Rix, X. Fan, M. Strauss: The VLT and the most distant quasars
Daniel Harbeck, Eva K. Grebel, Graeme H. Smith: Evidence for external enrichment processes in the globular cluster 47 Tuc?
OTHER ASTRONOMICAL NEWS
Steve Warren: The UKIRT Infrared Deep Sky Survey becomes an ESO public survey
Young Stars in Old Galaxies – a Cosmic Hide and Seek Game
C. Madsen: ESO in the European Parliament
ANNOUNCEMENTS
The Very Large Interferometer: Challenges for the Future (A Jenam 2002 Workshop to be held at Porto, Portugal, on September 4–7) 46 Personnel Movements 46 ESO Fellowship Programme 2002/2003 47 List of Scientific Preprints (March–June 2001) 47 A Note from the New Editor 48