of an obstacle to effective research than the practical aspects of how to move information around. These issues are addressed by Fionn Murtagh's article in this edition of *The Messenger*.

7. Acknowledgements

Report on ALD-II, Astronomy from Large Databases II

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The colloquium on "Astronomy from Large Databases II" was held from September 14–16, 1992. It was a follow-up to a meeting with the same title ("Astronomy from Large Databases: Scientific Objectives and Methodological Approaches") held in Garching in 1987. The proceedings of both meetings were published by ESO.

If one considers the two terms of the title, "astronomy" and "large databases", then the aim of the conference was the directed link between these. Hence the objective was not so much to cater for new astronomical results – there are many appropriate fora for this – nor to deal thoroughly with database technicalities. Rather the aim was to share experiences, and to focus interests, along the interface between these areas.

The meeting was structured so as to prioritize discussion. Twenty-odd invited talks were complemented by around 70 posters which were on display throughout. A number of talks covered database and archive usage on the part of extant projects (IUE, HST, ROSAT, HIPPARCOS, COBE, etc.). Reference was made to the myriad databases constituting a back-drop to such large projects. Panchromatic astronomy is certainly the order of the day. Subsequent talks included coverage of: classification-oriented front-ends for databases; current research and perspectives in the information retrieval community; data security issues; the astronomer's research environment; and other topics. Poster papers covered such themes as: statistical and pattern recognition studies; visualization; quality control of data; thesauri; sky survey databases; and many descriptions of functionality offered by particular projects.

A feature of note, regarding this conference, was the fact that the role of libraries (paradigmatic large databases, of course, even if not always in electronic form) in astronomy was addressed. A discussion panel involving librarians from ESO, AAO and others, as well as the President of IAU Commission 5 (Data and Documentation), focused further on this topic. What is aimed at is nothing less than the increasingly better integration of data and information that the astronomer has to deal with, whether bibliographic, symbolic, numeric, image, or whatever. Following this conference, one no longer has any right to consider astronomical databases separately from the role played by astronomical libraries.

Conferences such as this are of great help in combating "photonic provincialism" (D. Wells). The lowering of boundaries, and the bridging of what were until recently distinct areas, can only be for the betterment of our science.

The New MIDAS Release: 92NOV

ESO Image Processing Group

The new 92NOV release of MIDAS is now available for general distribution. The one-year release cycle introduced last year has made it possible to extend the validation tests significantly. The current release is actually based on the development version of MIDAS frozen in August. This frozen version is first going through a one month α-test inside ESO, after which a β-test version is sent out to 5–10 test sites. The final release version is made in the course of November, taking into account the different test reports. We hope that this rigorous test procedure and full configuration control of the source code will provide a stable and reliable system for the users.

The introduction of source code control and other CASE tools for code production in MIDAS not only improves the development cycle but also provides interesting statistics as a side effect. The number of source code lines is shown in Table 1 for different types of files, where FORTRAN and C correspond to actual programme code, while prg refers to high-level MIDAS procedures. Documentation is mostly in the form of L^{A}T$_E$X or ASCII help files. In a few cases, the size has decreased due to revisions and rearrangements of old code. For the first time, the new release contains more C than FORTRAN code. The change is caused by a significant