

## Foreword

Astronomy is a science which has preserved even to our days the fascination of adventure, being a rare one among the sciences affording the possibility even to amateurs of making the greatest discoveries. Let us remember William Herschel, an organist in the English town Bath, who discovered with the telescope of his own making the planet Uranus, the first among the planets not known to the ancients. Let us remember also the numerous amateurs, discoverers of the new comets. The great interest in astronomy is roused also by the impact of its achievements on the development of other sciences, resulting in the emergence of astrophysics, astrochemistry, astrobiology... Moreover, we are witnessing its explosive and revolutionary progress. The spacecraft sent from the Earth have visited all of the planets of the solar system except Pluto, while new cosmic missions are continuously being expedited. It is therefore no wonder that the number of amateurs in the astronomical societies by far surpasses that of the professionals.

Our country is taking active part in the present-day astronomical researches and scientific explorations at large, thus contributing to the development of astronomy as an universal science, whose results are devoted to the whole humanity. In order to bring closer the results of the astronomical researches to the astronomers, students, colleagues from other sciences, amateurs and all those interested in astronomy and its achievements, I started in 1989 a course of lec-

tures entitled "Current Researches in Astronomy", which in time outgrew into regular praxis, important for the scientific atmosphere at this Observatory and for the training of the young researchers. As envisaged by me, all the authors were to put in writing their lectures, allowing thereby the forming of collections of papers like the present one, aimed at securing a steady filling out of the gap in literature, thus favouring better informing of the general public and the scientific upbringing of the young. However, I managed to procure printing-ready texts from some of the lecturers only. Even though the greater part of the contributions appearing in this volume have been presented at the Observatory in the framework of the course of lectures referred to above, there are texts written specially for this collection or were included in it as being convenient by their conception.

I hope that by the present collection of papers, meant not only for the narrow circle of professionals, but for all those interested in the astronomical researches, primarily in our country, a wide gap in our astronomical literature is filled out. It is important to students as they are offered the possibility of getting acquainted with the specific problems worked on by individual scientists, along with their results. It is of importance to scientists too as they are therewith enabled to bring closer their results to those who might learn by them and to all those interested in the progress and achievements of our astronomy.

"It is a big sin to know some truth and not communicate it to fellow-man, letting him straying in ignorance" wrote George Stanojević (1858 – 1921), our first astrophysicist, the second Director of the Belgrade Observatory and a science popularizer in our milieu. Having this in mind I hope that the present collection of papers will prompt our researchers to write about their results for those who might be attracted by them and that this volume will not be the first and the only of the kind.

*Milan S. Dimitrijević*