

Editorial

Robotic Astronomy

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The number of automatic astronomical facilities worldwide continues to grow, and the level of robotisation, autonomy, and networking is increasing as well. This has a strong impact in many astrophysical fields, like the search for extrasolar planets, the monitoring of variable stars in our Galaxy, the study of active galactic nuclei, the detection and monitoring of supernovae, and the immediate followup of high-energy transients such as gamma-ray bursts.

Most manuscripts published in this special issue are the fruit of the I Workshop on Robotic Autonomous Observatories held in Málaga (Spain) on May 18–21, 2009. The main focus of the workshop dealt with the new and existing astronomical facilities whose goal is to observe a wide variety of astrophysical targets with no (or very little) human interaction. The workshop became an international forum for researchers to summarise the most recent developments and ideas in the field, with a special emphasis given to the technical and observational results obtained within the last five years.

Torremolinos (Málaga) was the perfect place for hosting the workshop with pleasant early Summer temperatures and the possibility of swimming in the Mediterranean sea at any time, as the conference room at Hotel Camino Real was only 200 m away. Moreover, the lack of Internet access in the conference room was a real advantage (rather than a disadvantage as initially thought), and the participants could really concentrate and actively participate in the talks, without having the possibility of checking emails and so on (they had to leave the conference room if they wanted to do so). And twelve kilometres away, the 3,000-year-old Málaga Town, which is bidding for the title of 2016 European Capital of Culture, was the perfect companion, with its magnificent view from the Gibralfaro castle surroundings during the conference dinner.

The workshop was organized by both the Instituto de Astrofísica de Andalucía of the Spanish Research Council (IAA-CSIC) and the Department of System Engineering and Automatics at Universidad de Málaga (UMA) with support from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology (through Project AYA2009-06301-E). We want to thank the members of the Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC): C. Akerlof, M. Boer, A. J. Castro-Tirado (chair), A. García-Cerezo (cochair), L. Hanlon, R. Hudec, T. Kotani, L. Mankiewicz, F. M. Sánchez-Moreno, and F. Zerbi for arranging an excellent scientific programme, and we express our gratitude to the members of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC): S. Castillo, J. Gorosabel, S. Guziy, M. Jelínek, P. Kubánek, V. Muñoz-Fernández, C. Pérez del Pulgar, M. Pérez-Ramírez, and T. J. Mateo-Sanguino. Together with the Torremolinos and Málaga Town Halls and the Patronato de Turismo de la Costa del Sol, they made of the staying of the 80 participants in Málaga an unforgettable experience.

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