VII national conference on planetary science

S. Felice Circeo, September 5-9, 2006

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Angioletta Coradini (INAF - IFSI, Rome),
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Simonetta Di Pippo (ASI, Rome),
Enrico Flamini (ASI, Rome),
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Angioletta Coradini (INAF - IFSI, Rome),
Cristina Baldetti (INAF - IFSI, Rome),
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Sponsorship

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Galileo Avionica

FOREWORD

The seventh National Conference on Planetary Science has been held between the 5th and the 9th of September in San Felice Circeo, a small village near Rome. The tradition of conferences in planetary science was born thanks to an effort made by a few colleagues, among wich it shall be mentioned Alessandro Manara of the Brera Observatory, Enzo Zappal of the Pino Torinese Observatory, Paolo Paolicchi and Paolo Farinella from Pisa, Carlo Blanco of the Catania Observatory, Andrea Carusi and Giovanni Valsecchi of the IASF in Rome. The inspiring principle was to have the possibility to discuss quietly with colleagues on the recent achievements as well as to plan future joint activities. The community - at that time- was quite limited and young, but very active and rich in hopes and vision. In the last years, thanks to the effort made, the community has enlarged both in numerical terms and in terms of activity. Now to the Planetary Science conference we do not see only astrophysicists, but instead we have noticed the attendance of scientists coming from different communities, such as geologists, chemists and biologists. These contributions are extremely important when the planetary data have to be interpreted. The new data, coming from the missions that are presently flying, both ESA and NASA, and in which the Italian community has played an important role, need in order to be interpreted a coordinated interdisciplinary contribution.
During the conference the way in which the community has scientifically improved has been apparent. Many young researchers presented new data and proposed new interpretation of them. The opening was devoted to the really new data coming from the mission Venus Express, but also the Cassini and Mars Express data were discussed. In this book the reader will find only a subset of the presentations and discussions, however it is a very good synthesis of the main topics that were treated during the conference.

Another important aspect of the conference was devoted to the future of planetary science, that is represented in ESA by the participation to the programs Cosmic Vision and Aurora; co-operation with NASA through bilateral programs was also foreseen, and the main participation, such as the contributions to the missions Dawn (to Vesta and Ceres asteroids) and Juno (devoted to the study of Jupiter interior and atmosphere) were presented. The ESA and ASI programmes were also presented. A discussion took place on the future lunar exploration to which ASI intends to contribute.

The Planetary Conferences are held each 18 months approximately, typically in January in a mountain location and in September - in a sea side location. The mountain conference is more devoted to the theoretical work, while the September one is more devoted to space activity. We are sure that the next conference will show that the planetary science community has grown also in theoretical and data analysis fields.

Angioletta Coradini