

Introduction to Stellar Astrophysics: Volume 1, Basic Stellar Observations and Data

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Books

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High Speed Astronomical Photometry
by Brian Warner *Cambridge University Press, 1988; xi + 291pp. Hardcover, £35.00 / US\$ 59.50; ISBN 0-521-35150-2*

We welcome this excellent book from a world-renowned astronomer on a subject in which he pioneered in the late sixties and continues to contribute valuable research. Brian Warner admits to flirting with photometry in 1961 at the Radcliffe Observatory and returning to the safety of the photographic darkroom. With meticulous attention to detail and with full credits to his colleagues, he now has produced both a historical account of high-speed photometry and a vital introductory text on all aspects of the subject. In ten chapters, Warner covers practical photometric techniques with emphasis on most of its pitfalls, lunar and planetary occultations, flare stars, cataclysmic variable stars, optical pulsars, pulsating degenerate and non-degenerate stars, and extragalactic sources. There are 32 pages of literature references, which obviously require access to an astronomical library, and a useful index which will guide the reader through a fascinating mass of subject matter. Photoelectric photometry with ground-based telescopes has posed a difficult, and sometimes horrendous, practical problem to the astronomer due to atmospheric turbulence, scintillation etc. Warner quotes, "Observation, not age, brings wisdom" (Publius Syrus), to which the reviewer would add, but experience is the basis of good observation. It is Warner's experience that the reader should heed. The text is highly recommended to all students of astronomy. It should particularly be digested by all potential star photographers and adherents of novel stellar models and accretion disc theories. Historically, the book is published at a good time when the Hubble Space Telescope will soon prove or disprove, and certainly improve, most of our knowledge on stellar pulsations, accretion discs and flares.

January 1990

A. David Andrews

Satellite Orbits in an Atmosphere - Theory & Applications
by Desmond King-Hele

Blackie & Son Ltd., 1987; xi + 291pp. Hardcover, £49.00; ISBN 2-216-92252-6

As the title suggests, this book is a mixture of the theory behind current models of planetary atmospheres and their effect on the motion of satellites with orbits low enough to be influenced by air resistance. It will be of particular interest to those using satellites to investigate earth resources and micro-

gravity in low Earth orbit or probes making close fly-bys of planets with atmospheres. The theory is built up gradually so that anyone with university level physics will have no difficulty following the calculations. Sections are devoted to various factors which determine the extent of atmospheric resistance, such as day-to-night variation, planetary oblateness and atmospheric rotation. Applicability to actual orbits is always kept in mind, with approximations being made which are appropriate to the air density regimes encountered in the atmosphere of the Earth and other planets. The main focus is on the Earth, with reference to experience gained with past Earth satellites and some of the most widely used current models of the Earth potential and air density. There is also a section devoted to Mars and Venus, with rescaling of solar flux, gravity, air density etc. from terrestrial values.

This book is a handy reference for workers in the area of satellite control or for anyone interested in obtaining an insight into the processes which influence a satellite's movement when air resistance plays a role.

December 1990

Hugh Deasy

Introduction to Stellar Astrophysics. Vol. I. basic stellar observations and data

by Erika Böhm-Vitense
Cambridge University Press, 1989; x + 244pp. Hardcover, £30.00/US\$59.5. Paperback, £11.95/US\$22.95; ISBN 0-521-34402-6

This is the first of a set of three volumes and is primarily intended for first-year astronomy undergraduates; however, amateur astronomers would also find the book particularly useful. The student is introduced to fundamentals such as the positions and distances of stars, the colour-magnitude diagram, masses and radii, spectral classification, etc. Other topics include supernovae, pulsating stars and the interstellar medium. I believe this book would be a great benefit to any student beginning an astronomy course.

September 1990

J.G. Doyle

Molecular Astrophysics

edited by T.W. Hartquist
Cambridge University Press, 1990; xv + 484pp. Hardcover, £50.00/US\$79.50; ISBN 0-521-32331-4

This volume honours the major contributions made by Alex Dalgarno to the development of molecular astrophysics. The twenty-seven review articles cover a diverse range of topics, reflecting the

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