

J.O. Stenflo and K.N. Nagendra (eds.), *Solar Polarization*, Proceedings of an International Workshop held in St. Petersburg, Russia, 8–12 May, 1995, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht / Boston / London, 432 + xi pp., 1996, hardbound Dfl. 350,00/\$ 245.00/£ 155.00, ISBN 0–7923–1811–1;

These are the proceedings of a high-level workshop. The group picture (of unusual clarity) demonstrates that the *crème de la crème* of solar polarimetrists was assembled in St. Petersburg in a workshop slated towards serious business. The selection was perhaps too European or even too Swiss — Russia representing all of the former Soviet Union, David Rees Australia, and Andy Skumanich the U.S, against six (ex-)Zürichers — but it is indicative of the current state of solar polarimetry. An intricate field, not for the fast-track astrophysicist out on quick results but rather for those who really want to know how things actually come about.

These proceedings have lasting value. The polarization literature is still scattered. Stenflo's recent book¹ and Egidio Landi degl'Innocenti's yet-to-appear book remedy the lack of authoritative sources, but the ongoing developments in this pioneering field do require dissemination and analysis in proceedings like these, intended for specialists but not so hurried that a non-specialist cannot get the gist. There are no four-page-limited quickie advertisements here that spoil so many other proceedings volumes. Stenflo's twenty-page introduction, *Scattering physics*, is a useful summary of his textbook and Landi

¹Stenflo, J.-O., 1994, *Solar Magnetic Fields, Polarized Radiation Diagnostics*, Kluwer, Dordrecht

Degl'Innocenti is, deservedly, six times author or co-author with characteristic care and carefulness.

The book is not structured into sections or sessions. The ordering is roughly from theory along numerical techniques and applications to observational techniques. This order is a significant: the book is best in hard-core polarized radiative transfer physics, in its first 200 pages. I find it fitting that V.V. Ivanov, though not an author, figures prominently in the picture — rather like a physics headmaster with his pupils. There is no subject index, but indices are not really needed in books as these that cater less to browsing than to detailed study.

The book is well produced. Unfortunately, it is much too expensive for graduate students, and probably for many libraries as well. Most researchers will have to rely on the original *Solar Physics* edition (volume 164 Nos. 1–2) instead.

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