



Circumstellar Habitable Zones. Proceedings of the First International Conference. Edited by Laurance R. Doyle (1996). Travis House Publications. Menlo Park, CA, USA. 526 pages. ISBN 0-9650896-0-6

This book presents papers contributed by participants at the First International Conference on Circumstellar Habitable Zones, which was staged by L. R. Doyle with NASA funding at the NASA Ames Research Center, CA, USA, in January 1994. The introduction was provided by the late Carl Sagan (1934-1996), who also delivered the speech at the after-conference banquet.

In the Forward, Doyle (1996, p. xi) explained: *“The idea of having a conference on circumstellar habitable zones came from noticing some mistakes in the technical literature that were a simple result of not being aware of the work in other fields. Consequently, this conference was held with the express purpose of bringing together planetary scientists, astrophysicists, biologists, geologists, chemists, and those of several other disciplines to educate each other and form collaborations in the appreciation and discovery of what makes a nice place to live. As a result, the conference was extremely productive – discussions continued long after the sessions concluded . . .”*

This was the first comprehensive volume to address the large-scale ecology and long-range habitability of our planet and its setting in the Solar System. It brought together 62 world-class experts in fields as diverse as planetary atmospheres, stellar evolution, microbiology, and many additional disciplines to examine the multitude of factors that define our planetary home and the evolving processes that went into making it habitable. With over 1,000 references, it was intended to serve as a key resource for anyone interested in understanding the factors that made and still make our planet and Sun unique in detail, but likely not alone in providing a place of habitation among the stars. The contributions explored fast-moving fields, and perspectives have evolved in many ways since its publication. The book must remain of historical importance, however, because it documents the most significant meeting on the topic of circumstellar habitable zones that had been held at that date. It provides a unique insight into state-of-the-art planetary habitability science in the mid-1990s. Doyle *et al.* (1998) provided an overview. The period will be of key interest to future historians of science because it overlapped with the first identification of planetary bodies around other stars. Planets of comparable size to the Earth had been reported around the pulsar PSR 1257 + 12 (Wolszcan & Frail, 1992) and the discovery of the first planet, a hot Jupiter, around the Sun-like star 51 Pegasi (Mayor & Queloz, 1995).

References.

Doyle, L. R. (1996). Forward. In L. R. Doyle (Ed.). *Circumstellar Habitable Zones. Proceedings of the First International Conference* pp. xi-xii. Menlo Park, CA, U.S.A.: Travis House Publications.

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Wolszcan, A. and Frail, D. A. (1992). A planetary system around the millisecond pulsar PSR 1257 + 12. *Nature* **355**: 145-147.