FIFTEEN YEARS OF "SONDERFORSCHUNGSBEREICH" IN HEIDELBERG: RESEARCH ON CIRCUMSTEellar MATTER

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At the end of this year, the Sonderforschungsbereich (Special Collaborative Programme) no. 132 on "Theoretical and Observational Stellar Astronomy" in Heidelberg will terminate after fifteen years. Although 15 years are only 2 1/2 per cent of the age of the University of Heidelberg, which is celebrating its 600th anniversary this year, they are nevertheless a long and important time for astronomical research in Heidelberg. On the occasion of the termination of the Sonderforschungsbereich, we are now given the opportunity to present an essential part of its research, namely that on circumstellar matter, at an international conference, and we are grateful to the International Astronomical Union that this could be realized, and that we can welcome here so many participants to this Symposium. As the Speaker of our Sonderforschungsbereich I would like to briefly introduce to you the general concept of the institution of an SFB and give an overview over its structure and research activities.

The concept of support of research in the frame of a Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) was proposed at the end of the 1960s by the Wissenschaftsrat, our National Science Council. In these new institutions the federal government and the state governments jointly give funds to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the West German Science Foundation, which in turn financially supports the SFBs in addition to its various other programs for funding research.

In 1968, there were 18 SFBs with a total funding of 5 million DM, this increased to 96 SFBs with 125 million DM in 1972, the year our SFB was first financed, and at present there are 163 SFBs supported by 317 million DM altogether.

An SFB is to be approved by the university and by the DFG, and is equivalent to other institutions of the university, e.g. institutes. The host university, in establishing an SFB, commits itself to making available a sufficient base of staff and financial resources ("Grundausstattung") and is applicant and recipient of the DFG support. The scientists of the SFB decide on the scientific course and the day-to-day affairs. An important aspect of an SFB is the support by the DFG for a longer period of time, subject to refereeing in three years' intervals. The maximum duration of support is 15 years.

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