

FOREWORD

The understanding of the origin and evolution of the solar system is one of the major scientific goals of space research. The important data in this respect are the physical and chemical properties of the solar system at the time of its formation. Bodies of the size of the Moon and planets have necessarily undergone substantial evolution in the last 4.5 billion years and these evolutionary processes have altered much of the initial record of their formation. However, smaller bodies—asteroids, comets, and meteorites—probably contain a less altered record of the early history of the solar system. The rapid advances in space technology have cleared the way for man to consider flights to and rendezvous with the asteroids during this century. The development of the scientific rationale for investigations of the minor planets is a precursor requirement in the planning of specific space missions. The publication of this book is a step to the asteroids.

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