



Preface

The European space Agency (ESA) undertook a bold experiment with the Mars Express mission: to develop rapidly a low cost platform for planetary exploration. The myriad scientific achievements of this mission prove the success of the experiment. ESA took a second bold step by adapting the Mars platform for the Venus Express mission, and doing so rapidly and most cost-effectively. While the differences in Venus and Mars necessitated several changes in instrumentation, there are many objectives that remain the same at the two planets. When we issued a call to the MEX and VEX communities for a volume of brief articles covering the latest results from these two missions, the response from those examining the interaction of the solar wind and energetic particles with the planets was most swift. The authors were asked to keep their presentations to four published pages. The guest editor in turn attempted to shepherd these papers through the reviewing process quickly. In those instances where the editor had a conflict of interest, R. J. Strangeway assumed the duties of the editor.

The articles that passed review before the press deadline are included therein. They include discussions of the various plasma boundaries at Venus and Mars, the nature of their plasma environments, the discovery of energetic neutral particles, the configuration of the magnetic field near the planets, space weather and the loss of atmosphere. Papers included contain both modeling and observational work and are written by some of the newest members of the community as well as many of the veteran research scientists. We especially thank the referees of these papers who responded promptly to help speed these early results to the readers of Planetary and Space Science.

C.T. Russell
*University of California, Institute of Geophysics, 405
Hilgard Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1567, USA*