

## 30 years SPWs — Time for an Assessment

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Modelers and theoreticians continually need magnetic field data while often forgetting that magnetic fields are not observables. What is observed is the polarization of the light from astrophysical objects. The translation from observables to physical parameters depends (1) on the limitations of the instrument used, (2) on the approximations of the theory used to describe the matter-radiation interaction in magnetized media with light scattering, and (3) on the idealizations used to model the structure of the medium. The prime task of the SPW community is to focus on this translation problem. Since our community is relatively small, there have often been well-meaning suggestions to merge our SPW meetings with more mainstream solar physics symposia to integrate us with the dominating fashions. The SPW organizers have however consistently resisted such efforts, because our rationale would then get abandoned: The rationale to explore a vital interface and foundational area of astrophysics that is not addressed by the mainstream. This is the area where we are needed, now and in the future.