CANDELS: THE COSMOLOGICAL ASSEMBLY NEAR-INFRARED DEEP EXTRAGALACTIC LEGACY SURVEY


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ABSTRACT

The Cosmic Assembly Near-IR Deep Extragalactic Legacy Survey (CANDELS) is designed to document the first third of galactic evolution, from $z \sim 8$ to 1.5. It will image >250,000 distant galaxies using three separate cameras on the Hubble Space Telescope, from the mid-UV to near-IR, and will find and measure Type Ia supernovae beyond $z > 1.5$ to test their accuracy as standard candles for cosmology. Five premier multi-wavelength sky regions are selected, each with extensive ancillary data. The use of five widely separated fields mitigates cosmic variance and yields statistically robust and complete samples of galaxies down to a stellar mass of $10^{9} M_\odot$ to $z \sim 2$, reaching the knee of the UV luminosity function of galaxies to $z \sim 8$. The survey covers approximately 800 square arcminutes and is divided into two parts. The CANDELS/Deep survey (5σ point-source limit $H = 27.7$ mag) covers $\sim 125$ square arcminutes within GOODS-N and GOODS-S. The CANDELS/Wide survey includes GOODS and three additional fields (EGS, COSMOS, and UDS) and covers the full area to a 5σ point-source limit of $H \geq 27.0$ mag. Together with the Hubble Ultra Deep Fields, the strategy creates a three-tiered “wedding cake” approach that has proven efficient for extragalactic surveys. Data from the survey are non-proprietary and are useful for a wide variety of science investigations. In this paper, we describe the basic motivations for the survey, the CANDELS team science goals and the resulting observational requirements, the field selection and geometry, and the observing design. The Hubble data processing and products are described in a separate companion paper (Röckemoer et al. 2011).

Subject headings: Cosmology: observations — Galaxies: high-redshifts —

1 Space Telescope Science Institute
2 University of California, Santa Cruz
3 The Johns Hopkins University
4 Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
5 Durham University
6 University of Nottingham
7 Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics
8 Institute of Astrophysics and Particle Physics, University of Innsbruck
9 University of Michigan
10 Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique
11 Institute for Astronomy, University of Edinburgh
12 University of Massachusetts, Amherst
13 Harvard College Observatory
14 California Institute of Technology
15 UK Astronomy Technology Centre, Edinburgh
16 University of California, Irvine
17 Swinburne University of Technology
18 University of Arizona
19 NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
20 Racah Institute of Physics, The Hebrew University
21 National Optical Astronomy Observatories
22 Department of Physics & Astronomy, University of Victoria
23 CEA-Saclay/DSM/DAPNIA/Service d’Astrophysique
24 University of California, Berkeley
25 Texas A&M Research Foundation
26 INAF, Osservatorio Astronomico di Roma
27 University of Notre Dame
28 Observatories of the Carnegie Institution of Washington
29 Smithsonian Institution Astrophysical Observatory
30 Yale Center for Astronomy & Astrophysics
31 University of Missouri-Kansas City
32 University of California, Riverside
33 Jet Propulsion Laboratory
34 Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics
35 University of Pittsburgh
36 Texas A&M University