

Physics Olympiad 2000 Held in UK

The five high-school competitors from China each took home a gold medal from this year's International Physics Olympiad, which was held this past July in Leicester, UK. The team members from Russia, Hungary, Iran, and the US also all won medals.

The US team's Gregory Price of Arlington, Virginia, got a silver medal; and Anthony Miller of Pennington, New Jersey, returnee Jason Oh of Baltimore, Maryland, Michael Vrabble of Encinitas, California, and Joseph Yu of Irvine, California, each won a bronze.

With 296 students from 63 countries competing, this olympiad was the biggest ever. And the exams were longer than usual—only 15 students won golds, compared to 30 last year, and fewer than a quarter of students received medals, compared to more than half last year.

This year, voluntary contributions from two-thirds of the participating countries covered a quarter of the \$600 000 cost of hosting the olympiad. For the UK, raising the rest was not easy. "We have found it very difficult to obtain sponsors, and extremely difficult to get money from our government," says Cyril Isenberg, one of the organizers of this year's event.

"An obligatory fee should be introduced," adds Waldemar

Gorzowski, president of the International Physics Olympiads organization. "But it should not be too high. We cannot create financial barriers for poor countries," he says, pointing out that training and travel costs alone kept Suriname and the Philippines from returning this year.

At the closing ceremony, Martin Rees, head of the UK olympiad committee, mused that future competitions "could be held via screens and computers: The competitors could stay at home." But that would be a loss, he added: "Real reality can be better than 'virtual' reality."

LYNLEY HARGREAVES



THE BRONZE MEDAL WINNERS attend the olympiad's closing ceremony.

Web Watch

<http://www.aip.org/history/curie/contents.htm>

Marie Curie and the Science of Radioactivity is the latest online exhibition from the Center for History of Physics, a division of the American Institute of Physics. Written by Naomi Pasachoff of Williams College, the exhibition covers Curie's research—which earned her an unprecedented two Nobel prizes—as well as her eventful and, at times, scandalous, life.



<http://biosci.umn.edu/biophys/OLTB/Textbook.html>

Four years ago, University of Minnesota's Victor Bloomfield proposed to the Biophysical Society that it should sponsor an online collaborative biophysics textbook. Edited by Louis DeFelice of Vanderbilt University, the **Biophysics Textbook Online** now offers 20 expert-written chapters on topics such as photosynthesis and sequence analysis.

Biophysics Textbook Online

<http://globalchange.gov>

The US Global Change Research Program and the Global Change Data and Information System—both federal organizations—have teamed up to produce **globalchange.gov**, a clearinghouse for data and research reports on global change. Also available on the Web site are links to agencies that research global change and a question-and-answer feature "Ask Doctor Global Change."



<http://www.scotese.com>

Geologist Christopher R. Scotese, who's based at the University of Texas at Arlington, is the creator of the **Paleomap Project**, a Web site devoted to illustrating the plate tectonic development of Earth's continents and ocean basins. Among the site's many animations is one that shows how continental configuration will change over the next 250 million years.



<http://www.math.toronto.edu/mathnet/interactive.html>

For your edification and entertainment, the University of Toronto's mathematics department offers three kinds of **Interactive Activities and Games**—namely, Games with a Twist, Classic Fallacies, and Keep the Traffic Moving. The traffic game, whose aim is to minimize the time cars spend waiting at red lights, comes with the challenge: "See if you can beat the high scores for the three competition scenarios!"

To suggest topics or sites for Web Watch, please e-mail us at ptwww@aip.org.

Compiled by CHARLES DAY

Jordan as the host country for the planned revamped German synchrotron (see PHYSICS TODAY, June, page 51). Construction is scheduled to begin early next year in Allan, about 25 km northwest of the Jordanian capital Amman. Member countries will each contribute at least \$50 000 annually during the expected three-year construction phase. Yemen, Bahrain, and Tunisia intend to join SESAME, which would bring to 14 the number of member states. But before Germany will actually donate the synchrotron, the SESAME partners must still raise money by the end of this year for upgrading and running it. SESAME members selected the Yerevan Physics Institute in Armenia as a backup site should the Jordanian proposal fail. However, because Armenia is not in the Middle East, that choice would require new approval from Germany, and would compete with other options, such as giving the synchrotron to Poland.

Jordan's education minister. Khaled Toukan, a radiation physicist, is Jordan's new minister of education. He succeeds Izzat Jaradat. Toukan gave up the presidency of Al-Balqa' Applied University to take the post. One of his key tasks will be to improve computer literacy and multimedia-based learning in the country's schools and universi-



TOUKAN