

program manager for pulsed power hydrodynamics, “but we are doing it, very seriously. And folks are basically happy to be able to give input.”

Not surprisingly, LANL’s woes are fueling speculation about the future management of the lab. Before Congress’s summer recess, Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) introduced legislation that would terminate UC’s management contract and ban its renewal. Observers speculate that technology industries in Colorado stand to gain from an expected Texas bid to run the lab. They also point to comments by Senator Joe Barton (R-TX) as politically calculating. For example, at a hearing in July, Barton, who chairs the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said that there is “probably better security at the . . . public library over CDs and videos that are on the Blockbuster top 10 list.”

While the disk debacle and earlier security lapses at LANL may reflect poorly on UC, the university is taking the problems seriously, Gerald Parsky, chair of the UC board of regents, said at the August press conference. “We want to be in a position to say the mistakes of the past have been addressed.” **Toni Feder**

South Korea Hosts Physics Olympiad

Thirty-one competitors earned gold medals at the 35th International Physics Olympiad, which was held in Pohang, South Korea, in July. More than 300 high-school students from 71 countries participated. Alexander Mikhalychev of Belarus earned the top score; the US’s Elena Udovina was cited for the most original solution in the theory part of the competition—she was also the highest scoring female. The team from China was the only one to win all golds, capturing first place for their country; tallied by scores, Iran took second place, followed by South Korea, Belarus, Ukraine, the US, Taiwan, Hungary, Russia, and Romania.

All five US competitors earned medals: Udovina, of Solon, Ohio, and Yi Sun of San Jose, California, took home golds; Anson Hook of Princeton, New Jersey, and Eric Mecklenburg of Chagrin Falls, Ohio, garnered silvers; and Jeffrey Middleton of Austin, Texas, won a bronze. The US team was sponsored by the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Institute of Physics.

In the theoretical part of the competition, contestants had to calculate the current carried by a small con-

MARY MOGGE



With their medals, the US competitors in this year’s physics olympiad, flanked by coaches Mary Mogge (California Polytechnic University) and Robert Shurtz (Hawken School in Gates Mills, Ohio), were (from left) Yi Sun, Eric Mecklenburg, Anson Hook, Jeffrey Middleton, and Elena Udovina.

ducting disk as it bounced between two oppositely charged plates; find how high a helium-filled balloon would rise before its buoyant force is balanced by its weight; and determine the parameters that control a scanning probe microscope and derive a formula that gives the distance from the tip of the microscope’s cantilever to an electron buried in the sample. In the experimental part, they had to figure out two spring constants and the mass of a ball for a system concealed

in a cylindrical black box.

Other highlights during the nine-day event included a contest to build a contraption that would survive a 15-meter fall (the Russian team won), visits to Korean homes, and a talk by Nobelist Robert Laughlin, the newly appointed head of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology.

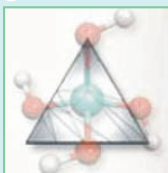
Next year’s physics olympiad will be held in July in Salamanca, Spain.

Toni Feder ■

WEB WATCH

http://www.spacetelescope.org/projects/fits_liberator

For decades, NASA has distributed and archived astronomical data in a standard format called FITS. But FITS isn’t especially handy for home enthusiasts. Now, NASA has teamed up with the European Space Agency and the European Southern Observatory to produce **FITS Liberator**, a free software plug-in that converts FITS files for use with Adobe Photoshop.



<http://www.ca.sandia.gov/HiTempThermo>

HiTempThermo is a new online database devoted to such high-temperature processes as chemical vapor deposition, catalysis, and combustion. The database, which is maintained by Sandia National Laboratories, includes thermodynamic data and a wide range of calculated molecular properties for gas-phase species.

<http://neutron.neutron-eu.net>
<http://muon.neutron-eu.net>

Sponsored by several European organizations, the **European Neutron Portal** brings together news and online information about the use of neutrons as structural probes. A sister site, the **European Muon Portal**, covers the use of muons.



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