The ICTP-MAIS will address the specific needs of the region, says acting director Arnulfo Zepeda. "That is why, in addition to applied mathematics and theoretical physics, we are focusing on energy and the environment." The center will start by offering a course to prepare physics bachelors for top-level PhD programs, and in the longer term will create a physics PhD program; the highest physics degree currently available at the local university is a master's.

With funding from the state of Chiapas, the federal ministry of energy, and Mexico's main science funding agency, the ICTP in Mexico will hire five researchers, and Zepeda says he hopes to attract about a dozen visitors in the first year. "There are very few physics schools in Central America. We think [people] will be attracted when we provide the opportunity."

Quevedo, who is from Guatemala, chairs the steering committees of the new centers. The key factors in going ahead with the sites in Brazil and Mexico, he says, were scientific quality and a "natural generosity toward the neighboring countries. They will be able to lift the level of science in their regions." The brand-name of the ICTP, he adds, "provides prestige and experience gained over the years." **Toni Feder**

## news notes

**Hats off to Japanese center.** The Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPMU; see photo) at the University of Tokyo appears to be the first national research institute in Japan ever to receive a substantial gift from a non-Japanese donor. In February the Kavli Foundation announced a $7.5 million endowment to the IPMU, making the institute the foundation's 16th—its 6th in astrophysics and 3rd in theoretical physics.

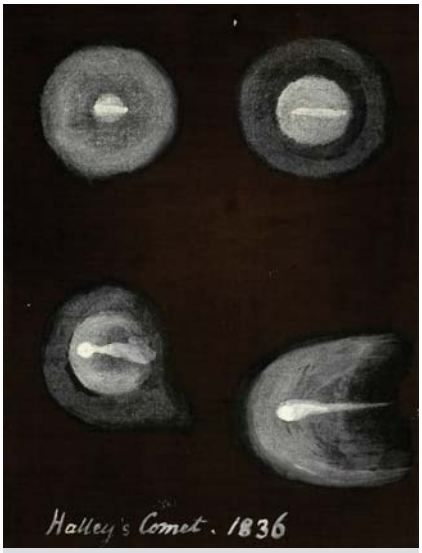
"Within just four years, IPMU has established itself as a world-renowned institute starting from zero," said Daisuke Yoshida, director general of the research promotion bureau in Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The Kavli IPMU, as it is now called, was launched as part of a Japanese initiative to internationalize the country's scientific community (see PHYSICS TODAY, December 2008, page 28). The center has grown to 200 researchers, more than half from outside the country.

"I am super excited!" says Kavli IPMU director Hitoshi Murayama. The center's new visibility will help attract

IPMU

scientists, he says. And the flexibility of the Kavli money will be especially helpful for such things as inviting potential recruits' families to visit and seeding new research concepts. "All in all, it is a great honor to be recognized internationally for our excellence and globalization effort." **TF**

**Herschel archives.** A collection of papers from astronomer siblings William Herschel and Caroline Herschel, and from William's son, John Herschel, is now open to scholars, thanks to $10 000 from the Friends of




HARRY RANSOM CENTER

**Halley's Comet**, sketched by Caroline Herschel in 1835–36.

the Center for History of Physics at the American Institute of Physics. The collection is housed in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin; a listing of the inventory can be downloaded at http://budurl.com/herschelinventory.

William is best known for discovering the planet Uranus in 1781. After Caroline followed William from Germany to the UK, she became the first woman in Britain to receive a pension for scientific work. John made significant contributions in astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, and photography. One of his major achievements was a sky survey from data he amassed during several years in South Africa. In his *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin calls John Herschel "one of our greatest philosophers."

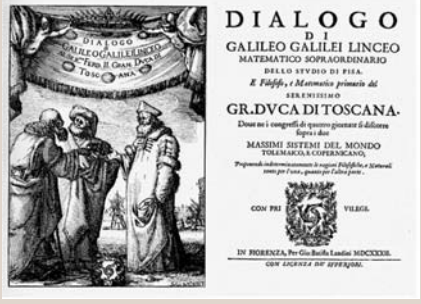
In addition to extensive correspondence with Darwin and other 18th- and 19th-century luminaries, the collection includes diaries, telescope designs, and other papers. Only the Royal Society in London has a larger Herschel collection. TF ■

## Recently on physics today online...

PHYSICS TODAY's Facebook page, http://facebook.com/PhysicsToday, continues to attract new fans, thanks to its mix of news, videos, and historical anecdotes. A typical day's posts might include a nuclear physics discovery, discussion about site selection of the Square Kilometer Array telescope, the anniversary of a massive Alaskan earthquake, and a video of a fluid dynamics experiment on the International Space Station.

### ▶ Singularities

The Latin American Center for Physics is 50 years old. In an interview with PHYSICS TODAY's Toni Feder, the center's outgoing director, Feliciano Sánchez Sinencio, discusses the center's focus, the ways in which the center helped him personally, and the challenges ahead.




### ◀ The Dayside

In his blog, PHYSICS TODAY's online editor Charles Day writes about sine-wave speech recognition in Mandarin, the concept of water footprint, superluminal neutrinos, the European Research Council, and a new interactive exhibit at a science museum in Washington, DC.

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