



## HITS Alumni Meeting

The HITS alumni meeting took place on June 30 and July 1, 2017. The two-day event was launched at a public colloquium by HITS alumnus Prof. Stefan Wuchty (University of Miami, USA) who spoke on quantifying group dynamics in online social media. HITS alumni Dr. Katja Filippova (Natural Language Processing), Dr. Jon Fuller (Molecular and Cellular Modeling) and Dr. Fernando Izquierdo-Carrasco (Scientific Computing) subsequently discussed their career paths with the current HITSters. The second day was all about bringing together the HITS Alumni and current HITSters for a big family party on the HITS campus. Altogether, more than 100 alumni and HITSters participated in the event.

## New call for HITS "Journalist in Residence"

HITS has published a new call for its international "Journalist in Residence" program which offers science journalists the opportunity to spend up to six months at the institute discovering more about computer-aided, data-driven research in areas ranging from molecular biology to astrophysics. **The deadline for applications is November 15, 2017.** See the "Portrait" section for more about the last journalist in residence, T.V. Padma from Delhi/India.

HEIDELBERG  
LAUREATE  
FORUM

HITS

HITS is one of the scientific partners in the Heidelberg Laureate Forum, September 24 – 29, 2017. This year, once again, we will host a group of young researchers at the institute.

## HITS mathematician honored

Prof. Anna Wienhard, leader of the associated "Groups and Geometry" group, has been invited to give a presentation at the 2018 International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Hosted every four years by the International Mathematical Union, the ICM is the largest international gathering in mathematics. An invitation to hold a lecture at the ICM is one of the most prestigious acknowledgements of research achievements in mathematics. Anna Wienhard has also been elected a full member of the mathematics and natural sciences section of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Together with her research group, she investigates symmetries and so-called deformation spaces in geometric structures.

## Two fellowships for HITS statistician

Prof. Tilmann Gneiting, leader of the "Computational Statistics" group, has been named a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA). The ASA has been using the title as its highest honorary grade of membership for nearly 100 years. Tilmann Gneiting is one of only four scientists outside the USA to have received the honor this year. The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) has also confirmed Tilmann Geiting as an ECMWF Fellow for a further three years. His research focuses on statistical methods and the science of probabilistic forecasting.

## New staff members and visiting scientists

**DMQ:** Nils Schween, visiting scientist (*Heidelberg University*)

**GRG:** Beatrice Pozzetti, Valentina DiSalvo, visiting scientists (*both Heidelberg University*)

**MBM:** Dr. Fan Jin, visiting scientist (*Heidelberg University*)

**MCM:** Marcus Fabiano de Almeida Mendes, visiting scientist (*Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil*)

**TAP:** Jesus Prada Gonzalez, visiting scientist (*University of Los Andes, Colombia*)

**Administration:** Thomas Rasen, Controlling

HITSTERS

## "Auriga" uncovers the history of galaxies

With thousands of processors, terabytes of data, and months of computing time, an international group of researchers has produced some of the largest and highest resolution simulations ever made of galaxies like our Milky Way. In the "Auriga" project, the team led by HITS scientist Dr. Robert Grand (TAP) simulated 30 different high-resolution Milky Ways using some 18 million CPU hours on the supercomputers "Hornet"/"Hazel Hen" in Stuttgart and "SuperMUC" in Garching. It was the first time the magnetic fields that permeate the so-called interstellar medium were simulated. The team discovered that smaller galaxies could have merged with the Milky Way galaxy early in its history, in a process that could have created larger spiral discs. The scientists are now combining the results of the Auriga Project work with observation data from missions like Gaia to better understand how mergers and collisions shaped galaxies like our own.

*Publication: "The Auriga Project: The Properties and Formation Mechanisms of Disc Galaxies Across Cosmic Time," Robert J. J. Grand et al., 2017 May, Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, vol. 467, pp. 179-207.*

## New "TRAPP" Server

The Molecular and Cellular Modeling (MCM) group has published a new webserver for the software platform "TRAPP" (Transient Pockets in Proteins). The platform helps drug discovery researchers to search, analyze and visualize binding pockets in proteins. The new webserver provides a user-friendly environment.

*Publication: Antonia Stank, Daria B. Kokh, Max Horn, Elena Sizikova, Rebecca Neil, Joanna Panecka, Stefan Richter and Rebecca C. Wade. TRAPP webserver: predicting protein binding site flexibility and detecting transient binding pockets. Nucleic Acids Res (2017) gkx277. <http://trapp.h-its.org/>*

RESEARCH

## T.V. Padma: "A focus not on deadlines, but on learning new things."

She walks up the steps to the entrance gate, stops suddenly and turns around to look back on the green garden and the red brick building. "I'm really rather sad to be leaving this place," T.V. Padma confesses. The Indian science journalist is now returning to Delhi after spending five months as the 6th journalist in residence at HITS. Padma is a freelance science journalist who writes for Nature, New Scientist, Physics World, and other media outlets. She was a science correspondent for India's leading news agency, Press Trust of India (PTI), and editor-in-chief of the first South Asian regional office of SciDev.Net. She was selected as the 2017 HITS journalist in residence out of 40 candidates from 23 countries.

## New projects launched during her stay

"This program is a rare opportunity," she explains. "Life as a journalist is a mad rush for deadlines, under high pressure. For five months, my focus was not on deadlines, but on learning new things." Padma attended scientific meetings, had conversations with HITS group leaders, met several German and other European science journalists, and enjoyed cheerful lunch breaks with the Astroinformatics group. "I learned a lot about how to deal with data," she smiles. "It helped me to set up my own data journalism projects." She also held an internal seminar with the HITSters on social media and gave a public talk on science and science journalism in India. And she got to know Heidelberg better. "At first it fulfilled all the clichés of a picture postcard," she said in an interview with the local newspaper. "But soon I discovered that this city is full of science, an ideal place for a science journalist."

Padma is returning to Delhi with some new projects that started at HITS. One is to investigate data on extreme weather events in the Himalaya region together with the Computational Statistics group. "This was probably one of the most wonderful phases of my whole professional life," she says, ascending the last steps to the gate.

## HITS Journalist in Residence program – deadline for applications: November 15, 2017

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PORTRAIT

NR. 28 / 09-2017

Heidelberger Institut für  
Theoretische Studien

HITS

THE CHARTS