Henrik Mouritsen Awarded Prize for Excellent Research

The Universitätsgesellschaft Oldenburg (UGO) has awarded Prof. Dr. Henrik Mouritsen its Prize for Excellent Research, which includes 5,000 euros in prize money. Mouritsen was selected for “his outstanding research in the field of Neurosensorics/Animal Navigation,” according to the jury statement.

The Prize for Excellent Research was awarded for the first time in 2012. The UGO awards it in alternation with its Pri-

ze for an Outstanding PhD Thesis. “With this prize our aim is to honour not only the person but also Oldenburg as an out-

standing research location, and to bring it into the public eye,” UGO Chairman Michael Weifers explained.

Henrik Mouritsen (43) has been con-
ducting research and teaching at Olden-

dburg University since 2002, and has earned his habilitation there in 2009. He has turned down offers of professorships in Manchester, Kiel and Bayreuth in favour of remaining at Oldenburg. He has held the Lichtenburg Chair, endowed with 1.5 million euros, since 2007. In 2011 he was awarded the “Eric Kandel Young Neuros-
cientists Prize”. As head of the interna-
tional research group “Neurosensorics/
Animal Navigation”, Mouritsen was able to demonstrate that birds use the Earth’s magnetic field to orient in two different ways. Photosensitive molecules in their eyes enable them to sense the compass direction of the magnetic field. Further-

more, the birds have a magnetic sensor in their upper beak which is connected to their brain stem via the ophthalmic branch of the trigeminal nerve. For both orientation systems, the group led by Mouritsen was able to locate the area of the birds’ brain involved. Mouritsen’s research extends into the newly emerging field of quantum biology. Together with physicists and chemists from Oxford University, Mouritsen is investigating to what extent, the birds’ magnetic sensor fundamentally relies on quantum me-

chanical principles.

New Appointments

Prof. Dr. Holger Schuster has been made Chair of Marine Geochemistry in the Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment (ICBM). He has led the Max Planck Institute for Marine Geochemistry research group there since 2008. As a “bridge professor” Dittmar will continue to extend the Institute’s cooperation with the Max Planck Institute for Marine Microbiology (MPI Bremen). Dittmar studied geocelology at Bayreuth University. He earned his PhD at the University of Bremen in 1999. He was a research fellow at the Alfred-Wegener-Institut (AWI) in Bremerhaven and then spent several years conducting research at the University of Washington (USA). Before coming to Oldenburg Ditt-

mar was Assistant Professor at Florida State University in Tallahassee (USA). His research focuses on dissolved organic matter in seawater, whose role in the carbon cycle is still not well un-

derstood. He analyses the formation, chemical structure and potential com-
ponents of this matter, which consists of algae remnants, terrestrial plants and petroleum components that have leaked from deposits under the ocean bed into the seawater.

Prof. Dr. Thorsten Dittmar has been appointed Junior Professor for Social Theory at the Faculty of Educati-
on and Social Sciences. Henkel studied economics and social sciences at Witten/Herdecke University and at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques in Paris. After sev-
eral research stays in Copenhagen she received her PhD in 2011. Her research focuses are social and societal theory in connection with empirical research, the inclusion of materiality and material in sociological studies as well as ques-
tions relating to economic sociology and knowledge research. Her main focus is to apply social theory to social problems. The interdisciplinary and inter-univer-

sity doctorate programme „Dimensions of Worry“, funded by the Evangelische Studienwerk Villigst e.V., was launched in July. It supports PhD projects at the universities of Oldenburg, Bochum and Creifswald in the disciplines of theology, philosophy and sociology. Henkel was the lead applicant for the programme.
New Appointments

Prof. Dr. Jörg Lücke has been summoned to the „Machine Learning“ chair in the „Hearing4all“ Cluster of Excellence at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Lücke studied physics at the Technical University of Dortmund, the University of Exeter (UK) and the Centre de Physique Théorique in Marseille (France). He earned his PhD with a thesis on „Information Processing and Learning in Networks of Cortical Columns“ at the Ruhr University Bochum. After two-and-a-half years as a postdoctoral fellow at University College London, Lücke led a research group on „Computational Neuroscience and Machine Learning“ based first at the Goethe University Frankfurt’s Institute for Advanced Studies and later first at the University of Exeter (UK) and the Centre de Physique Théorique in Marseille (France).

Jörg Lücke
Machine Learning

Dr. Jan Steffen Müller has been appointed Junior Professor of Mathematics with the main emphasis „Explicit Methods in Number Theory and Algebra“. Müller studied „Mathematics with Computer Science“ at the Technical University Darmstadt. After a year at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara (Turkey) he gained his master’s degree at Bayreuth University with his dissertation entitled „Calculating canonical heights on Jacobians“ under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Michael Stoll. Before transferring to Oldenburg Müller (31) was a research fellow at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge (England), Be’er Sheva (Israel) and Leiden (the Netherlands), where he also spent several research stays.

Jan Steffen Müller
Mathematics

Verena Pietzner has been appointed Chair of Chemistry Teaching. In this position she also takes over leadership of the teacher training lab „Chemol – Chemistry in Chemistry Lessons“ and „integrating the use of computers in chemistry lessons“ and „integrating the use of computers in chemistry lessons“. Pietzner studied to become a secondary school teacher of mathematics and chemistry at Bielefeld University. After obtaining her teaching degree she completed her PhD at the University of Hamburg. Pietzner was visiting researcher in the „Natural Science Lessons“ research group at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Before transferring to Hildesheim in 2009, she spent two years conducting research at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (USA). In 2005 he resumed his specialised medical training at the University of Denmark, where she completed her PhD in 2010. Her research in Oldenburg focuses on improving hearing impairment diagnostics. To achieve this she is looking for ways to combine psychoacoustic methods with physiological methods such as electroencephalograms (EEG) and otoacoustic emissions. She also uses computer models of the auditory pathway to study the impact of hearing impairment on the processing of noise along the auditory pathways. Verhulst has research collaborations with Aalto University Finland, the Technical University of Denmark (DTU), and the Universities of Boston and Harvard (USA).

Sarah Verhulst
Plastic Surgery

Prof. Dr. Sarah Verhulst has been appointed Junior Professor for Analysis and Modelling the Auditory System. Before she came to Oldenburg she was a postdoctoral researcher at Boston University’s Center for Computational Neuroscience (USA) and a research fellow at Harvard Medical School. Verhulst, who comes from Belgium, studied electrical engineering at the Group T college in Leuven (Belgium) and acoustical engineering at the Technical University of Denmark, where she completed her PhD in 2010. Her research in Oldenburg focuses on improving hearing impairment diagnostics. To achieve this she is looking for ways to combine psychoacoustic methods with physiological methods such as electroencephalograms (EEG) and otoacoustic emissions. She also uses computer models of the auditory pathway to study the impact of hearing impairment on the processing of noise along the auditory pathways. Verhulst has research collaborations with Aalto University Finland, the Technical University of Denmark (DTU), and the Universities of Boston and Harvard (USA).

Prof. Dr. Sarah Verhulst
Medical Physics

Michael Wark has been appointed Professor of Technical Chemistry at Oldenburg University. He heads the University’s working group „Photocatalysis and Sustainable Use of Resources“. Wark studied chemistry in Bremen, where he attained his PhD with his thesis „Stabilisation of High Dispenser Semiconductor Particles in Zeolith Matrices“. Postdoctoral posts at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Mulhouse (France) and the universities of Dortmund and Bochum followed.

Michael Wark
Technical Chemistry