



MLZ User Meeting and German Neutron Scattering Conference 2020: Meetings without Meeting....

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MLZ User Meeting and German Neutron Scattering Conference 2020: Meetings without Meeting....

It all started by accident!

After a really successful re-launch of our series of User Meetings in 2019 with about 250 participants, it had been decided to establish such an event for all users of the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Zentrum (MLZ) as a repetitive one each December. At the same time, the Komitee für Forschung mit Neutronen (KFN, Committee Research with Neutrons) that represents the interest of neutron users in Germany to politics and facilities, searched for a location for the German Neutron Scattering Conference 2020 (DN2020). This conference is organized every 4 years and attracts every scientist who is working with neutrons in Germany. In 2008, the Forschungs-Neutronenquelle Heinz Maier-Leibnitz (FRM II), operated by the Technical University of Munich (TUM), had already had the pleasure to organize this conference at Garching. About 300 participants gathered for 4 days then and enjoyed it very much. This time, the idea had been developed to couple both events and thus get a lot of synergy from the mix of the national and international community of the MLZ users with German neutron scatterers who maybe had not yet used the MLZ. A joint poster session should open the discussion between both groups. It would link the 2-day User Meeting

to a 1-day DN2020. While the MLZ User Meeting is organized by the MLZ User Office, it took over for the DN2020, too. Christine Papadakis, Head of the Soft Matters Physics Group of the Department of Physics at TUM, joined this team and thus represented also the longstanding tradition of neutron research here at the faculties in Garching.

Everybody was looking forward to a big double event where a huge number of participants of the MLZ User Meeting and the DN2020 would have met at a conference hotel in Munich downtown and enjoyed discussions, networking, and just chatting with old friends during a poster session with beer and pretzels between December 8 and 10. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this became impossible (Figure 1). While in July, we all still hoped for some kind of a hybrid event, we had to bury that hope a few months later and went purely virtual. Nevertheless, MLZ and KFN decided to stick to the initially planned timetable with parallel sessions and the huge poster session. Furthermore, it was decided that no recording would be made available afterward—this should emphasize the live and unique character of the events.

In the end, 405 registrations were submitted via the event's web page:

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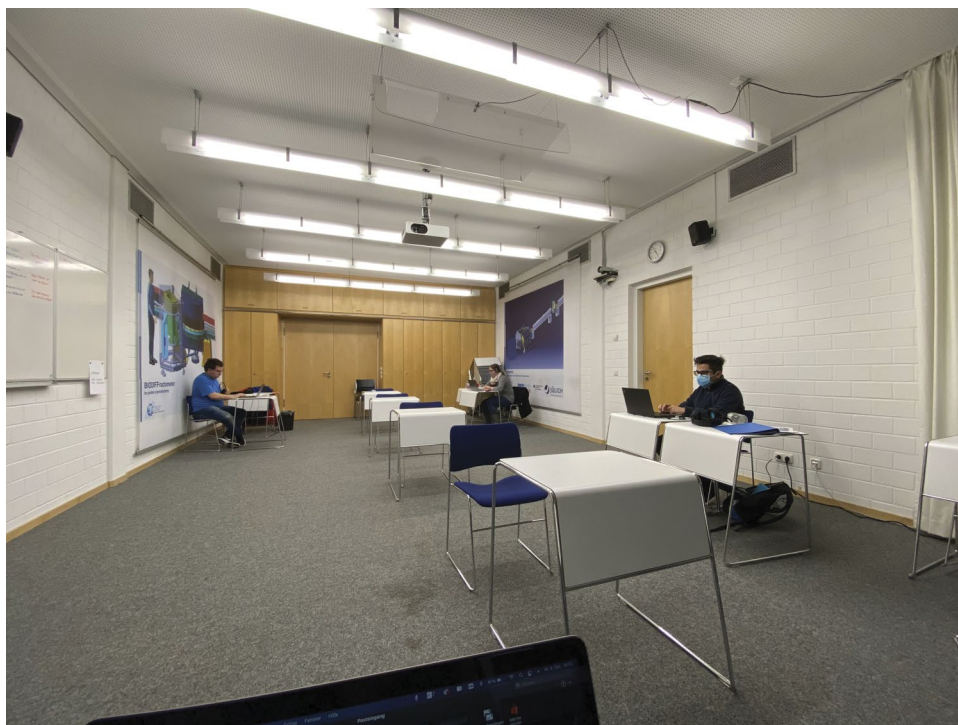


Figure 1. A conference office during pandemic times. (© MLZ).

<https://indico.frm2.tum.de/e/um-2020-dn>. The participants came from 24 countries in total, most of them from Germany and other EU countries, but we attracted also neutron scatterers from Australia, Brazil, India, Japan, Morocco, Russia and the United States! From all submitted abstracts, the programme committee finally accepted 96 as talks and 159 as posters.

For the first afternoon of the MLZ User Meeting, participants gathered for the parallel workshops of the six MLZ Science Groups. These groups aim for working at the interface between the scientific users and groups at the surrounding universities and institutes, and bring about a lively scientific exchange triggering new projects and collaborations. They represent the relevant scientific fields: Materials Science, Soft Matter, Quantum Phenomena,

Structure Research, Neutron Methods and Nuclear, Particle and Astrophysics. Each group is in charge of its workshop leading to a broad bandwidth of topics. This year, listeners had to choose between a lot of thrilling talks dealing with many different topics: Zoe Fisher (ESS, Sweden) hunted for enzyme isoform specific ligand binding, Steffen Neumeier (FAU Erlangen, Germany) explained how advanced characterizing techniques help to develop novel Co-based superalloys, Martin Fertl (JGU Mainz, Germany) discussed cyclotron radiation emission spectroscopy in the context of precision beta-decay experiments—and there was so much more!

Wednesday morning offered the plenary talks of the MLZ User Meeting. First, MLZ Director Peter Müller-Buschbaum looked back on 2020 here at Garching and explained how

the MLZ prepares for mail-in/remote experiments: an important development in the scope of the pandemic situation. Afterward, Susann Schorr (HZB, Germany) talked about insights into structural disorder in photovoltaic absorber materials using neutron diffraction. Akira Uedono (University of Tsukuba, Japan) presented the usefulness of positron annihilation spectroscopy, and finally, Julian Oberdisse (Laboratoire Charles Coulomb, France) answered the question “How much information is in my scattering data?” The report on the work of the MLZ User Committee by its chair Adrian Rennie (University of Uppsala, Sweden) closed the talks of the User Meeting.

After a short break, the DN2020 started with a short welcome session. Traditionally, the Wolfram-Prandl-Prize for young scientists is awarded during the DN—and this



Figure 2. Sabrina Disch (Research Group Leader, Department für Chemie, Universität zu Köln) received the 2500 Euro Wolfram-Prandl Prize 2020 for young scientists. (© Ellen Bornkessel/Portraitfotografie für Unternehmen).

was also the case this time: The 2020 awardee was Sabrina Disch of the University of Cologne (Germany) for her research results on magnetic nanoparticles that she presented in her awardee lecture afterward (Figure 2). She received it for her outstanding research on the understanding of structure, spin structure and spin dynamics of magnetic nanoparticles, their self-organization and the resulting forming structures, achieved with innovative neutron scattering methods, as KFN chair, Astrid Schneidewind, explained in her statement.

On Wednesday afternoon, the poster session started. About 159 posters waited for online visitors. This was a really new experience. Each poster had its own virtual room where the presenter was able to discuss with anyone dropping in. The main challenge had been to create a poster that suits these unusual sur-

roundings. In the beginning, some server problems annoyed everyone but fortunately, they could be solved on short notice. After this stumbling start, visitors went into the online rooms and discussions at the posters picked up speed. Late afternoon saw many participants using the rooms for chatting with colleagues.

The third day was then completely dedicated to the DN2020. It started with the plenary talks. Markus Appel (ILL, France) presented ongoing instrument developments at the ILL and was followed by Thomas Hellweg (Universität Bielefeld, Germany) who talked about stimuli-responsive core-shell microgel particles. Bastian Märkisch (TUM, Germany) centered on the neutron beta decay and its importance within the Standard Model. Nathalie Kunkel (Universität Göttingen, Germany) reported on measurements on novel lumi-

nescence materials and Alexander A. Tsirlin (Universität Augsburg, Germany) gave insights into the quantum and structural disorder in triangular antiferromagnets. Finally, Martin Weik (IBS, France) illustrated how both neutron spectroscopy and crystallography at XFELs and synchrotrons can be used to study equilibrium and non-equilibrium protein dynamics.

After a short break, the participants spread among three parallel sessions on six different big topics, including the upgrade of the well-known spin-echo machine J-NSE at MLZ (Olaf Holderer, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Germany), the signature of defect-induced symmetry breaking in magnetic neutron scattering (Andreas Michels, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg) or adaptive microgels (Walter Richtering (RWTH Aachen, Germany)—the broad range of talks

showed the importance and versatility of neutron science and was well received by the virtual audience.

The DN2020 was closed with the presentation of the board of the 12th KFN, which had been elected shortly before. The 11th KFN Chair, Astrid Schneidewind (Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Germany), passed on her position to Frank Schreiber (Universität Tübingen, Germany) after she had handed over the new KFN strategy paper to Jürgen Kroseberg

from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Because this was the first big virtual event the MLZ organized, we asked the participants to complete a survey. We are happy that so many took this opportunity! We learned that the talks were very well received (from both the presenters' and listeners' side) but about the poster session, opinions were divided. We got a lot of ideas on how to improve such an event in the future and are

thankful for this. We all missed the same thing: the face-to-face meeting, the socializing, and the little chats with people one meets by accident. Therefore, we hope for better circumstances at any upcoming conference!

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