International Commission on the History of Mathematics
Meeting to celebrate honours recently awarded to historians of mathematics

Friday 6 March 2026 - 14.00-18.30
Mathematical Institute, Oxford
Lecture Room L3

Programme

14:00-14:45 Ursula Martin (University of Oxford) – DBE 2025
Hidden figures: the women who made Oxford computing

14:45-15:30 Henning Heller (University of Bonn) – ICHM Montucla Prize 2025
Mellen Woodman Haskell (1863–1948): An American mathematics student of the Wanderlust generation

 15:30-16:00 Break

16:00-16:45 David E. Rowe (University of Mainz) – ICHM Kenneth O. May Medal and Prize 2025
What Riemann learned from Gauss: When and How

16:45-17:30 Jan Hogendijk (University of Utrecht) – ICHM Kenneth O. May Medal and Prize 2025
Applied mathematics in Ottoman Palestine: the treatise by Taqi al-Din on sundials

17:30-18:30 Drinks reception

Abstracts

Ursula Martin (University of Oxford) – DBE 2025.
TBC.

Henning Heller (University of Bonn) – ICHM Montucla Prize 2025
Mellen Woodman Haskell (1863–1948): An American mathematics student of the Wanderlust generation

In the late nineteenth century, interest in mathematical research grew rapidly in the United States. As university-level mathematics was only beginning to take shape, many aspiring

scholars sought opportunities abroad in order to take their first steps in research. A central figure in this academic Wanderlust was the German mathematician Felix Klein, who actively encouraged international students to study and work under his supervision. Among the earliest Americans to do so was Mellen Woodman Haskell. A Harvard graduate, Haskell went to Leipzig in 1885 and subsequently followed Klein to his new post in Göttingen. He completed his doctoral dissertation under Klein in 1889 before returning to the United States, where he was soon appointed professor at the newly founded University of California. There, he played a central role in establishing and shaping the mathematics department until his retirement in 1933. This presentation examines Haskell's formative years in Germany from both biographical and mathematical perspectives. His case illuminates the emergence of the United States as a leading nation in mathematical research and illustrates the wider dissemination of Klein's vision of mathematics among both national and international scholars. The work presented here contributes to a recently published collaborative study of Klein's international students.

David E. Rowe (University of Mainz) – ICHM May Medal 2025
What Riemann learned from Gauss: When and How

Riemann met Gauss in 1846/47 during his first year of studies in Göttingen. He then left to spend two eventful years studying mathematics and physics in Berlin, before returning to Göttingen in 1849. Several clues suggest that by then he had already begun to develop some of the main ideas for his dissertation, which he completed in 1851. Some of these ideas were directly inspired by Gauss, but the question we will consider here concerns when and how he learned about them. Ideally, one would like to understand the nature of Gauss's influence on Riemann at that time. The circumstances surrounding his dissertation strongly suggest that he had few substantive personal interactions with Gauss, who only learned about his thesis work after Riemann had submitted the text. Without entering deeply into the mathematics, I will attempt to offer a plausible explanation for the ways in which Gaussian ideas influenced the young Riemann's work.

Jan Hogendijk (University of Utrecht) – ICHM May Medal 2025
Applied mathematics in Ottoman Palestine: the treatise by Taqi al-Din on sundials

Taqi al-Din ibn Ma`ruf was a capable Ottoman mathematician astronomer who was the director of the astronomical observatory in Istanbul between 1575 and 1580. Around 1567 he wrote a handbook on the constructions of sundials when he was qadi (Islamic judge) in Nablus, now on the West Bank. The handbook has been preserved in circa 15 Arabic

manuscripts (of which two important ones are in Oxford), but it has never been studied in modern times. In it, Taqi al-Din explains detailed computations of sundials on planes of arbitrary position, provided with a stylus parallel to the celestial axis. I will try to give an overview of the handbook, and an impression of its style, and then discuss its relevance for the relationship between science in Europe and the Islamic world in and after the Renaissance.