heterostructures of this type can be used to inject spin-polarized holes and electrons. Spin-polarized electrical currents offer many new applications, particularly also in the sector of radiation generation via electronic transitions in corresponding structures, such as quantum-well laser diodes.

Pioneering experimental work of Awschalom and co-workers, based on femtosecond time-resolved optical spectroscopy, provided access to probing the temporal and spatial variations of the spin degrees of freedom in this type of materials. The method of Awschalom proved to be especially adapted to measurements of the lateral drag of spin coherence. Another particularly encouraging result was the demonstration of long spin coherence times in suitable material systems. This observation makes the use of spin dynamics an attractive option for future concepts in quantum computing and quantum information processing.

A large and growing number of scientists have contributed to the rapid development of the field of spintronics in semiconductors. In the wake of the afore-mentioned pioneering work, national and international programs devoted to this type of research were initiated, which reflects not only the interest in the fundamental aspects of this area of physics but also the expectations and hopes for future technological applications. The outstanding and leading role of the awardees is fully recognized by the community and reflected in important national awards and numerous invitations as plenary speakers to international conferences. The selection committee is therefore convinced that the award of the Agilent Technologies Europhysics Prize 2005 to David Awschalom, Tomasz Dietl and Hideo Ohno is well deserved. ■

Public Understanding of Physics Prize 2005

The European Physical Society's Public Understanding of Physics Prize 2005 is awarded to Martial Ducloy for his outstanding contributions to science and society, in particular the initiation of the World Year of Physics.

Martial's nomination was widely supported by the European physics community, including the physical societies in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Portugal, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom through the Institute of Physics.

Martin Huber and Martial Ducloy, laureate of the 2005 PUP prize at the Physics Poster Competition.

He is well know to all of us and has made valuable contributions as a working physicist in the field of quantum electronics and lasers. His research and organisational abilities are also well recognised by his university in Villetaneuse, Paris Treize, where he has held successive positions as the Vice-president for research and the Vice-president for international relations.

He joined the EPS shortly after its creation in 1968, and has been a fervent supporter of its activities. He was chairman of the EPS Quantum Electronics Division from 1994 to 1998, and was instrumental in the creation of the EPS conference services department, and in the organisation of the CLEO/Europe – EQEC conference series. He became EPS president - elect in 2000, and served as President in 2001 and 2002.

In 2000, at the 3rd World Congress of Physical Societies in Berlin, Martial proposed to more than 30 societies present that 2005 be declared the World Year of Physics. This initiative was inspired by the Jahres der Physik which generated enormous enthusiasm for physics in Germany during the year 2000, and by the World Year of Mathematics. Learning from our German colleagues, and those in mathematics, Martial worked tirelessly with the help of notably Chris Rossel and Martin Huber to obtain widespread international support. IUPAP endorsed the World Year of Physics in 2001, UNESCO added its support in 2004, culminating with the declaration of 2005 as the International Year of Physics by the United Nations General Assembly.

Since then, thousands of projects from around the world have been held celebrating 2005 as the World Year of Physics. The European Commission recognised the importance of this initiative with a 2.1 million Euro contract to finance hundreds of projects in Europe during 2005.

We all hope that the outcome of 2005 will be a better understanding by the general public of the importance of physics in their lives, more dialogue between the physics community and policy makers to address such future challenges as renewable energy, global warming, and medicine, and most importantly, renewed interest in the young generation to follow careers in physics.

WYP2005 can already be proclaimed a success, and we owe our thanks to Martial Ducloy for his efforts and contributions to this initiative. ■

Gero Thomas medal for services to EPS

John Lewis, who has always identified himself as a schoolmaster, spent virtually all his career at Malvern College, where he had previously been to school before studying physics and mathematics at Cambridge and where he was Head of the Science Department from 1955 until his retirement in 1983. During this time his was active, not just in teaching pre-university physics, but also in developing physics teaching nationally, for example playing a leading role in the Nuffield advanced physics project. As a celebrated educationalist, John has also travelled around the world studying and advising on physics education. Anyone who has heard him talk on physics education or seen him give demonstrations will realise what a splendid teacher he was. In retirement John has been no less active, first becoming the Institute of Physics' Vice-