

Ritva Serimaa (1957–2016)

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Ritva Serimaa was a member of the IUCr Commission on Small-Angle Scattering (SAS) since 2008, and we are sad to report her passing on 12 April 2016 in Hamina at the young age of 58.

Ritva started her life in physics at the University of Helsinki, where she graduated with a Master of Arts in 1982, Licentiate in 1986 and doctorate in 1990. Her dissertation, and her subsequent career as a researcher and teacher, focused on X-ray scattering studies in soft condensed matter and nanostructures. Ritva carried out postdoctoral studies at Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory from 1991 to 1993.

Returning to Finland in 1993, Ritva rose to the rank of Docent in 1998 and in 2004 was the first woman to be appointed Professor of Physics at the University of Helsinki. In 2010 she was appointed to Head of the

Laboratory of Electronic Structure, Division of Materials Physics. That same year she was the first woman to be admitted as a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters.

In 2011, Ritva became the head of the Finnish Physical Society – another first for a woman. Notably, she contributed to the society's activities promoting opportunities for women scientists as a member of the Working Group for Women in Physics of the Finnish Physical Society.

In addition to her membership of the SAS Commission, Ritva served her community in a wide variety of roles, including as a member of the EMBL Priority Committee (Synchrotron Radiation Research of Biological Systems, Hamburg Outstation), an advisory board member of the Academy of Finland research programme LIFE (Research Programme on Biological Functions), an assessor for European and US funding agencies, and a reviewer for many journals. She served as a member of the boards of the Department of Physics of the University of Helsinki, the Nordic Network of Soft Matter Physics and the Finnish Synchrotron Radiation Users' Organization. She also contributed as a member of organization, advisory and programme committees for many national and international conferences, including the International Advisory Panel of the 15th International Small-Angle Scattering (SAS2012) conference in Sydney, Australia, in 2012. Ritva was an active contributor to the IUCr; one of her last contributions was serving as Co-Chair with U-Ser Jeng for the 2014 IUCr Congress microsymposium entitled 'Industrial and Technological Applications of Small-Angle Scattering' in Montreal. U-Ser fondly recalls how she contributed to the organization of this microsymposium with her characteristic care and dedication in spite of being unable to travel to attend.

During her career, Ritva directed 16 doctoral theses and published more than 230 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles. She was internationally and nationally recognized and respected as a colleague. According to her colleague Simo Huotari, Ritva also was a 'considerate, friendly, modest and cheerful person who loved music and did not hesitate to travel long distances to listen to her favorite musicians, such as Neil Young, Gary Moore, the Zombies and the Eagles concerts. She also enjoyed very much her husband Olli's guitar accompaniment of songs.' (Quote translated from original Finnish.)

Simo Huotari's complete tribute to Ritva, in Finnish, can be found at <http://www.hs.fi/muistot/art-2000002902593.html>.