Editorial

50th birthday of Yurij Holovatch

It is easy to write about Yurij Holovatch. As easy as to communicate with him, who is always open, friendly and sincere. It is hard to believe that he is getting 50, we would say, a mature scientific age, as some much younger colleagues could be jealous or dream about his easiness in perceiving novel ideas. On the other hand, his achievements in various fields of theoretical physics make us feel that Prof. Holovatch has been actively working in science considerably longer! More than 70 journal publications, about the same number of conference talks, a supervisor to a dozen of Ph.D. students, editor of six proceedings and scientific books speak for themselves. We are not going to reveal the secret of how he managed all this, but rather leave it for the reader to guess.

Yurij Holovatch graduated from Ivan Franko Lviv State University in 1979 and was appointed for his first job in the Institute of Physics and Mechanics, Lviv, as an engineer. At the same time, he started his postgraduate studies in the Bogoliubov Institute for Theoretical Physics, Kyiv which he completed in 1984. He was lucky to have scientific supervisors that any young scientist could be very proud of, both then and now. Professors I.R. Yukhnovskii, I.O. Vakarchuk and Y.K. Rudavsky were among those who not only formed and shaped the Ukrainian theoretical physics but also made a huge impact on the development of the country in general. After obtaining his Ph.D. degree on phase transitions in the n-vector model in 1984, Dr. Holovatch started to work at the Institute for Condensed Matter Physics, Lviv (at that time the department of Statistical Physics of the Bogoliubov Institute for Theoretical Physics, Kyiv) where he did habilitation, obtained his Professor degree and where he holds the position of a Leading Researcher since 2000. In parallel, he shared his time and responsibilities working at the Ivan Franko Lviv National University, first as an Assistant and Associate Professor and as a full Professor during 2001–2006. Prof. Holovatch is frequency invited to read physics courses at other scientific centers, namely the Johannes Kepler Universität Linz, Austria, the Université Henri Poincaré, Nancy, France and the Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv.

Prof. Holovatch's research interests cover a broad area of theoretical physics. In the focus of his interests is the criticality in its various incarnations, the field in which he started his research and to which he is devoted until today. From the pure n-vector model to diluted and frustrated systems, fractals, percolation phenomena, criticality in polymers and, most recently, to the complex networks. His collaborators include many prominent scientists, to name the most long-time and closely working only, C. von Ferber, R. Folk, B. Berche and others. This communicative network of colleagues and collaborators (where Yurij Holovatch is a vertex of very high rank!) helps him to constantly feel the "pulse" and "breeze" of the modern physics at its front edge, opening up new promising directions. Some of these problems may be classified as "exotic problems of statistical physics", but while the theory can provide the solution to the transport or computer network problems, this is here that the usefulness starts and the exoticity ends!

Though Prof. Holovatch is flexible and tolerant in communication he turns out to be solid as a rock in achieving the principal goals and there are no compromises in the main thing – the quality of science. He devotes a lot of his time to his students, sitting together for hours and methodically discussing some problem, manuscript draft or the future talk. Most often no strict and resolute advice is given but rather tolerant parental advice while the right decision should be made by the young person himself or herself. He shows a very specific feeling of responsibility for his students, always trying to help them in their advances and always being very positive about their progress. At present many of them are scattered around the globe and take part in extending the state of the art of science.

This deep understanding of the younger generation has made Prof. Holovatch a very successful lecturer, too. For a number of years he has been giving lecture courses on the theory of phase transitions, on critical phenomena in soft condensed matter, on the theory of disordered systems as well as some special courses of theoretical physics and history of science in various scientific centers.

While our world is dynamically changing, the scientist has to actively promote both his personal research and the science in general to make it accessible to a wider public. Yurij Holovatch is indeed very energetic and active in this respect. He is the founder and organizer of the Ising lectures (an annual event at the Institute for Condensed Matter Physics, Lviv since 1997) and co-organizer of the monthly interdisciplinary seminar “Horizons of Science”. He is also an active member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society, as well as a member of editorial boards of the Condensed Matter Physics Journal and the Journal of Physical Studies.

Devoted family man and good solid friend for many of us, our best congratulations on the occasion of your 50-th birthday!