IEEE VIS 2026

VGTC Visualization Service Award

Petra Specht, University of Magdeburg



The 2026 VGTC Visualization Service Award goes to Petra Specht for her extraordinary contributions to the visualization community through exceptional leadership, operational excellence, unwavering commitment, organizational skill, and dedication that have been instrumental to the continued success and impact of the IEEE VIS conference, including her service as Coordinating Chair for IEEE VIS 2018, VEC Assistant for IEEE VIS 2022–2023, and Overall Papers Chair Assistant for IEEE VIS 2024–2025.

Petra studied mathematics and physics from 1977 to 1981 and worked as a high-school teacher in Magdeburg for four years. Starting in 1985 until retirement in 2024, she held various positions in university administration at the University of Magdeburg.

Since the late 1980s, her Institute for Simulation and Graphics has organized own annual conferences and workshops in the fields of computer animation, simulation and animation, and simulation and visualization. Petra took on an increasing number of organizational responsibilities. The institute grew, and the conferences became larger and more international.

Following the VIS in Paris in 2014, the idea arose to organize a VIS in Germany. She was asked to take on the role as Coordinating Chair, and did not hesitate to accept the challenge. Together with the huge committee and the general chairs, she worked on the organization and it was an exciting journey. VIS 2018 in Berlin was a resounding success.

Afterwards, she supported the VIS community as a VEC Assistant and OPC Assistant.

At the same time, Petra has been active since 2001 in a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting gifted students in the fields of mathematics, physics, and computer science in her home state of Saxony-Anhalt. There, she serves as treasurer and also plays a major role in organizing many events, such as: the annual Mathematics Olympiad in Saxony-Anhalt, the 40th Mathematics Olympiad in Germany (2001) and the 61st Mathematics Olympiad in Germany (2022), the 30th Central European Olympiad in Informatics (2023), and the 4th World Mental Math Championship (2010).

Petra is now enjoying her retirement with family and friends. She still continues to work for her nonprofit organization, and will also be working for the Eurographics Association in the future.

Award Information

The IEEE VGTC Visualization Service Award is given every year to recognize an individual for dedication, support, and service contributions to the visualization and/or visual analytics community. More information about the award and nomination forms can be found at: https://tc.computer.org/vgtc/awards/vis-award-nominations/.