

British scientist Hawking leaves top Cambridge post

September 30 2009

Acclaimed wheelchair-bound British scientist Stephen Hawking is to hand over his top Cambridge University job this week, the prestigious seat of learning said on Wednesday.

Hawking, whose book "A Brief History Of Time" became an international best-seller, is standing down as Cambridge's Lucasian professor of mathematics at the age of 67, as stipulated in the terms of the post.

Hawking, who suffers from motor neurone disease, will continue to work with the university after his last day in the professorship on Wednesday, a university spokesman said.

The new Lucasian professor will be announced shortly.

Previous holders of the post, founded by British parliamentarian Henry Lucas in 1663, include Sir [Isaac Newton](#), Charles Babbage, Sir Joseph Larmor and Sir James Lighthill.

Hawking has achieved worldwide fame for his research, writing and television documentaries despite suffering since the age of 21 from motor neurone disease that has left him disabled and dependent on a voice synthesizer.

A fellow, or teacher, at the university's Gonville and Caius College, he began work in Cambridge in 1962 and took up the Lucasian

Professorship in 1979. The university announced last year that Hawking would be standing down.

In April he was rushed to a Cambridge hospital and treated for a respiratory infection, after falling ill following a trip to the United States.

Four months later US President Barack Obama conferred America's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, on Hawking and 15 other recipients in a ceremony at the White House.

"From his wheelchair, he's led us on a journey to the farthest and strangest reaches of the cosmos. In so doing, he has stirred our imagination and shown us the power of the human spirit here on Earth," Obama said.

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Citation: British scientist Hawking leaves top Cambridge post (2009, September 30) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-british-scientist-hawking-cambridge.html>

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