

President's Newsletter: October 2012

"To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (J.H. Newman)

The previous year has been one of change for many and no doubt the coming year will continue to be so too, at all levels. At an undergraduate level we are all living with the change of increased undergraduate fees from the quaintly named "Rest of the UK" (RUK) students, while at a research level no doubt we are all busy with various aspects of REF (the Research Excellence Framework). The biggest change here has been the introduction of trying to assess the "impact" of our academic research in non-academic settings, and I am sure that many of us are busy crafting "Impact Case Studies" and "Impact Templates". New acronyms abound. Whether all this change will lead to perfection remains to be seen.

Thankfully change within the Society moves at a more leisurely pace, and the Society's core activities of talks, the Proceedings (PEMS), grant giving, and the Burn postgraduate conference have again flourished. Full details on these and the application procedure for our grant schemes are available from the relevant sections of the Society's web pages.

The Society's 2011-12 lecture programme once again featured a wide range of high-quality and engaging talks by eminent speakers. Sincere thanks go to the Society's Meetings Secretary, Tom Lenagan, and all the local reps for organizing such an interesting and varied programme.

In February the Society's third "Popular Lecture" was given by Dr. Colin Wright of Solipsys Ltd. (www.solipsys.co.uk). "*Juggling: Theory and Practice*" proved a great hit and lived up to its billing of "*demonstrating a selection of the patterns and skills of juggling while at the same time developing a simple method of describing and annotating a class of juggling patterns.*" I am sure that many of us in academia have learned a few tricks as to how to keep several objects in the air at the same time without dropping any of them!

The Society's connection to UK policy issues is through its membership of the Council for Mathematical Sciences (CMS). Once again CMS has been very active in the past year, particularly in UK government events and policy submissions, and information is available at www.cms.ac.uk. A document which could have a big impact for the future of mathematical activity in the UK is "*Measuring the economic benefits of Mathematical Science Research in the UK*", commissioned by EPSRC,

RCUK and CMS and produced by Deloitte. The final version of this document will appear shortly and I will be able to up-date you in next year's Newsletter! Another important event on the horizon is a call for "*Centres for Doctoral Training*" (CDT) which will be issued by EPSRC in early 2013.

As the AGM approaches, on behalf of the Society, I would like to thank everyone who has given their time to the Society, on its committees, on the PEMS Board, and as EMS representatives to outside bodies. In particular to the Society's continuing officers: Tom Lenagan, Richard Steiner, Agata Smoktunowicz, Rob Archbold, Allan Grady, Tibor Antal, David Pritchard; to those stepping down from the General Committee: Anatoly Konechny, Stephen Watson, Laci Iancu, David Pritchard; to Iain Gordon who steps down as PEMS Convener; to David Pritchard and Frodyce Davidson who step down from the Education Committee; to Mark Ainsworth who steps down from the RSF Committee (and we wish him well in his new position at Brown University...); to Sotirios Sabanis who steps down from the Finance Committee; to Max Neunhoeffler and Radha Kessar, the 2012 Burn meeting organisers; to Lyonell Boulton, our webmaster and to Frances Reid for her work in the Society Office. I would also like to thank the School of Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh for its close and supportive relationship with the Society.

Finally, it is a genuine personal pleasure to sincerely thank Dr. Penny Davies who stands down after the AGM in her role as Vice President. Over the past year in particular, Penny has been very helpful in providing me with insight into the machinations of the presidency, and advice and helpful reminders regarding the running of the various meetings and committees. I am sure that Penny will put her newly found "spare time" to good use in the coming year and hope that she, like the rest of you, will enjoy the forthcoming year's programme of events.

Mark Chaplain