

President's Newsletter: October 2013

This year's EMS President's Newsletter is a little late in appearing – apologies. As most of you are aware “the REF” (Research Excellence Framework) is almost upon us and it has been somewhat all-consuming over the past few months. Now that the submission date is almost here, most academics can get back to doing what they love best i.e. research, and forget about the seemingly endless bureaucracy that has swamped us all recently. However, spare a thought for the panel members whose real work is only about to start!

Thankfully activities 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 2012-13 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 fourth “Popular Lecture” was given by Dr. David Bedford of Keele University and was intriguingly entitled: “*Tales of Ants, Bricks, Bugles, Barrels and Infinity*”. Dr. Bedford gave a very accessible and entertaining talk on the concept of infinity and sequences and series, finishing with a live demonstration of how to balance a pile of bricks over the end of a table without them all falling off (all precisely calculated using the mathematics introduced in his talk). Next year's popular lecture will be given by Prof. John Barrow, Cambridge University, but will take place in March in Edinburgh rather than the usual February slot – please make a note in your diaries!

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 full information is available at www.cms.ac.uk. This year Professor Sir Adrian Smith, FRS, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, took over as the new Chair of the CMS, replacing Professor Frank Kelly CBE FRS, University of Cambridge.

As mentioned in last year's President's Letter, a document which should have a big impact for the future of mathematical activity in the UK was finally published:

"Measuring the economic benefits of Mathematical Science Research in the UK", commissioned by EPSRC, RCUK and CMS and produced by Deloitte. This may be downloaded from the EPSRC website at URL:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2012/Pages/mathsciresearch.aspx>

As noted by EPSRC, *"The report by the consulting firm Deloitte is the first study of its kind to quantify the economic value of mathematics research in terms of the employment it supports and gross added value of mathematics to the UK economy."*

Thankfully for the UK mathematics community, the take home message of the document is that mathematics contributes enormously to the UK economy across a wide range of sectors, with the report estimating that *"...10 per cent of jobs and 16 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy stems from mathematical sciences research."* This is something that all Maths Heads of Department should bear in mind the next time they are negotiating with Deans and other Higher-Powers-That-Be for staff replacements or additional staff or resources for their department.

After this month's AGM, 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, Michael Grinfeld, Allan Grady, Tibor Antal, David Pritchard; to Agata Smoktunowicz who steps down from the role of General Secretary; to Alastair Gillespie who steps down from the Education Committee; to Rob Archbold who steps down from the RSF Committee; to David Pontin, Alan Lindsay, Jozsef Farkas and Max Neunhoeffler who step down as local representatives; to Jonathan Pears and Miklos Rasonyi who step down from the Investment Committee; to Max Neunhoeffler the 2013 Burn meeting organiser; 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 pleasure to "hand over the EMS torch" to Prof. Tony Carbery who takes over now as the next EMS President and to assure Tony of my continuing support in the coming year as Vice President.

Mark Chaplain