CONGRATULATIONS

“We heard you were leaving so we baked a cake”
(to misquote an old song)

Peter Renaud’s final lecture to his MATH103-S1 class was gatecrashed by an unruly mob of academics who presented him with a cake to mark the occasion!

Peter has been teaching in this department since September 1968, during which time he claims to have “subjected two generations of unwilling students to something like 6,000 lectures.” “But students are a forgiving lot”, he adds modestly! Peter retires at the end of semester one.

Congratulations to Marco Reale, who has been appointed to the Consumers Price Index (CPI) Advisory Committee to the Government Statistician. Periodically convening independent advisory CPI committees helps to ensure public confidence in the index and is recommended as good practice in the International Labour Organization’s resolution on CPIs. The committee’s recommendations will be included in a report, which will be published in July 2013. These recommendations will inform the next CPI review, scheduled for 2014. Statistics NZ last convened a CPI advisory committee in 2004.

CHINESE GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SELF-FINANCED STUDENTS ABROAD

Congratulations to our PhD student Sha (Joe) Zhu, who was awarded a Chinese overseas student fellowship at a ceremony in Wellington on 16 March at the Chinese Embassy.

The award was established by the China Scholarship Council in 2003 and a total of 14 PhD students from NZ have received this award since its inception. Joe was one of two students from NZ who received awards this year.

The Chinese Ambassador and representatives of the NZ Ministry of Education were amongst those who attended the ceremony.

Photo: Joe being presented with his award by the Chinese Ambassador, Mr Xu Jianguo.
AWARD OF PRESTIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP

Congratulations to PhD student Claudia Seibold, who has been awarded a prestigious fellowship to Vienna on the Young Scientists Summer Program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

The IIASA is a scientific research institute located in Laxenburg, near Vienna, Austria, and its program offers research opportunities to young researchers whose interests correspond with IIASA’s ongoing research on issues of global environmental, economic and social change. From June through August, Claudia will work within the Institute’s research programs under the guidance of IIASA scientific staff.

Fifty-one participants from 23 countries are participating this year. Claudia is one of the three Germans who are funded by the National Member Organisation for Germany - the German Association for the Advancement of IIASA.

- Jennifer Brown

GPU TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

Congratulations to Paul Brouwers who was awarded a grant from the College of Engineering to participate in the GPU Technology Conference in San Jose, California, from 18 – 21 March 2013. Paul presented his collaborative work with Igor Rychkov.

- Jennifer Brown

ROY KERR INTERVIEW ON CTV

Neil Watson reports that on tuning into the Canterbury Life programme (CTV) on 13 March, he found Roy Kerr being interviewed about his Einstein Medal. The interview is available “on demand” on the CTV website and it’s about 10 minutes into the programme.

WELCOME

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Welcome to our New Postgraduate Students

Shakira (Bibi) Suwan graduated with Honours from UC in 2009 and recently rejoined us as a PhD student. Her current project, supervised by Dominic Lee and Carl Scarrott, is to develop, implement and analyse random attributed graph models and technique; for example, Bayesian latent variable model and seeded graph matching for vertex nomination. Her other interests include watching Korean and Thai soap operas, shopping and swimming.

Alan Williams is a professional engineer who is undertaking an MSc (CAMS) degree supervised by Raaz Sainudiin and Kourosh Neshatian (CSSE). He is here to learn as much as he can about the maths behind predictive analytics. In particular, he’s looking at revenue optimization for an online ad exchange using non-negative matrix factorization and regularized logistic regression on a cluster. Alan enjoys mountain biking, running, whitewater kayaking, games and he’s fascinated by government policy, music, economics and sealing wax! Alan is based over in NZi3.

Discovering blockland was the beginning of Paul Cordue’s Maths journey. Blockland is a place where numbers are represented as blocks, and operations are a manipulation of blocks. Blockland gave Paul the confidence to pursue study at university and also contributed to his success. He initially went to university to do Physics but he found that Maths was a lot of fun, so he spent most of his time studying that. After he had finished a BSc(Hons) at Victoria University, he undertook a Summer research project with Charles Semple and Simone Linz. The project was on phylogenetic networks and the task was to find out when a phylogenetic network displays the maximum number of trees. They’re still working on that problem so that’s what Paul is currently working on for his PhD, under Charles’ supervision.

Anuj (AJ) Misra describes himself as a vegan, compulsive doodler and impulsive tramper. He has joined us to complete a PhD in Mathematics working with Clemency Montelle on the History of Mathematical Astronomy in Ancient India. His involvement in this project is a culmination of his interests in ancient languages, mathematical artistry, cognition science, philosophy and socio-anthropology on the one hand and his training as an Applied Mathematician and Astrophysicist on the other. AJ looks forward to an exciting 3 years in Christchurch and, more specifically, at UC with endless intriguing discussions and countless stimulating coffees!

Robin Candy has just finished his Combined Honours year in Mathematics and Computer Science here at UC. This year, he will be doing a Masters by thesis under the supervision of Charles Semple and Mike Steel. The topic is still to be finalized but it will involve the reconstruction of phylogenetic trees from different matrices. Robin’s university interests are very broad but mainly revolve around algorithms, algebra, combinatorics and complexity. Running, strategy games (mainly board games), basketball, snowboarding and origami are his main hobbies.

WHAT’S THE CHANCE? 3 HEADS IN A ROW!
Over Summer, while on holiday with her family on Stewart Island, Jennifer went to the local pub, the South Seas Hotel, for a 6pm Friday night drink. At the same time, Prof. Bryan Stanley, a statistician who was Jennifer’s PhD supervisor at the University of Otago, arrived. He was closely followed by Prof. David Fletcher, also a statistician at the University of Otago. All three had no idea that the others would be on Stewart Island at the South Seas Hotel. Are these three independent events? Or is there some underlying process that results in statisticians holidaying in Stewart Island and drinking beer at the South Seas Hotel at 6pm on the same night in January?

- Jennifer Brown
PAPERS SUBMITTED


PAPERS ACCEPTED

Haq, A., Brown, J. and Moltchanova, E.: Improved Fast Initial Response Features for Exponentially Weighted Moving Average and Cumulative Sum Control Chart, for Quality and Reliability Engineering International


PAPERS PUBLISHED


NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY


From the Web
5. Largest Known Prime Number Discovered; Has 17,425,170 Digits (ScienceDaily) http://bit.ly/VQ8VDv
9. Changing Culture in Higher Education (Huffington Post) http://huff.to/VneRyA

On the lighter side...

John Arnold | Mathematics/Statistics Liaison Librarian
Fifteen participants from 10 countries attended the ‘Networks of Life’ meeting at the UC Cass Field Station last month to hear Mathematician Dr Barbara Holland.

Department visitor Amelia Taylor

Olivier Gascuel & Giulio Dalla Riva on Sugarloaf

Michael Matschner & Mike Steel at the finish of the Avalanche Peak challenge

Searching for a theorem in Cave Stream (Jessica Leigh, Giulio Dalla Riva, David Bryant & department visitor Benny Chor)

A chance for UC and visiting staff and students to have a weekend of academic discussion, fellowship and fresh air. Scholarly fare included talks on probability, popper, parsimony and phylogenetics, the mathematics of knots and tangles, precursors to algebraic notation, and our very own contradancing session!

- Clemency Montelle

Bill Baritompa teaching knots & tangles while Erskine visitor Peter Olsson works

The end result!

Mitch McIntyre in contemplative mood

John Hannah getting away from it all