Congratulations to Rua Murray, recipient of a 2013 award from AKO Aotearoa for sustained excellence in tertiary teaching. Rua’s citation describes him as having “a heart of gold that inspires passion for complex ideas amongst learners of all abilities.” AKO Aotearoa is New Zealand’s first Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence. It was set up as part of a $20 million Government initiative to boost the quality of teaching in all branches of the post-school education sector. A consortium of institutions headed by Massey University won the contract in 2006 to establish the Centre. The consortium includes AUT University, the University of Canterbury, Christchurch College of Education, Universal College of Learning (UCOL), and Manukau Institute of Technology. The Centre comprises a national centre in Wellington with regional hubs in Christchurch, Palmerston North and Auckland.

Congratulations to Daniel Lond who was awarded his PhD degree this month, subject to minor amendments. Daniel is based in Wellington where he works for Weta Digital. His supervisor was Ben Martin, formerly of this department but now with the University of Auckland.

Congratulations to the students who took part in the department round of the Thesis in Three event on 19 July. Postgraduate Co-ordinator Miguel Moyers-Gonzalez reports that the standard of the presentations was very impressive. The students selected to represent the department this year in the College heat are: Nick Brettell, Rachelle Binny and Anuj Misra.
Erskine Fellows
Two familiar faces have returned to our department as Erskine Fellows this month:

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH ALLMAN
Elizabeth Allman (University of Alaska, Fairbanks) is teaching in MATH102. She is hosted by James Degnan but will also be interacting with Mike Steel. Her fields of interest include tree construction methods and statistical models, modelling of evolutionary processes, mathematical biology, algebraic statistics, computational algebra, Galois theory, Brauer groups and mathematics education. Elizabeth is accompanied by her husband, John Rhodes, from the same university.

PROFESSOR CAREY PRIEBE
Carey Priebe (Johns Hopkins University Baltimore) is teaching in STAT213, giving two seminars, and participating in postgraduate research supervision on this his second Erskine Fellowship. Carey’s special fields of interest are computational statistics, kernel and mixed models, statistical pattern recognition, statistical image analysis and statistical inference for high-dimensional and graph data. Positive feedback is coming in from his Stats class for his ability to clearly explain statistical concepts, so kudos to Carey!

The Way to a Teacher’s Heart!
Liz Ackerley was delighted to receive the following message of appreciation, together with a box of chocolates, from a grateful student this month:
“I just wanted to thank you for the massive amount of help you gave me to get through MATH102 last semester. You went well above what was necessary to help me get through the course and I can’t emphasize enough how grateful I am for that”
“I left a small token of my appreciation … it’s nothing flash, I just figured it was the least I could do considering you saved me $647 and the six months it would have taken me to do the course again!”

THE ‘A’ TEAM!
These smiling faces belong to the triumphant department team that placed second at a quiz night in support of the Christchurch City Choir. Members of “The Heat” were (from left) Bill Taylor, Helen Rowley, Penelope Goode, Miguel Moyers-Gonzalez, Hilary Seddon and Phil Wilson. A second department team, “The Cruciverbalists”, consisting of Douglas and Vivien Bridges, Jennifer Brown, Malcolm Thomas, Elena Moltchanova and Walter Guttmann (CSSE), finished just outside the prizes.
Over the last two weeks, hordes of children descended on campus for events related to KidsFest. The Mathematics & Statistics Department was no exception. Four 90-minute sessions were organized, where kids had fun playing with graph theory, algorithms, probability and data exploration, as well as a fantastic fluid mechanics display. Both the kids and the parents who came along commented on the quality of the event and the fun they had participating.

One keen young mathematician even solved Elena’s puzzle set: the Department congratulates Ryan Whall.

The key players in bringing this event to a very successful fruition were (in no particular order): John, Phil, Elena, Miguel, Patrick, Paul, Helen and Maarten. We extend many thanks to our office staff and the department for putting up with the excitement.

Footnote:
Thanks to the team for their sterling work. This is the first time I can recall this department having such a presence in KidsFest and it was great to see. Activities such as these make a difference, not only for the children but also for the parents.

- Jennifer Brown
CONFERENCES AND VISITS

Rache Binny: MMEEYORK2013, University of York; MPDE2013, University of Osnabrück; and University of York research visit, August.

Douglas Bridges: Erskine Fellowship for visits to the Universities of Padua, Stockholm and Nis (Serbia) 1 April – 30 June.

Jennifer Brown: research visit to Université de Pau & Pays de l’Adour, June; Ecological Statistics Research Group Symposium, University of NSW, July; and presenting paper on Balanced Acceptance Sampling, Biometrics Conference in Perth, 1-6 December.


Alex James: MMEEYORK2013, University of York; MPDE13, University of Osnabrück; and research visit to the University of York, August.

Steve Manion: NAACL/SemEval 2013, Atlanta, Georgia, June.


Jeanette McLeod: research visit to Brendan McKay, Australian National University, August.

Elena Moltchanova: guest lectureship and research visit to the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, 28 October – 3 November.

Clemency Montelle: invited paper at an ICHTM special session, Manchester, July.

Mike Plank: Marsden-funded research visit to Richard Law and Jon Pitchford, University of York, October.

Raaz Sainudiin: invited to Banff International Research Station for Mathematical Innovation and Discovery (BIRS) to partake in a workshop titled Advances in Scalable Bayesian Computation, organised by Luke Bornn (Harvard University), Nando de Freitis (University of British Columbia), Christian Robert (Ceremade-University Paris-Dauphine) and Scott Schmidler (Duke University). The organisers are interested in the binary tree arithmetic for nonparametric Bayesian computations developed at UC. The invitation includes accommodation and meals at the BIRS facility at The Banff Centre, Alberta.

Claudia Seibold: International Workshop on Statistical Modelling, Palermo, July.

Nicholas Stringer: MMEEYORK2013, University of York; MPDE13, University of Osnabrück; and research visit to the University of York, August.

PAPERS SUBMITTED


**PAPERS ACCEPTED**


Penttinen, A., Moltchanova, E. and Nummela, I. (2013): Bayesian modelling of the evolution of male height in 18th century Finland from incomplete data, Economics & Human Biology


**PAPERS PUBLISHED**


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