



AMSI news

Geoff Prince*

A message from the outgoing chair of the AMSI Board

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Ron Sandland as the new Chairman of the AMSI Board. Ron has agreed to take up this position in the second half of 2011.

Ron comes to AMSI with a distinguished background in science and mathematics in CSIRO and beyond. Most recently Ron has been the Deputy Chief Executive of CSIRO and Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Australian National Data Service (ANDS). He has also been Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Australian Centre of Excellence in Risk Analysis (ACERA). In addition to significant senior management experience, of particular relevance to AMSI is that Ron is also a mathematician by background and training. Of course most recently Ron was the Chairman of the Committee that reviewed AMSI late last year. As a result, Ron comes with an intimate knowledge of AMSI and its key stakeholders, many of whom made submissions to the Review.

I believe that AMSI will be extremely well served by having as its Chairman a person of Ron's capacity and standing in the scientific and broader community. I am delighted that he has accepted the invitation to become Chairman and on behalf of the AMSI membership I welcome Ron to this role with warmth, enthusiasm and much expectation for visionary leadership as the Institute implements the recommendations of the Review.

Jim Lewis
Chair, AMSI Board

Here is a more complete summary of Ron's achievements.

Dr Ron Sandland BSc(Hons) (USyd), PhD (UNSW), FTSE, AM. Ron Sandland graduated from the University of Sydney in 1969 and joined the (then) Division of Mathematical Statistics of CSIRO. He gained actuarial qualifications in 1974 and his PhD from the University of New South Wales in 1980. His research interests were in applying statistics to the solving of challenging real problems in areas as diverse as growth of organisms, analysis of mark-recapture experiments, ore reserve estimation and quality improvement. He became Chief of the Division in 1988, later managing its merger with the Division of Information Technology

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into what became CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences. In 1999 he became Deputy Chief Executive of CSIRO and took responsibility for the Flagship Initiative. This involved six major cross-disciplinary research programs and was aimed at addressing problems of national priority. Ron served the Statistical Society of Australia in various capacities including a period as President from 1993 to 1995. He was made an Honorary Life Member of the Society in 1998 and won the CSIRO Medal for Lifetime Achievement in 2006. Ron chairs the Steering Committee of the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) and the Advisory Board of the Australian Centre of Excellence in Risk Analysis (ACERA). He is a member of the Council of the University of Technology Sydney and chairs its Commercial Activities Committee. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, and was made a member of the Order of Australia in 2007.

Graduate Winter School 26 June–8 July 2011 at UQ

Professor Margaret Sheil, CEO of the Australian Research Council opened the sixth annual AMSI Winter School.



Left to right: Geoff Prince, Joe Grotowski, Margaret Sheil, Michael Keniger (University of Queensland acting VC), Mark Gould

Professor Sheil talked about the importance of such events to the Australian science and research community, commenting that they help to fill the serious demand for the mathematical sciences identified in the Research Workforce Strategy. She congratulated AMSI on its commitment to research training in the mathematical sciences.

Approximately 25 students attended the Graduate Winter School. The event gives students access to courses in contemporary mathematics taught by top mathematicians. Dr Jean Lasserre (French National Centre for Scientific Research) and

Professor Jerzy Filar (University of South Australia) delivered the courses on the theme, *Global Optimisation: Theory and Applications*.

Students were exposed to a wide range of new concepts, modelling tools and algorithms. Additionally, each student presented a 30-minute talk on their own research, providing a valuable opportunity to obtain feedback from high-profile mathematicians.

The Winter School was funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) through the Collaboration And Structural Reform (CASR) Fund.

Links. AMSI Graduate Winter School in the Mathematical Sciences: www.maths.uq.edu.au/AMSI-AGTP/.

Hyamfest

Hyamfest: Geometry and Topology Down Under, was hosted by the University of Melbourne in honour of Professor J. Hyam Rubinstein. The one-off conference celebrated Hyam's contribution to the field of topology, as well as his long-standing role as an advocate for the mathematical sciences discipline. The event brought together an impressive line-up of guests from the United States, Europe and Asia, and was attended by approximately 120 students and academics.

Elisabeth Tarica from *The Age* wrote about Hyamfest in an article that appeared on Monday 18 July. The article drew attention to the parlous state of mathematics in Australia, and how some of the nation's best mathematical minds have been lost to overseas institutions. She wrote

They say that if Australia continues to slide backwards in maths education and the disciplines it supports, the shortage of workers with high-level mathematics and statistics capabilities could jeopardise the nation's economic and research capability.

AMSI hosted a free public lecture on 19 July in conjunction with the conference. Professor Danny Calegari, from the California Institute of Technology, delivered the lecture entitled *The Shape of the Internet*.

Links. Article in *The Age*: www.theage.com.au/national/education/maths-man-fears-for-its-future-20110717-1hjvv.html; Hyamfest homepage: www.ms.unimelb.edu.au/~hyamfest/.

Summer is coming . . .

. . . and so are the AMSI events. In this issue of the *Gazette* you will find our ads for the 2012 Summer School at UNSW, BioInfoSummer at WEHI in December and the Vacation Research Scholarships. There are two important features of the Summer School that shouldn't be overlooked. One is that around half of the

attendees are postgraduate students. The Summer School provides an invaluable opportunity for postgraduates to get some coursework under their belts especially in career-focused areas such as operations research and statistics. Secondly, the Summer School isn't just about coursework. There are embedded events such as guest lectures, careers events with presentations from employers such as the ABS, DSTO and the Bureau of Meteorology, scientific programming short courses and many barbeques and excursions.



I was a Monash undergraduate and took out a La Trobe PhD in 1981 in geometric mechanics and Lie groups. This was followed by a postdoc at the Institute for Advanced Study in Dublin. I've enjoyed teaching at RMIT, UNE and La Trobe. My research interests lie mainly in differential equations, differential geometry and the calculus of variations. I'm a proud Fellow of the Society, currently a Council and Steering Committee Member. I became AMSI director in September 2009.