

Obituary



Alex Rubinov
28 March 1940 – 9 September 2006

Alex Rubinov was born in Leningrad (now St Petersburg), Russia in 1940 and did his undergraduate studies at Leningrad State University. This was followed by a Ph.D. in Novosibirsk, Siberia and an advanced doctorate at Moscow University. Subsequently, he held positions in Leningrad and Karlini in Russia. Then he joined his mentor, Nobel Prize winning mathematician and economist, Leonid Kantorovich, in the scientific research centre near Novosibirsk. He enjoyed 7 years there until he needed to escape anti-Semitism by moving to Baku, Azerbaijan where he was head of the mathematics institute. With the fall of the Soviet Union he moved to Ben Gurion University in Beersheba, Israel. After a comparatively short sojourn there, in 1996 he migrated to Australia and joined the staff of the University of Ballarat. He finally thrived in the peace and tranquillity of Ballarat, and Australia in order to escape anti-Semitism and Soviet oppression, but always nurtured his international circle of research colleagues and attracted many to visit Ballarat and some to join its staff.

The University of Ballarat quickly recognised its luck in having an international researcher and scholar of the calibre of Alex Rubinov and appointed him Professor of Mathematics. Six years ago, the University established the research centre CIAO (Centre for Informatics and Applied Optimization) with Alex as its founding Director. Under his leadership, CIAO was successful in becoming a research centre of both national and international repute. It is recognized for both its theoretical and practical research in non-smooth optimization. Over that period, the research output of CIAO increased ninefold with an annual commercial income of \$2 million and annual grant income of some \$500,000. Alex's academic and personal impact was such that, at his funeral, scores of tributes from international scholars as well as many Australian colleagues were read. Professor Phil Howlett of the University of South Australia said "Alex was a very fine mathematician who made a magnificent contribution to mathematics in Australia. His passing is a great loss."

Over his career Alex published 17 monographs and textbooks, 12 edited books and journal special issues and more than 200 research papers. His most cited work is the book *Abstract Convexity and Global Optimization*, published in 2000 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. While at the University of Ballarat, Alex was the recipient of many Australian Research Council grants, as well as other national competitive grants and research contracts. He continued to work in optimization and convexity and founded the area of monotonic analysis as well as initiating new optimization approaches to data mining. Alex supervised over 40 PhD students, half of these at the University of Ballarat. Along with his scholarly achievements, Alex was also recognised for his wonderful human qualities and his ability to relate, not only to his colleagues and students, but also to industry partners and clients. Many mathematicians do their best work before they are 40 and their publication rate drops off dramatically as they age. This could not be further from the truth in the case of Alex. In recent years he was at the pinnacle of his research productivity and to the end had plans and initiatives for the future. He was honoured days before his death as the 2006 Fellow for the Continuous Optimization Working Group of EURO (EUROPT - The Association of European Operational Research Societies). To focus, however, on Alex's academic achievements alone would be to ignore Alex the person. The School of Information Technology and Mathematical Sciences (ITMS) of the University of Ballarat has eighty staff, all of whom liked and respected him as a scholar and as a person. Despite his great achievements, Alex was a modest and humble man and always a gentleman. Even when close to the end, when the Vice-Chancellor visited him in hospital, Alex stood up for him. Professor Mirka Miller of ITMS used the following words in connection with Alex: "excellence, integrity, gentleness, and excellence again." Professor Karl Hofmann of Darmstadt University of Technology and his wife Isolde visited Ballarat for extended periods. He wrote as follows: "Alex will be remembered as an outstanding scholar, as one of the most prominent colleagues and personalities of the University of Ballarat, and as a very gentle, modest, and wonderful person. Isolde and I feel all the better for having known him and having enjoyed his friendship and hospitality." At the University of Ballarat, he is greatly missed both as a colleague and as a friend. At Alex's funeral I described Alex in the following way: "not only a gentleman and a scholar, but also a truly lovely person". Condolences from around the world can be read at <http://www.ballarat.edu.au/ard/itms/CIAO/condolences.shtml>. Alex was very devoted to, and proud of, his family. He is survived by his wife Dr Zari Dzalilov (also a mathematician in ITMS), and children Eldar and Mikail, and children from his first marriage, Svetlana and Vadim.

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