

Minutes of the Meeting of the Irish Mathematical Society

Annual General Meeting

28 August 2012

The Irish Mathematical Society held its Annual General Meeting from 16:00 to 17:30 on Friday 3 September at IT Tallaght. There were 24 members present at the meeting.

(1) **Minutes of AGM 30 August 2011.**

The minutes of the last AGM were approved and signed.

(2) **Matters Arising.**

The President reported that he had detected little enthusiasm among the membership of the Society for associate membership of the International Council for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (ICIAM).

(3) **Correspondence.**

The Society received a letter soliciting nominations for the King Faisal Prize.

An email was also received from the President-elect of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), Robert Devaney, offering to come to next year's Meeting.

(4) **Membership Applications.**

The following have been approved as new ordinary members.

Tom Cooney (post-doctoral researcher, Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

Ronan Flatley (teaching fellow, UCD)

Ivan Lyberg (Schrödinger Fellow, DIAS)

Azadeh Nikou (student, Tarbiat Moallem University, Tehran)

Pádraig Ó Catháin (lecturer, NUIG)

Niall Christopher Ryan (UL)

(5) President's and Vice President's Reports.

Since many of the President's usual duties were performed by the Vice President, the latter reported on the Society's activities over the last year. He attended the Presidents' Meeting of the European Mathematical Society in Prague. The outlook for mathematics at the European level continues to be gloomy.

He reported that PhD students can apply for free membership of the EMS.

(6) Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer presented her report for 2011. It showed a healthy surplus of €1248.49, but there was at least one big conference whose expenses had not yet been paid.

C. Stack raised the question of whether the Society could get more money from the government, for professional development of its members for example. The Treasurer mentioned that there already is a body Teacher Professional Networks funded by the Department of Education and Skills. It was also pointed out that J. Cruickshank tried during his time as President to obtain money from the SFI to distribute to mathematics conferences, but without success.

(7) Bulletin.

The Editor told the meeting that the Bulletin is exchanged with other journals, and it should be decided where new issues of the exchanged journals should go. A link to a document recording where the exchanged journals go should be put on the Society's website.

(8) Elections to Committee.

The following were elected unopposed to the committee:

Committee	Member	Proposer	Secunder
M. Mathieu	(President)	S. Wills	M. Mackey
M. Mackey	(Vice President)	S. Wills	M. Mathieu
B. Kreußler		S. Wills	S. O Rourke
M. Mac An Airchinnigh		S. O Rourke	M. Mackey

C. Stack agreed to serve another two-year term on the Committee.

As editor, A. O'Farrell will be invited to committee meetings. The total number of years each existing member will have been on the committee as of 31 December 2012 will be: S. Breen (6), S. O'Rourke (6), S. Buckley (5), C. Hills (5), A. Wickstead (5), S. Wills (5), C. Stack (4), M. Mackey (3), R. Quinlan (3), M. Mathieu (2), J. Gleeson (1), B. Kreußler (1).

The following will then have one more year of office: S. Breen, S. Buckley, A. Wickstead, R. Quinlan.

(9) Funding for Mathematical Sciences.

It was pointed out that there are very few funding opportunities for mathematics research in the country. A short meeting on the subject of research funding took place the previous day during one of the breaks in the programme. This meeting was attended by about 20 members. One of the major concerns expressed at this meeting was that many applications for funding were 'administratively withdrawn' without being sent for peer review.

The President asked for any suggestions on this matter to be sent to him. He intended to take the opinions expressed on board, then meet with Gary McGuire and make contact with SFI to try to reverse their withdrawal of funding of mathematics.

(10) Discussion Boards/Popularisation of Mathematics.

The President raised the possibility of creating an online discussion board where members of the Society could express and share their views. (Currently the mailing list `mathdep` is used primarily for notices of upcoming seminars and conferences, but has recently come to be used as a forum for sharing opinions on mathematical matters.)

It was pointed out that discussion boards had been successfully used for virtual committee meetings in recent years. They had the advantage that contributions were automatically recorded.

The President asked for anybody who had the necessary IT skills to help create such a forum to contact him. (N. Ryan said that he might be in a position to help.)

(11) **Future Meetings.**

The 2013 Meeting will take place in NUI Maynooth, most likely in the second week of September.

The 2014 Meeting will take place in QUB on 5-6 September. The 2015 Meeting will take place in UCC.

(12) **Project Maths.**

There was a discussion on Project Maths, the new programme for mathematics teaching and examination at second level, which was now being taken by all senior-cycle students, and had been sat by all Leaving Certificate students in 2012 for the first time. (Previously it had been sat by a limited number of students on a pilot basis.) Concerns had been expressed by many groups that the extent and depth of the material covered was now inadequate preparation for many third-level courses, and also risked putting Irish students at a disadvantage when applying for third-level places overseas.

It was pointed out that various groupings had produced reports on Project Maths, notably an interim report from UCC, a report by Cora Stack and collaborators, and by the education subcommittee of the Royal Irish Academy. It was further highlighted that Project Maths is under constant review, and that the Society should keep itself informed of developments.

The main question facing the Meeting was whether the Society should have, or formulate, a position on Project Maths. It was pointed out that holding ‘positions’ is not typical of the Society (although positions had previously been formed in recent years, notably on service teaching at third level, and on bonus points for third-level entry).

C. Stack proposed the formation of an Education Matters Committee which would be broadly based, and would tap into some of the expertise of people in the Society.

G. Lesells said that the Society would need to have the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association on board, as it would be ineffectual to have a position completely at odds with them. It would be interesting to find out how teachers find the new

syllabus. However, the President said that we should first make up our own minds, leaving any joint initiatives with the IMTA as a separate issue.

S. Dineen expressed reservations on the manner in which the debate on Project Maths has run in recent months and recommended a cooling off period.

S. Breen said that the biggest change was in teaching methodology rather than a change in syllabus.

However, C. Stack mentioned that a great deal of important material was now dropped from the syllabus or sidelined, notably calculus, vectors, matrices, sequences and series.

The President said that there was no point in debating the details of Project Maths at the Meeting. S. Buckley stated that it would be worthwhile to see if there are people willing to join an Education Matters committee to consider this matter.

A. O'Farrell reminded the Meeting that there are structures in place to facilitate constructive feedback through the Mathematical Sciences Committee of the Royal Irish Academy.

(13) **AOB.**

There was no other business.

Shane O Rourke
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