

NZMS PRESIDENTIAL REPORT, DECEMBER 2021

I teach a 100-level mathematical modelling course. For years I've covered classical epidemiological models, usually spiced up with zombies and clips from the Contagion movie. I thought that this semester was the time I'd really get to demonstrate how relevant maths is. We'd explore the very same models that were being discussed on the news. As it turned out, the students are just as fatigued by COVID and lockdown and zoom as we are.

For Academics, this has been a year of online lectures, online tutorials, online exams, online conferences and seminars and, for me, an almost completely online tenure as president of the NZMS. So I was really very disappointed to miss out on an in-person Colloquium this year. I'm confident that the micro-colloquium will work fine, but it is not a great substitute, just like online teaching is no substitute for classrooms, despite the wishful thinking of our university administrators.

Despite all that, the NZMS has still had a very active and successful year.

There has been a lot of work around the high-profile Royal Society panel on mathematics education, chaired by Gaven Martin. Several NZMS members were on the panel itself, others were involved preparing reviews and providing other support. The panel demonstrated a critical need to change mathematics education in this country, for both economic and social reasons. The NZMS must play a key role in following up this report and helping bring about the real change needed.

The education group has also been extremely active in the current revision of NCEA level mathematics, writing submissions, helping modernise the curriculum, and making sense of what decolonisation means for mathematics.

There has been ongoing work improving links between the NZMS and others in the mathematical community (and beyond). We have signed a reciprocal agreement with AMSI¹ an organisational with an impressive track record of championing mathematics and statistics and building links. They have promised concrete support in a range of areas. We are carrying on talks with AMSI, the NZSA² and ANZIAM³ aimed at creating internship opportunities for NZ mathematics and statistics students.

Those involved in student advising will be aware of the MathsAdds initiative⁴, a fabulous online career resource for mathematics students and academics. For the first time, this Australian publication will include NZ students and positions.

We are working on the website. The NZMS website has been an invaluable tool for communicating with members, supporting students and advocating for mathematics.

¹ Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute: <https://amsi.org.au/>

² New Zealand Statistical Association

³ Australia and New Zealand Industrial Applied Mathematics

⁴ <https://careers.amsi.org.au/>

We have started a complete redesign of the site, building on the years of expert, and much valued, work by John Shanks.

The trial run for the NZMS seminar was, for the most part, successful. The intention was to provide a framework to broadcast quality talks from different universities. We will also invite speakers directly. We will be in contact with local seminar organisers early in the new year and draw up a schedule for the semester.

The society is working hard to reduce representation bias with respect to gender, diversity and identity. Aspects of this work should become embedded in our bylaws and constitution. I also think that our constitution should reflect the fact that the society is part of Aotearoa New Zealand and acknowledge our obligations under the Treaty. Expect consultation and discussion documents on these changes in the new year.

Finally, I have a large number of people to thank on behalf of myself and the NZMS.

Thanks to the Prize Committee, accreditation committee, Gillian Thornley prize committee and the Nomination Committee. These people, who remain anonymous, do critical work keeping our selection process fair and effective. Thanks to those in the education committee, particular the former convenor Cami Sawyer and the new co-convenors Julia Crawford and Sione Ma'u. Thank you John Shanks and David Simpson for maintaining the NZMS website, and to Fabien Montiel and Melissa Tacy for editing the newsletter. Thanks again to John Shanks for his work as membership secretary.

A big thank you to the NZMS council. My abrupt jump to the position of president entailed a pretty steep learning curve, and the council have patiently tolerated my lack of experience with NZMS protocols.

Finally I'm especially indebted to Graham Donovan as vice president and Phil Wilson as secretary. Both of Graham and Phil agreed to take these positions as a temporary stop-gap. I've really appreciated their support, hard work, and sage advice.

David Bryant
NZMS President