

Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences
Management Committee 9th June 2015

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Correspondents
2 April 2015 at the Isaac Newton Institute
“The INI Correspondent’s Network: A Lossy Channel?”

Chair: Christie Marr (CMM)
Present: John Toland (JFT), Sara Wilkinson (SJW)

Surname	Forename	Representing
Abrahams	David	ICMS
Bahsoun	Wael	Loughborough University
Bayer	Arend	University of Edinburgh
Brzezinski	Thomas	University of Wales (Swansea)
Burbanks	Andrew	University of Portsmouth
Cullen	Mike	Met Office
Davies	Russell	Cardiff University
Elton	Daniel	Lancaster University
Goldie	Charles	University of Sussex
Gorban	Alexander	University of Leicester
Hammond	Paul	Schlumberger Cambridge Research
Healey	Jonathan	Keele University
Hrynyiv	Ostap	University of Durham
Hydon	Peter	University of Kent
Ilin	Konstantin	University of York
Kerr	Oliver	City University, London
Kerr	Robert	University of Warwick
Mackenzie	Kirill	University of Sheffield
Majid	Shahn	Queen Mary, University of London
Maree	Stan	John Innes Centre
McCartney	Mark	University of Ulster
Mestel	Ben	Open University
Mishuris	Gennady	Aberystwyth University
Moiola	Andrea	University of Reading
Parau	Emilian	University of East Anglia
Rietsch	Konstanze	King's College London
Vallis	Geoffrey	University of Exeter

Apologies were received from Michael Singer (Chair of Correspondents).

Introduction

JFT thanked everyone for attending and CMM outlined the current problems with the Network of Correspondents. In particular, CMM wished to elicit whether the Correspondent's network is currently fit for purpose (and indeed what that purpose was). Discussions took place in the key areas of Spread of Correspondents, the best people to be Correspondents, duties of Correspondents, Correspondents bulletins and the future role of Correspondents.

JFT explained that the Network of Correspondents was established after the National Advisory Board (NAB) was disbanded in 2008. The NAB had been formed in response to concerns about how INI was fulfilling its national remit. At that time, EPSRC top-sliced grants to fund INI, and departments needed reassurance that they were getting value for money. This no longer happens, and it cannot be argued that INI does not fulfil its role as a national institute. Modern communication methods (such as Skype) and the live streaming of seminars mean that INI can be in anyone's office every day.

Spread of Correspondents and who they are

David Abrahams (ICMS) pointed out that there were 53 Institutions in the REF and that these should all have an INI Correspondent representative.

ACTION: SJW to check.

Thomas Brzezinski (Wales, Swansea) said that the best way to choose Correspondents was to select from people that have attended an INI programme. This would help with keeping Correspondents engaged with the activities of INI (because they would have first hand insight into the role of INI). A show of hands revealed that of those present 11 Correspondents and 6 replacement Correspondents had attended an INI programme.

Other thoughts and questions that emerged were:

- Correspondents who are regularly in touch with INI may feel that they are already engaged with INI activities, so therefore do not take notice of the bulletins;
- The duties of Correspondents need to be restated to all;
- HOD's should be involved if Correspondents are found to be lacking;
- Is it better that Correspondents are Directors of research rather than someone who has been to INI?
- A communication strategy is needed to ensure that underrepresented areas are targeted;
- A clear email should be sent out asking Correspondents if they wish to remain a Correspondent; those that don't reply to the email are removed from the Correspondents list and another representative is sought.

ACTION: SJW to check.

Duties of Correspondents

David Abrahams (ICMS) said that the role of INI Correspondent should be regarded as critical in UK mathematical sciences institutions. A Correspondent should be distributing information, conducting triaging and seeking the best fit for INI activity. Circulating outside of their own department to other relevant areas that would not necessarily be otherwise engaged with the activities of INI e.g. epidemiology. HOD's should nominate an 'INI Ambassador'.

Gennady Mishuris (Aberystwyth) supported David Abrahams and added that Correspondents should actively engage with other departments, including attending meetings in other departments and championing the INI at every opportunity.

Bulletins

CMM asked if it was felt that the format of INI Correspondent's Bulletin was useful and fit for purpose. It was agreed that the new-style bulletin was fine for general information and contained the 'essential ingredients'. CMM reported that it was alarming that INI tracking figures showed that less than half Correspondents opened the bulletins.

Konstanze Rietsch (King's College London) suggested that programme organisers might wish to send more targeted information to Correspondents about their programmes.

Mike Cullen (Met Office) suggested that Correspondent's should be sending more targeted emails to their departments – but the bulletin doesn't allow for this splitting up of information. This can have the effect of Correspondents effectively *blocking* the communications channel between INI and the mathematical sciences community (INI feels that material is being circulated – but Correspondents are not passing it on). JFT commented that LMS sends out a monthly e-bulletin with useful information including a list upcoming events. It would be useful if there was a generic email address that INI could send to directly (missing out the Correspondents), but this is not possible as all departments have their own internal emailing lists that they understandably protect (hence the need for Correspondents). It was suggested that bulletins are sent directly to HOD's for forwarding on, but this was discounted because it was likely that HOD's would be too busy (hence the reason why HOD's nominate a Correspondent).

Mark McCartney (Ulster) stated that Correspondents still need to receive bulletins and supported the idea that Correspondents need reminding to fulfil their role – and indeed nurture and encourage representatives from other departments who are not necessarily mathematics departments.

Ben Mestel (Open) suggested that the name 'Correspondent' might be changed and that the 'Correspondent's Bulletin' was not particularly meaningful when forwarded on to colleagues. He suggested a revision of the name. **ACTION: SJW to look at revising name of Bulletin.**

The INI Newsletter should be sent to Correspondents in hard copy format (currently it is only circulated electronically) as it is ideal to leave on coffee tables in departments. **ACTION: SJW to circulate Newsletters in hard copy to Correspondents.**

Future role of Correspondents

David Abrahams (ICMS) said that someone doing the role of Correspondent is still needed. *Andy Burbanks (Portsmouth)* said that a human face as a contact is really valuable. *Peter Hydon (Kent)* would like to see the view from mathematical sciences departments better represented by Correspondents. *Kirill Mackenzie (Sheffield)* wondered if Correspondents could be made aware of INI Junior Members in their department so that they can be particularly encouraged to engage with INI.

It was suggested that Correspondents from institutions some distance from INI are never realistically able to attend Correspondent's Day, so perhaps INI could go to them and the Annual Meeting could be held in different parts of the country and be an INI Roadshow.

Shahn Majid (Queen Mary) suggested that INI sends an email to everyone who has participated in INI activity and ask them to sign up to receive INI info (in the form of a bulletin or Newsletter). The name of a designated person 'Friend of INI' or 'INI Ambassador' can be given to individuals as a helpful person that has been to INI.