

Report on the Correspondents' Day 2013

Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences

This year's meeting of the Correspondents was held at INI on Monday 10th June 2013. There were 28 attendees including 20 (out of a possible 55) Correspondents or their substitutes from universities and 4 (out of a possible 31) Correspondents or their substitutes from other organisations. A full list of attendees is included at the end of this document.

The agenda for the day was as follows:

12.00	Lunch
13.00	Welcome and Introduction.
13.15	Correspondents Day Lecture. Christl Donnelly (Imperial). <i>Science and the challenge of evidence-based policy.</i>
14.15	Session 1: Developments at INI.
15.00	Tea
15.30	Group Discussions
16.30	Feedback from Group Discussions
17.00	Rothschild Seminar. Peter Constantin (Princeton). <i>Nonlocal Evolution Equations.</i>
18.00	Wine Reception

In the Welcome and Introduction, Chair of Correspondents, Michael Singer (UCL), identified actions and outcomes following comments and suggestions made at the 2012 meeting. Issues of particular concern to Correspondents in 2012 had been support for early career researchers and for women in mathematics, and the opportunities created by social media. The Chair informed Correspondents that INI had held 5 one-day events for early career researchers in March 2013 and that funding restrictions for students had recently been relaxed by EPSRC. He commented that INI had revised and updated its Gender Balance Action Plan and that it had hosted the 2013 LMS Women in Mathematics Days. Finally, INI has embraced social media and has approximately 1000 likes on Facebook and 900 followers and 200 tweets on Twitter. He reported that the Mathematics of Liquid Crystals programme had recently used Google+ Hangout to facilitate a virtual poster session between INI programme participants and students and faculty at the Liquid Crystal Institute, Kent State University, Ohio.

Christl Donnelly is Professor of Statistical Epidemiology at the MRC Centre for Outbreak Analysis and Modelling in the Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at Imperial College London. She was a member of the 1997 Krebs Review Committee examining the links between bovine tuberculosis and badgers, and the Deputy Chair of the Independent Scientific Group on bovine tuberculosis from 1998 to 2007. She also helped to advise policymakers about BSE/variant CJD, FMD, SARS and pandemic influenza. In this talk she discussed the relationship between science and policy and in particular the diverse policies put in place across the UK for tackling the spread of TB following a randomized badger culling trial on the spread of TB and the impact of control measures put in place during the 2001 Foot and Mouth outbreak.

In Session 1 the Director reported on developments at INI including the outcome of the recent funding application to the Research Councils. He reported that INI had been successful in its application but that, due to restrictions imposed on INI by EPSRC, the

application had been for £6m over four years. Thus, he concluded, despite incredibly strong letters of support from across and beyond the mathematical sciences community, and despite the grant proposal scoring 35/36 through the peer review process, the agreed settlement represents a 15% cut in cash terms in support from the Research Councils combined from 2011 levels. He reported also the shift in funding from EPSRC alone to the Research Councils collectively and the pressure that INI was being put under to further engage with BBSRC, ESRC, NERC and STFC.

Session 1 finished with a presentation by Jane Leeks, the recently appointed University of Cambridge Mathematics Knowledge Transfer Facilitator, who manages the newly founded Turing Gateway to Mathematics (TGM), an initiative conceived by INI in response to the UK Government's "Impact" agenda. Reflecting the fact that the mathematical sciences play such a key part in all aspects of modern society, TGM aims to bridge the gap between academic mathematicians, business and government, and other academic disciplines by facilitating the flow of knowledge and ideas from the mathematical sciences to potential users.

In the group sessions, animated discussions were led by Ulrike Tillman (University of Oxford) and Frank Neumann (University of Leicester). Two topics were of particular interest to Correspondents: the role of Correspondent and the timing of Correspondents' Day; and the role and aims of TGM. Additionally they commented first that INI should address the Research Councils' "Developing Leaders" agenda by encouraging programme proposers to include academics from across a range of career stages in their Organising Committees and, second, that the shift in funding from EPSRC to the Research Councils collectively should not influence programme selection: INI should continue to select only the best programmes.

Correspondents felt strongly that the role of INI Correspondent should entail more than simply forwarding emails about forthcoming INI activities to interested parties and welcomed increased opportunities to provide feedback, including via questionnaires. They observed that some Correspondents are more effective/diligent than others about forwarding on information. Some thought that alternative technologies should be used for passing on information but others felt that email was still the most effective medium. Correspondents noted the low attendance rate at Correspondents' Days and suggested that INI investigate scheduling it at a different time of year. They felt that attending Correspondents' Day, or identifying a representative to attend in your place, should be one of the duties of a Correspondent. There was a general consensus that the role of Correspondent is an important one and that Correspondents who were not effective in passing on information about INI activities or providing institutional feedback should be encouraged to stand down.

Correspondents asked for greater clarification of the aims of TGM and how it differed from already established institutions and networks. They questioned whether its purpose was solely to provide end users of mathematics with a means for identifying mathematicians to help them solve their problems, observing that there was also a need for identifying industrial contacts for mathematicians who had a result that they felt could be useful to business or industry. They asked about the governance of TGM and questioned whether TGM would be Cambridge-centric or whether it would put users of mathematics in touch with mathematicians from across the UK, suggesting that a "Board of Expertise" should be created. Correspondents were concerned about the somewhat limited interpretation of

“impact” as defined by REF and suggested that TGM be used as a platform for advocating a broader understanding of this term.

Correspondents were invited to attend the Rothschild Seminar given by Peter Constantin, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor in the Department of Mathematics at Princeton University, and Rothschild Distinguished Visiting Fellow on the INI programme Mathematical Modelling and Analysis of Complex Fluids and Active Media in Evolving Domains.

List of Attendees and their Home Institutions

Chris Athorne	University of Glasgow
Roger Behrend	Cardiff University
Thomas Brzezinski	University of Wales (Swansea)
Andrew Burbanks	University of Portsmouth
Christl Donnelly	Imperial College London
Jan Gutowski	University of Surrey
Rod Halburd	University College London
Paul Harris	University of Brighton
Richard Hibbs	OR Society
Antal Jari	University of Bath
John King	University of Nottingham
Stephen Langdon	University of Reading
R Murray Lark	British Geological Survey
Xue-Mei Li	University of Warwick
Christie Marr	Isaac Newton Institute
Ben Mestel	The Open University
Frank Neumann	University of Leicester
Anthony Pearson	Schlumberger Cambridge Research
David Penman	University of Essex
Konstanze Rietsch	King's College
Michael Singer	University College London
Igor Smolyarenko	Brunel University
Shaun Stevens	University of East Anglia
Claire Tansley	EPSRC
Ulrike Tillmann	University of Oxford
John Toland	Isaac Newton Institute
Djoko Wirosoetisno	University of Durham