



AMSI news

Geoff Prince¹

Jim Lewis, Chair of the AMSI Board, retires

Jim has been Chair of the AMSI Board from day one back in 2002. A BHP executive, a successful businessman in his own right, a chemical engineer and an awarded university lecturer, Jim was exactly the sort of over-achiever that AMSI's architects wanted as independent chair of the board. This isn't the place for a long tribute. The AMSI Members and Board will be celebrating Jim's contribution at the forthcoming meetings in July, but I can quote from the recent AMSI Review:

AMSI was fortunate to attract the services of Jim Lewis, a former BHP executive, as Chair of its Board. Jim has been inspirational in his unflagging efforts on behalf of AMSI. A brief summary of his contributions include maintaining AMSI's relationship with the University of Melbourne, appointing and mentoring a series of AMSI Directors, negotiating complex contracts such as BlueScope Steel's involvement in the ICE-EM outreach program, taking a hands-on leadership role when there was no director and direct involvement in negotiations to bring significant funding to AMSI. The Panel salutes this massive contribution without which AMSI's survival would have been jeopardised.

A full tribute to Jim will soon be available at www.amsi.org.au, along with an extended interview.

The importance of brand integrity

One of the exciting parts of this job is dealing with the huge entrepreneurial capacity of the discipline. Yes, I confess 'exciting' is a bit facetious here, but not the 'entrepreneurial capacity' bit. You have only to look at the individuals in leadership roles to see what I mean. They didn't start being leaders at the age of fifty! So there are many enthusiastic and ambitious mathematicians out there throwing out great ideas in various directions. The task of the AMSI director is to project this activity tangentially onto AMSI's sphere of interest. Of course when these directions are orthogonal to ours the task can be impossible but generally I make the 'national benefit, don't divide the resource, everyone loves a team player' type argument. (One day someone will assess the personality traits of mathematicians and confirm what I already know: we're mainly goat-like and not at all sheep-like.) I hope you're still with me because what I'm saying is that personal ambition is what turns one group of 50 people into 50 groups of one person each. For mathematics this can be a dangerous thing because the agencies which fund national

¹Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, Building 161, c/- The University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. E-mail: director@amsi.org.au

initiatives in our discipline and in others want to know that they are dealing with the group of 50. AMSI is in the facilitation business and I invite you to come and knock on my door the next time you feel ambitious.

TIMES project comes to an end

This remarkable project could not have been delivered by any other group in Australia and we are rightly proud of the outstanding results that Janine McIntosh and Michael Evans have achieved. Here is the abstract of the newly published report to DEEWR:

The purpose of the Improving Mathematics Education in Schools (TIMES) Project was to provide an integrated approach to increasing mathematics achievement, especially in low SES communities, to develop innovative resources to support the national mathematics curriculum and to raise awareness of career opportunities in occupations and professions requiring mathematics skills.

The project supported improved learning outcomes for Australian school students by

- expanding the AMSI's outreach in schools based on the AMSI/BlueScope model into regions of demonstrably low SES communities
- developing and disseminating innovative teaching and learning resources to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics
- developing materials and strategies to raise awareness among parents, school career advisers and others about mathematics in different careers
- facilitating the involvement of mathematical scientists in the 'Mathematicians in Schools' component of the Scientists in Schools Program
- supporting the creation of Maths by Email, a fortnightly e-newsletter with the aim of inspiring students, parents and teachers to see the beauty and importance of mathematics in our lives, in collaboration with CSIRO

In a period of just under two years AMSI has delivered

- school mathematics support in 6 Outreach clusters comprising 54 schools — 13 Secondary Schools, 38 Primary Schools, 3 P-12 Schools
- potential impact on the mathematics learning of over 28 000 students
- 123 days of professional development delivered in the first six months of 2010, 93 days of professional development delivered in the second half of 2010. This made a total of 216 days for the 2010 school year.
- 68 Teacher Content Modules written equating to over 3000 pages of material designed to elevate the content knowledge of primary teachers, secondary mathematics teachers and secondary teachers teaching out of area

- a website hosting Teacher Content Modules: www.amsi.org.au/teachermodules providing national support for the teachers implementing the Australian Curriculum
- upload of Teacher Content Modules to ‘Scootle’ via Education Services Australia
- Regional Departments of Education and key stakeholder support for intervention programs designed to enhance the teaching and learning of mathematics
- assessment of 28 existing careers resources and interviews with over 100 stakeholders involved in careers education
- videos of 12 careers requiring mathematics complete
- 12 posters featuring profiles of the mathematics requirements of different careers
- a website www.mathscareers.org.au
- production of a 24-page booklet with 20 profiles of people demonstrating that mathematics is essential to their work and to a successful career
- 25 000 careers booklets, 264 000 posters and 9700 careers video DVDs produced
- careers packs sent to every school in the country — 2 sets of 12 posters, DVD and one careers booklet for each primary and 2 sets of 12 posters, DVD and 5 careers booklets sent to each secondary and P–12 school.



I was a Monash undergraduate and took out a La Trobe PhD in 1981 in geometric mechanics and Lie groups. This was followed by a postdoc at the Institute for Advanced Study in Dublin. I've enjoyed teaching at RMIT, UNE and La Trobe. My research interests lie mainly in differential equations, differential geometry and the calculus of variations. I'm a proud Fellow of the Society, currently a Council and Steering Committee Member. I became AMSI director in September 2009.