

Physics & Astronomy

FROM THE DEPUTY HOD (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PETER COTTRELL)

Greetings from Dunedin and the 13th NZIP Conference. Some great talks already and some good interaction with the physics teaching community. Long may this continue.

A couple of highlights to date. Carl Wieman's plenary talk on 'Science education in the 21st century' was an excellent overview of some of the ideas and techniques that are being undertaken at Canterbury, through the course for our teaching staff and graduate students, as well as the 'clicker' technology and the use of simulations. The second plenary session was by Gerard Milburn from the University of Queensland and discussed a number of aspects of quantum computing.

I only had about a day and a half in the office this week and that followed a Friday to Sunday in Auckland at the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand conference. There were great contributions from staff and students of the Department. Next year's conference will be held in Tekapo - a little earlier than normal to avoid potential snow and logistical problems - and highlights our facilities on Mount John.

Next week - at 12 noon on Tuesday, July 10 in Room 701 - we will have a full Department meeting as part of our regular monthly meetings. The main topic will be promotion of the Department to bring to the fore the things that we have been doing in this area to date and to focus our attention on developing strategies for student growth within our physics & astronomy programme. I'd also like to report briefly on some related aspects discussed at the NZIP Conference, as well as some local matters. But the emphasis will be on promotion.

Round the Traps this week...

On Thursday Jon-Paul Wells played host to Prof Francis Everitt from Stanford University who visited the department and ring laser group. Francis is the principal scientist for Gravity Probe B and was expected to give an excellent account of the GP-B programme as well as some thoughts on the ring lasers we have here at Canterbury. He was delivering a science prestige lecture dealing with these topics as this newsletter went to press.

Also on Thursday afternoon members of the Department attended the College of Science Forum on the feedback received on the College Plan.

SEMINAR THIS WEEK : - 11:00AM, FRIDAY 6 JULY

Professor Daniel Sudarsky

National Autonomous University of Mexico

Cosmological Mysteries and the Problematic Quantum Origin of the Cosmic Structure.

We will go through a brief review of the current status of the most important questions of cosmology, focussing at the end on a critical analysis of the current understanding of the origin of structure in inflationary scenarios. Then we will present a phenomenological model constructed to address the problematic issues, which is inspired on R. Penrose's proposal for a possible modification of Quantum Mechanics associated with Quantum Gravity and show that these ideas are in fact susceptible to being empirically explored.

NO SEMINAR PLANNED: - 11:00AM, FRIDAY 13 JULY

CONGRATULATIONS – NEW BABE

With his heart almost bursting with pride Dr John Pritchard (former Astronomy PhD student and Postdoctoral Fellow with the Dept) announces the birth of daughter Sophie Morgane. Born the 30th of May she is now 1 month old and John reports that both Vanessa and Sophie are doing wonderfully.

You can see pictures at: <http://www.vjpd.net/~smpd>

JULY 2007 SCHOLARSHIPS – WEB SITE

View General Scholarships at:-

<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/scholarships/resources/currentnoticeboard.shtml>

College of Science Scholarship

<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/scholarships/noticeboard/july2007sci.shtml>

NEWS FROM THE PHYSICAL SCIENCE LIBRARY

1. New titles in the UC Library...<http://tinyurl.com/law9a>
2. Journal Citation Reports 2006 data now available. JCR allows you to determine a publication's impact and influence in the global research community. Access JCR via the Library's Databases pages <http://library.canterbury.ac.nz/databases/>
3. From the Bigger Faster dept...<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/6241566.stm>
4. Wondering about the physics of sailing? <http://tinyurl.com/2zdpjt>
5. More on boats and Heritage Week... <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/voyages/>

Adam - <http://library.canterbury.ac.nz/people/cath.shtml>

AMUSING (JENNY WILLIAMS)

A Commission has just announced that English will be the official language of the European Union rather than German, which was the other possibility. As part of the negotiations, the British Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5- year phase-in plan that would become known as "Euro-English".

In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favour of "k". This should klear up konfursion, and keyboards can have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with "f". This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be ekspekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible.

Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling.

Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent "e" in the languag is disgrasful and it should go away.

By the 4th yer people wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v".

During ze fifz yer, ze unesesary "o" can be dropd from vords kontaining "ou" and after ziz fifz yer, ve vil

hav a reil sensi bl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united urop vil finali kum tru. Und efter ze fifz yer, ve vil al be speking German like zey vunted in ze forst plas.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to the Newsletter, please email Ro on rosalie.reilly@canterbury.ac.nz:
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