



Bio Sketch for Hugh Gribben

What area of maths do you work in?

I've come back to mathematics after being away from it for some years, so I have been doing graduate papers in a number of different areas, but my interest (and what got me back to mathematics) is the maths of origami.

It turns out that folding paper is quite a powerful mathematical tool - you can do things like trisect an angle using origami, but it can't be done using the old favourite of straight edge and compass. I like using origami as a teaching tool, because it is quite a different hands on way to connect to maths, and some people who think they don't like maths actually have fun learning with origami. I also like the fact that with origami, you can make some really beautiful things, engaging yet another sense. On this line, I like all sorts of things that are manipulative (you do them with your hands) and aesthetic (concerned with beauty), like tiles and knots.

What areas of maths do you follow from a purely interest standpoint?

Oh, lots! I guess I have always focussed on pure maths, but am really interested in mathematical modeling, or applied maths, like Philip Sharp's modeling of the solar system. As I don't do any of this kind of maths, I guess that's something I look at for interest only.

What were your best and worst subjects at school?

At school, I was good at maths, but also French: I still enjoy learning languages. These days I speak French and Japanese, and am hoping learn Tongan this year, as I am off to teach in Nuku'alofa. My worst subject was English - I nearly failed School Certificate, the old exam instead of NCEA level one. But then I ended up doing my first degree in English!

When you decided you wanted to be a mathematician and why

I don't think I have decided to be a mathematician yet! lol. I do enjoy doing maths, so I hope I can continue to do so, but I have other skills that need using too. I guess I did think that mathematics will lead me to a better career than say my ability to speak fluent Japanese, but I would like to find a way to combine my other skills.

What training (degrees and subjects) you've done

I did my first degree at Otago, where I was studying English, Maths and Physics. I went off to Japan for a summer part way through my degree, and didn't get back to finishing all of it, so I ended up with a degree in English only, although I was very close to finishing a major in Maths too. I studied Aikido in Japan, and eventually achieved a fourth degree black belt, which my teacher (an academic himself) used to say was about equivalent to a PhD, in terms of years of commitment. When I came back to New Zealand, I spent a year studying to be a secondary school maths teacher. I have also done a Post Graduate Diploma in Mathematics, and now I have my eyes set on a Masters.

What do you do for fun?

I've been playing a lot of World of Warcraft recently, which is a horrible addiction, and I recommend everyone stay away from it, but it is a lot of fun. I read a lot, especially books for young adults, but also novels from far away cultures. I also have two little boys, and we hang out a lot together in parks and at the beach, as I like getting outside. When the boys get a little bigger, I'm looking forward to getting back into camping.