
SIAM-IMA Reading Student Chapter online conference (2019/2020)



University of Reading SIAM Student Chapter

During the first three days of June, the Reading SIAM Student Chapter organised its annual conference, following up last year's event and concluding the academic summer term. This year, the annual conference had to take place remotely and online due to the current COVID19 crisis we are experiencing. Hence, this conference aimed at gathering not only UK based mathematicians, but also senior and young researchers beyond the borders. In fact, attendees joined in from fourteen different countries. This year, we had the pleasure of having Rossella Arcucci (Imperial College London) and Valerio Lucarini (University of Reading) sharing their research as keynote speakers together with six contributed sessions carried out by PhD students from British institutions and abroad.

To reduce the fatigue caused by the screen time, the conference was divided into three short sessions that were delivered in three days. The first two days of the meeting had the same format, where the keynote speaker was followed by a contributed student talk of a neighbouring scientific field, whereas the last day was totally student-lead. Dr. Arcucci kicked off the event with a presentation that gave valuable insight on the potential applicability of more efficient data assimilation schemes as well as highlighting their interplay with state-of-the-art machine learning techniques. On the second day, Prof. Lucarini shed some light on the nature of atmospheric blocking events and the dynamical processes triggering such weather phenomena. Student talks were shorter, but led to a great interchange of ideas between attendees and panelists in a friendly environment. Topics covered by the students included stochastic analysis, geometric singular perturbation theory and meteorological applications, to keep it general.

The online format was not originally planned, although the outcome was more than encouraging to consider this as a viable alternative as well as an opportunity to make the most of it and make science more accessible. Of course, preparation was required, since getting familiar with the different video platforms and their management is not a one-minute deal. In fact, a drill-video call, with all of the speakers, was helpful to break the ice and make sure that everyone knew how to share their screens, "unmute" themselves etc. Having separated people to take care of the technical aspects and to chair the talks reduced the stress on the day. It is also worth checking who can share their screen, computer audio etc to prevent the infamous Zoombombing events.

This year's SIAM-IMA annual conference was certainly not diminished by the current situation we are all in, and we can confidently say that we met the target of having hosted senior academics and young researchers spanning a range of topics that showed the diversity of mathematics being studied today.

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<http://www.reading.ac.uk/math/siamstudentchapter/>
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