

ARFL Newsletter

Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians of York University

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

1. President's Remarks	Page 1
2. FSCO Decision on Shadow Pension	Page 2
3. Should We Encroach on the Capital Of the YUFA Benefits Trust?	Page 2
4. Bargaining Priorities in 2009.	Page 3
5. Principal Supervisors' Eligibility for Graduate Studies Compensation	Page 3
6. Ralph Nicholls	Page 5
7. A History of Abstract Algebra	Page 5

1. PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Alex Murray

1.1 Send ARFL your e-mail address.

For the ARFL Executive it is increasingly economical, convenient and effective to communicate with ARFL members by email. We can quickly send you "late-breaking news" without a 52 cent stamp and licking an envelope.

So, if you are not sure if you have done so or know you have not, send your email address to Al Stauffer (stauffer@yorku.ca).

1.2 ARFL and YURA celebrate York's fiftieth anniversary.

The ARFL Executive is exploring how best York's retirees might contribute to and participate in our fiftieth birthday in 2009. Roger Heeler and Alex Murray have met with Cindy Betcher, Project Director, York University's 50th Anniversary to exchange ideas. Some interesting possibilities were identified.

Many events and projects will emerge from our former departments and divisions while some will be top-

down. By mid-March a first draft short list of events will be publicized but in the meantime ARFL can identify possibilities.

Do you have any ideas that retirees could get involved in? Please send them to me (amurray@yorku.ca) and I'll discuss them with you ASAP.

1.3 ARFL needs a Newsletter editor or two.

For 12 years ARFL has distributed a newsletter, two or three times a year, to its members and a selected group in the University. It has no fixed format other than a commitment to keep retirees informed of relevant matters such as pensions, health benefits, teaching and graduate supervision and research. It also describes interesting activities of retired faculty and librarians be they academic, professional or community based. Because of family and other commitments, our current Editor has to step down but has agreed to put together the current issue with the assistance of Roger Heeler. But ARFL will need another editor soon!

It would be great if a volunteer could participate in the assembly of the current issue to get used to the desktop system and software. So, grab this opportunity to learn a new or strengthen an old skill by joining the ARFL Team. Send Alex an email at amurray@yorku.ca, or phone at 416-924-1588.

1.4 Have you or a colleague done something interesting?

We would like to publicize our retirees' activities and accomplishments, be they academic, professional, community, national or international. There is at York no other medium by which such activities can be known and celebrated.

So, don't keep your or a colleague's light under a bushel. Send a short description to Roger Heeler (rheeler@schulich.yorku.ca) for the next Newsletter.



2. FSCO DECISION ON SHADOW PENSION

By Al Staufer

FSCO has informed YUFA that in the matter of the Shadow Pension, it finds the interpretation of the University Administration reasonable and within the scope of our Pension Plan. This means that the Shadow Pension still exists and there will be no readjustment to the amount of pension you will be receiving from York. In fact, this was an informal opinion on the part of FSCO and not a formal ruling. YUFA has asked FSCO for such a formal ruling before it decides on the next step.

YUFA made several attempts to negotiate a settlement of the Shadow Pension question with the Administration without success. Having exhausted this route, FSCO was asked to decide this matter. Once the formal ruling has been obtained, YUFA has the option of appealing this decision to a FSCO panel but at this point no decisions have been made. We will keep you informed of any further developments as we learn of them.



3. SHOULD WE ENCROACH ON THE CAPITAL OF THE YUFA BENEFITS TRUST?

By Al Stauffer

In 1994 the University decided to take a pension holiday because of the large surplus in the pension fund. Some of these surplus funds were returned to

employees as a bonus. The then members of YUFA decided to use their share of these funds to set up the YUFA Benefits Trust to provide health and dental benefits to retired members.

Retired YUFA members can obtain health and dental benefits through the University by paying a monthly premium. There are caps on the amount of these benefits that a member can receive annually and the Trust contributes additional funds to raise the annual limit on dental benefits. At present, the amount provided by the Trust is less than the income from the capital in the Trust. However, there is no certainty that the benefits can be continued at the present level in the future. There are increasing numbers of YUFA retirees each year to draw on the Trust funds and no new funds are being added. As well, the cost of maintaining the present level of benefits rises with inflation and the return on the investments of the Trust is relatively low.

There is also the possibility that the Trust will be asked to provide additional coverage for its beneficiaries, for example, catastrophic insurance. Thus we face the possibility that at some time in the future there will not be sufficient income from the capital of the Trust to maintain the benefits for members. While there is no urgency in this matter we should consider this possibility and now is a good time to have a reasoned discussion on the future of the Trust.

If the Trust can no longer maintain the current level of benefits for retirees the question then arises as to whether the level of benefits should be cut back to the level that can be provided from its income or, alternately, use its capital to maintain the level of benefits if this should occur. If the capital is encroached in this manner, it is probable that the total capital

in the Trust would be spent over a period of time.

The justification for encroaching on the capital if needed is that the funds were initially provided by individuals who were members of YUFA in 1994 and should be used for the benefits of these people, not kept indefinitely. Encroachment could also provide us with more benefits in the form of increased caps or additional coverage under this scenario.

A decision to encroach on the capital of the Trust is in the hands of the Trustees. However, we can ask them to consider establishing such a policy for future necessity. Before we do, we need to discuss the pros and cons of such a move to see if there is support for such a policy. If there is, then a motion in support of encroachment will be brought forward at a future membership meeting. In the meantime, the Executive would like to encourage an informal discussion of this matter through the ARFL discussion group (arfdg@yorku.ca). If you do not already subscribe to the discussion group, there are instructions on how to join on our website (www.yuarfl.org).



4. BARGAINING PRIORITIES IN 2009

By Al Stauffer

YUFA is beginning the process of preparing for the next round of bargaining in 2009. Thus ARFL needs to provide details for items of interest to retirees to be included in the YUFA bargaining position.

Benefits continue to be of primary concern, both in maintaining the current level of benefits and enhancing them, particularly in areas such as out-of-country coverage.

Another area which was on the agenda in the last round of bargaining and where we made a modest start was in obtaining payment for retirees who were active in graduate supervision. The scope of these payments should be extended. As part of this process the issue of age discrimination as a question of equity at York

should be considered.

Several of our members have identified support for research activities of retirees as an important issue (aside from participation in graduate programs). Provision of travel funds or grants to support particular research projects have been mentioned.

Are there other items that should be part of ARFL's agenda for the next round of bargaining? You can send suggestions to our email address yuarfl@web.net. Alternatively you can post suggestions or comments to the ARF Discussion Group (ARFDG@yorku.ca).

It is important to make our voice heard so let us know if you have new suggestions or just want to support the positions outlined above.



5. PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS' ELIGIBILITY FOR GRADUATE STUDIES COMPENSATION

By Joy Cohnstaedt

5.1 Principal Supervision of Theses and Dissertations:

If you have worked as a principal supervisor of graduate students since you retired from York University, you may be eligible for compensation under the 2006 Collective Agreement. If you believe that you are eligible for compensation for supervisory work undertaken since May 1, 2006 under the terms of Article 14.01(e) please document the work you have performed, contact the relevant graduate programme director and request compensation. If you are not satisfied with the response or the nature of the compensation, contact your steward. One area may be the exclusion of supervision of masters major research papers/research projects and projects

from the principal supervision work that is eligible for compensation. As pre-retirees are compensated for principal supervision of major research papers by masters students under Appendix O, it would seem fair to compensate retirees for such work as well.

Note: Eligible uncompensated supervisory work by pre-retirees during the year prior to retirement may be claimed after retirement.

5.2 Should Other Supervisory Duties Be Eligible for Compensation?

A cursory review of the masters degree requirements listed in the FGS 2007-09 Calendar reveal that the majority (no less than two dozen) of the graduate programmes require or provide an option that permits students to be awarded a master's degree by completing a master's research paper or a major research paper or a research review paper or project. Although the majority of the programmes provide a thesis option, several programmes do not include a thesis component but do require a research paper.

The research paper option is the major research requirement for students selecting this option for the master's degree. Although the master's research paper/major research paper may be more limited in scope and/or originality than a thesis, the student must demonstrate the ability to do research. The Education Programme text states that the research project is equivalent to a thesis in academic quality. There is anecdotal evidence that students are encouraged to agree to the research paper option. One programme (Art History) includes the following statement in the 2007-09 Calendar: "The programme strongly recommends the degree by research paper option. The thesis option requires special permission".

Most programmes with these options require a principal supervisor and a second reader appointed and approved by both the Graduate Programme and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Although the work done

by principal supervisors of research papers/projects is often characterized as fundamentally different from the supervision of a thesis, the difference in the work required by principal supervisors of research papers/projects is not significant enough to explain the significant disparity in pay to retirees for principal supervision - eligible retirees who supervise graduate students undertaking a thesis are compensated, but retirees who supervise research papers are not compensated.

The problem with the clause in the the current Collective Agreement is that it is read as a limit to compensation to principal supervisors of MA theses and PhD dissertations. Although a fine reading of the clause may have this result, a fair reading of the clause would include the principal supervisors of major/masters research papers and projects.

The core function for the supervision of a thesis, dissertation, research paper and project is the application of scholarly knowledge. What differences exist do not explain or warrant the absence of pay for some retired faculty assigned as principal supervisors of major/masters research papers and major projects. If fairness is the goal, an appeal to the parties to the Collective Agreement for a reconsideration of the limited interpretation of this clause is warranted.

For retirees who continue to contribute to scholarship valued by York University, the interpretation of this clause has an immediate claim on the attention of the Joint Committee on the Administration of the Agreement and an explanation of why this discrimination in eligibility for compensation for graduate student supervision is warranted.



6. Ralph Nicholls

Chester Sadowski

Ralph Nicholls passed away peacefully in the last week of January at the age of 81. He was among the pioneers of the York Campus. He was one of a small number of scientists, including Harold Schiff, John Goodings, Bob Lundell and Dave Fowle, who left their positions at other universities to take up the challenge of establishing a new Faculty of Science at York University more than forty years ago.



Ralph became the first Chairman of Physics and was a spearhead in the establishment of the Centre for Research in Experimental Space Science (CRESS), which in due course was to gain a worldwide reputation. I believe that the opportunity to establish an institute like CRESS was very persuasive in his decision to leave Western to take up an appointment in a fledgling university like York. His faith in CRESS's potential has certainly been vindicated. Over the years many scientists who joined the faculty at York were attracted by the exciting research possibilities associated with CRESS and have made outstanding contributions to the study of space from Earth and of Earth from space.

Ralph received many honours throughout his career. He was among the first faculty members at York to receive the title of Distinguished Research Professor. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He was a member of the Order of Canada. He was more recently honoured for the part he played in the establishment of the Canadian Space Agency and for his many contributions to that agency throughout its history.

I first met Ralph in 1963 or 1964 while I was working in the Defence Research Board (DRB) laboratories in

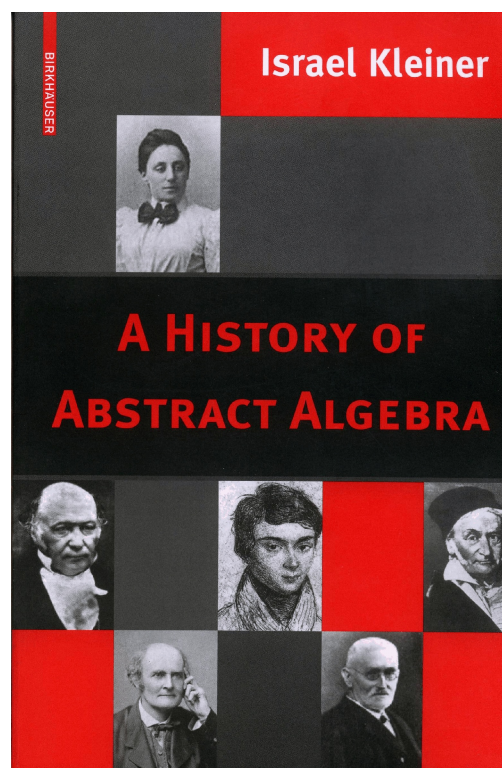
Valcartier, Quebec, where he served as a consultant. We had some shared research interests which continued after I left DRB and came to York. His passing leaves me bereft of a friendly acquaintance and colleague and reminds us that an era is coming to a close in the physical sciences at York University.

Ralph is survived by his wife, Doris Nicholls Professor Emeritus of Biology at York.



7. A History of Abstract Algebra

Martin Muldoon



Abstract algebra, embodying the concepts of group, ring, field, vector space, etc., is a staple of undergraduate mathematics. The subject as we know it came to maturity in the early 20th century but had its beginnings in 19th century

developments arising from subjects such as number theory and the theory of equations with roots going back several millennia.

Typical current presentations of abstract algebra often omit the historical motivations and can leave the majority of students unsatisfied. Recent decades have seen a movement to blend history with pedagogy. York Professor Emeritus and ARFL member Israel Kleiner has been in the forefront of this movement. He was the originator and chief organizer of a long-running seminar at York on History and Philosophy of Mathematics and Mathematics Education. He has written several prizewinning articles on the history of mathematics, and has produced several articles on the transition from classical to abstract algebra in the 19th century.

It is a pleasure to see that much of this material has been collected in book form. This is a scholarly work which is written so as to be accessible to students and their teachers. And even if the subject matter is abstract, the human element has not been forgotten. The author has included biographies of such diverse characters as Arthur Cayley, Richard Dedekind, Evariste Galois, Carl Friedrich Gauss, William Rowan Hamilton and Emmy Noether.



The ARFL Newsletter is published by the Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians of York University (ARFL). ARFL is an independent organization of retired faculty and librarians of York University and of pre-retirees who pay dues. Members of ARFL are Associate Members of YUFA and YUFA has recognized ARFL as the "representative organization for retired members" of YUFA. ARFL is a member of the College and University Retirees Association of Canada. (CURAC)



At the Annual General Meeting of October, 2007 the following slate of officers was returned, including those subsequently nominated to the Executive to extend its base and representation, as the meeting agreed:

EXECUTIVE

President

Alex Murray

amurray@yorku.ca

Vice-President

Allan Stauffer

stauffer@yorku.ca

Past-President

Mort Abramson

abramson@mathstat.yorku.ca

Secretary

Gene Denzel

lezned@yorku.ca

Treasurer

Barry Loughton

loughton@yorku.ca

Editor of Newsletter

TBA

Pre-Retiree Member

Stan Jeffers

stanj@yorku.ca

Members-at-Large

Joy Cohnstaedt

wolfecone@bellnet.ca

Cynthia Dent

cdent@yorku.ca

Roger Heeler

rheeler@schulich.yorku.ca

Brigitte Kitchen

bkitchen@yorku.ca

Tiit Kodar

tkodar@yorku.ca

Chester Sadowski

chesters@yorku.ca

The Editor of the newsletter welcomes comments, letters or items of interest, but reserves the right to edit any submissions. Please send submissions to rheeler@schulich.yorku.ca or ARFL, c/o YUFA, 261 HNES, York University, 4700 Keele St., Toronto, ON M3J 1P3.

