



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the Editor

For the sake of our children and grandchildren, the AMS should take the bold step of holding all of its future conferences remotely. The large carbon footprint of in-person conferences can no longer be ethically justified. Let us take a leadership role in fighting climate change and make this sacrifice now for the future of our planet.

The views expressed in this letter are my own and are not those of the US Navy, the Dept. of Defense, or the US Naval Academy, and should not be considered an endorsement of this publication.

Sincerely,
Caroline Melles
Mathematics Department
US Naval Academy

Letter to the Editor

Dr. David R. Adams died on July 30, 2021, peacefully in his sleep after a long battle with kidney disease and related problems. He was born on January 23, 1941, in Buffalo, Wyoming, and is survived by his wife, Jeanie Adams, and two children, Jay Bertino and Sissy Meredith, PhD. He liked creating new mathematics, international travel, reading—especially historical fiction, talking with friends, shooting pool, and stamp collecting. David developed a love of international travel and the world's people as an Army Brat, of which he was very proud. He spent his middle school years in Tokyo and completed his high school years in the Panama Canal Zone.

After obtaining his BS degree at South Dakota State University, David Adams received his PhD from the University of Minnesota in 1969 under the direction of Norman Myers, and he worked in the areas of partial differential equations, potential theory, and analysis. After postdocs at Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche in Rome, Italy (supervised by Guido Stampacchia), Rice University, and the University of California, San Diego, he joined the faculty of the University of Kentucky in 1973, where he remained a professor until his retirement in 2015. He published 71 research papers and two research monographs. He continued his work after his retirement, especially his many years of collaboration with Jie Xiao on Morrey spaces in harmonic analysis and partial differential equations. His

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book *Function Spaces and Potential Theory* (1996), written jointly with Lars Inge Hedberg, is a treatise on the interplay of potential theory and function spaces, including Sobolev, Bessel potential, and Besov spaces. His interest in analysis and potential theory was again showcased in his book *Morrey Spaces* (2015). He also wrote *Lecture Notes on L^p Potential Theory* at Umea University, Sweden (1981). His proof of the Moser-Trudinger inequalities with higher order derivatives, now known as Adams' inequalities, has had broad impact, generating results in many other non-Euclidean settings such as Riemannian manifolds and Heisenberg groups.

David Adams was an extremely talented and knowledgeable mathematician, who enthusiastically shared his knowledge with students and colleagues. He communicated his ideas in clear and positive ways. He had an exceptional talent to combine analysis and PDEs for novel results. He was a generous mentor to many mathematicians. In particular, many female mathematicians appreciated his work, teaching, and mentoring, including Patricia Bauman, Lillie Crowley, Renee Fister, Ann Heard, Mary Ann Horn, Ritva Hurri-Syrjanen, Suzanne Lenhart, Helena Nussenzweig Lopes, and Jill Pipher. Despite his considerable achievements in research and influence on mathematics, he remained an open, friendly, and unpretentious person throughout his life.

—Suzanne Lenhart
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Into the Apple Store: The Birth of the Robert T. Seeley Professorship

On a balmy June day I walked into the Apple Store with the intention to browse, and maybe talk, but not to buy. I came out with a brand new phone and a multimillion-dollar endowed professorship. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Handwaving in office hours gave rise to a crack in my cell phone screen. I was about to visit my usual Apple Store in Chestnut Hill but the family was going shoe shopping in Dedham, so I joined them.

A friendly receptionist at the Dedham Apple Store directed me to Rod. Based at another location, he was on special assignment in Dedham. Showing compassion for the injured appliance, he helped me navigate choices and options. Then came costs. Normally I'd ask about my wife's employer, Boston Children's Hospital, a source of past discounts (and maybe she would get me the phone...). But she was getting shoes for our son. So I asked about UMass

Boston (UMB) discounts. “Oh, you’re at UMB? What do you do there?” Mathematics. “Mathematics? Hmm, we were thinking CS... Mathematics... we *could* do Mathematics...” At this point the conversation took a twist, and the world changed.

Rod is a member of a donor group, alumni brothers of an MIT fraternity. Retired from a career in technology, he applied to the Apple Store. The acceptance rate for these prized jobs is lower than admission rates at top universities. But Rod made it, clearly enjoying the experience. He was also working with his donor group, aiming to support needs at institutions of higher learning. Somehow, I also sensed that honoring MIT people was of interest. (Rod reported that I spotted his MIT school ring; I don’t remember that.) An idea surfaced.

For years we’d been talking at UMB about setting up a visiting professorship, something like Brown’s Tamarkin, Yale’s Gibbs, or Michigan’s Hildebrandt, each of which had benefited our departmental colleagues. Years back, MIT’s Pavel Etingof kindly gave me the book *Recountings: Conversations with MIT Mathematicians*. Early in the book, Isadore Singer lauds the Moore instructorship, and its role in MIT’s meteoric rise. I lent the book with multiplicity, and cited his words in advocating the visiting professorship concept. Alas, cost was an obstacle. If only we had an external infusion of funds, we’d work with that and make the visiting instructorship a reality. But where to look?

Structural ideas about the professorship developed. We could name it after Robert T. Seeley, perhaps the best-known UMB mathematician. Recognized for his world-class research, e.g., as manifested in the Atiyah-Singer Index Theorem, he was praised for his humanity. Bob left a tenured full-professorship at Brandeis to come to UMB, drawn to its mission as an affordable, accessible, urban public university. When Rod mentioned the donor group, the Seeley Visiting Professorship came to mind. I knew that Seeley did his PhD at MIT with Alberto Calderon (1959), so the Seeley Professorship would honor an MIT person, a plus. I proposed the idea to Rod, and he found merit in it. I gained clarity, dispensed with discounts, and purchased a new phone outright. We exchanged addresses, agreeing to talk again soon.

I wrote Rod next day, didn’t hear back, and thought, in jest, he’s a good salesman. Writing again, I heard back immediately. He’d been overseas, now back. We talked. Rod visited the UMB campus, and met Dennis Wortman (MIT PhD with Ken Homan, 1972), our most senior faculty member and longtime colleague of Bob. Our university Advancement office joined the effort, helping with matters financial and administrative. By chance, a *Notices* letter appeared, extolling the virtues of Yale’s Gibbs Instructorship.

Fortuitously, UMB Chancellor Katherine Newman had already worked with mathematics departments at multiple institutions. At Princeton, she collaborated with the math department chair (“... Fermat’s Last Theorem ... Andrew

Wiles”!). She was familiar with and valued the visiting assistant professor model. Unhesitatingly, she found and added needed campus resources. The Board of Trustees affirmed the endowed position, named for Robert T. Seeley. Soon, a search was launched, selecting the inaugural Seeley Visiting Assistant Professor: Alexander Moll (MIT PhD, with Alexei Borodin, 2016). His first year took place under the Covid cloud, alas, but we anticipate the second year, with on-campus, face-to-face interactions. And we look forward to sustained Seeley Professorship appointments.

Paralleling the Gogol short story *The Overcoat*, we won’t end at this natural juncture, but rather reflect on how this happened, and how it might be replicated. Did we have a plan? Was this a Malcolm Gladwell *Blink* moment? The corridors of administration ring with “... *you don’t have a plan...*” We didn’t have a plan, but did have the Seeley Professorship concept, which helped. And no plan could have included Rod, a warm, kind, generous, and unique human being. The Dedham location was a double coincidence, and the timing dodged Covid. Could this have happened remotely? It’s inconceivable.

Might *Apple* be interested in the Seeley Professorship? Approaching Rod wouldn’t be fair. I could offer the motto *The Apple Store: Bringing People Together*. The in-store experience goes beyond shopping for electronics. It brought something wonderful and unexpected, a product of local human dynamics. I know people who know people who work for Apple. Dare I ask?

An expanded version of this story is at <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/cevnw/>.

Cordially,
Eric Grinberg
Professor, University of Massachusetts Boston