

The Great Origami Maths and Science Show

What's up in Origami and Mathematics Down-under?

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Two years ago origami was regarded largely as a children's recreational activity in the mathematics department at The University of Auckland. This status has changed remarkably as a result two main influences. Firstly, through access via the internet to the materials and research of international origami experts such as Robert Lang and Tom Hull. Secondly and more recently, Jonathan Baxter has stimulated interest in this field through presentations to students and staff within the department, particularly those involved in the secondary mathematics teacher training programme, and topology research.

An exciting development of this growing awareness has been a project called the Great Origami Maths and Science Show. This project, funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand (RSNZ), is a collaboration between Origami New Zealand and the Mathematics Department at The University of Auckland. The one-hour show is accompanied by a detailed resource aligned to the New Zealand mathematics curriculum. The show, described in advertising to schools as the ultimate maths field trip, aims to turn people on the realms of possibilities within the origami art-form. It examines some of the mathematical and scientific concepts contained in the extraordinary array of shapes and the folds involved. Multiple presentations will be made during a national tour of seven major centres through July, August and early September of 2006, commencing with the Incredible Science Day at The University of Auckland.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first ever project anywhere in the world to receive government funding on such a scale for origami and maths, science and education-related pursuits. This presentation will discuss the design and implementation of the project, with video excerpts from the show, and examples from the accompanying resource book. Details of the project, including feedback from educators and students, tips on how to start a similar project, places to look for funding, pit-falls, and possible improvements on the original concept will be shared.