

John Maxwell Foyster (1941–2003)

John Foyster commenced a PhD in mathematics at Monash University. While he did not complete, he made an impact there as a mathematician and a gruff but very friendly, eccentric character. When he later worked in the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education (VISE) a colleague commented that “one of the best things about the job is that there's a John Foyster in the building”.

Foyster approached Clements in 1976, with the idea of establishing a mathematics education research association. Over 1976-1978, he was instrumental in getting MERGA off the ground. He provided the money needed to get the first MERGA conference, at Monash, "on the road." Foyster continued to take an active part in MERGA's activities, including editing *Research in Mathematics Education in Australia*.

During MERGA's early years, Foyster worked at ACER, in education research and assessment. In recent years he worked with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), focusing on vocational education and examining a range of systems in South-East Asian countries and attended occasional MERGA conferences.

Foyster made significant contributions to statistics, science, and mathematics education, and to education research in general. He also began writing (and writing about) science fiction in the early 1960s, with main interests in particular writers and the evolution of styles. He was widely published as a literary critic as well as an author, and co-edited the *Australian Science Fiction Review*, so it was not only in relation to mathematics that he had an influence on younger generations. Despite his broad range of expertise, he continued to write about mathematics education and authored *Mathematics Beyond the Classroom* in 1988. His interest in mathematics *Beyond the Mathematics Classroom: Numeracy for on the Job* (1990) led to further publications about vocational education and training.

Ken Clements reports that “He was a great guy, and a bit of a dreamer. That combination was needed in order to get MERGA going”. The annual Clements/Foyster Lecture at each MERGA conference honors the two men who together initiated MERGA.