

A História e a Herança da Matemática

ADA LOVELACE: DEDICATED LEARNER OF MATHEMATICS



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The nineteenth-century British aristocrat Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace (1815–1852), was famous in her own time for being the daughter of the romantic poet Lord Byron (1788–1824). She is better known nowadays, however, for her 1843 speculations concerning the ‘Analytical Engine’ – the theoretical steam-powered general purpose programmable computer designed by her friend, the polymath Charles Babbage (1791–1871). Lovelace’s notes on the Analytical Engine have understandably received much attention over the past several decades, but much less notice has been taken of the educational background that enabled her to write these in the first place. Growing up at a time when it was unusual for a woman, not least an aristocratic woman, to receive a mathematical education, Lovelace had nevertheless dedicated herself to the study of mathematics, encouraged first by her mother, and then by her husband.

Much of her mathematical learning was through self-study, but she also engaged in a correspondence course with the mathematician Augustus De Morgan (1806–1871).

These letters provide a fascinating glimpse of an unconventional mathematical education; not only do we see Lovelace learning mathematics, but we also see her learning how to learn. The talk will focus in particular on Lovelace’s mathematical education, and the way in which this prepared her for her collaboration with Babbage.

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Segunda-feira, 27 de maio de 2024, 16h00.

DMAT Sala Sousa Pinto



Christopher Hollings is lecturer in the history of mathematics at the Oxford Mathematical Institute, and a Senior Research Fellow of The Queen’s College. He is an algebraist by background, but now works in the history of mathematics. His interests cover a range of topics in nineteenth- and twentieth-century mathematics, including the development of abstract algebra, international communications in mathematics, and the historiography of ancient mathematics. Christopher is the current President of the British Society for the History of Mathematics. He has (co-)authored and co-edited seven books, the most recent of which, co-edited with Philip Beeley, is *Beyond the Learned Academy: The Practice of Mathematics 1600–1850* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

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