The Australian
Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6390

Harcourt, Alison

(1929 -)

Born	24 November, 1929, Colac Victoria Australia
Occupation	Academic, Community stalwart, Statistician

Summary

Alison Harcourt (nee Doig) is an inspiring pioneer in mathematics, statistics and computer science. As a woman in an almost exclusively male field, her groundbreaking work from the 1950s on was often overshadowed. In recent years, however, the importance of her contributions has begun to be acknowledged more widely.

She is perhaps best known for developing integer linear programming – a basis of efficient computer processing – in a paper published with Ailsa Land in 1960. About 3000 academic journal articles have cited the paper since. This technique became know as Branch and Bound method and has numerous practical and mathematical applications. Earlier, Alison had been among the first users of CSIRAC, Australia's first digital computer.

As well as her significant academic achievements, Alison is a stalwart in community organisations. For over 30 years Alison has been a volunteer deliverer for the Kew (and later Boroondara) Meals-on Wheels service. She has also played an active role in many other community organisations, including the Melbourne Film Festival (which later became the Melbourne International Film Festival) (secretary, 1955 – 56); the Kew Primary School Parents' Association (secretary, 1980 – 84); a Council of Adult Education book group leader (secretary, 1998 – 2015); and a study group at the Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism (coordinator, 1999 – 2014).

Author Details
Nikki Henningham with Leonie Harcourt

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