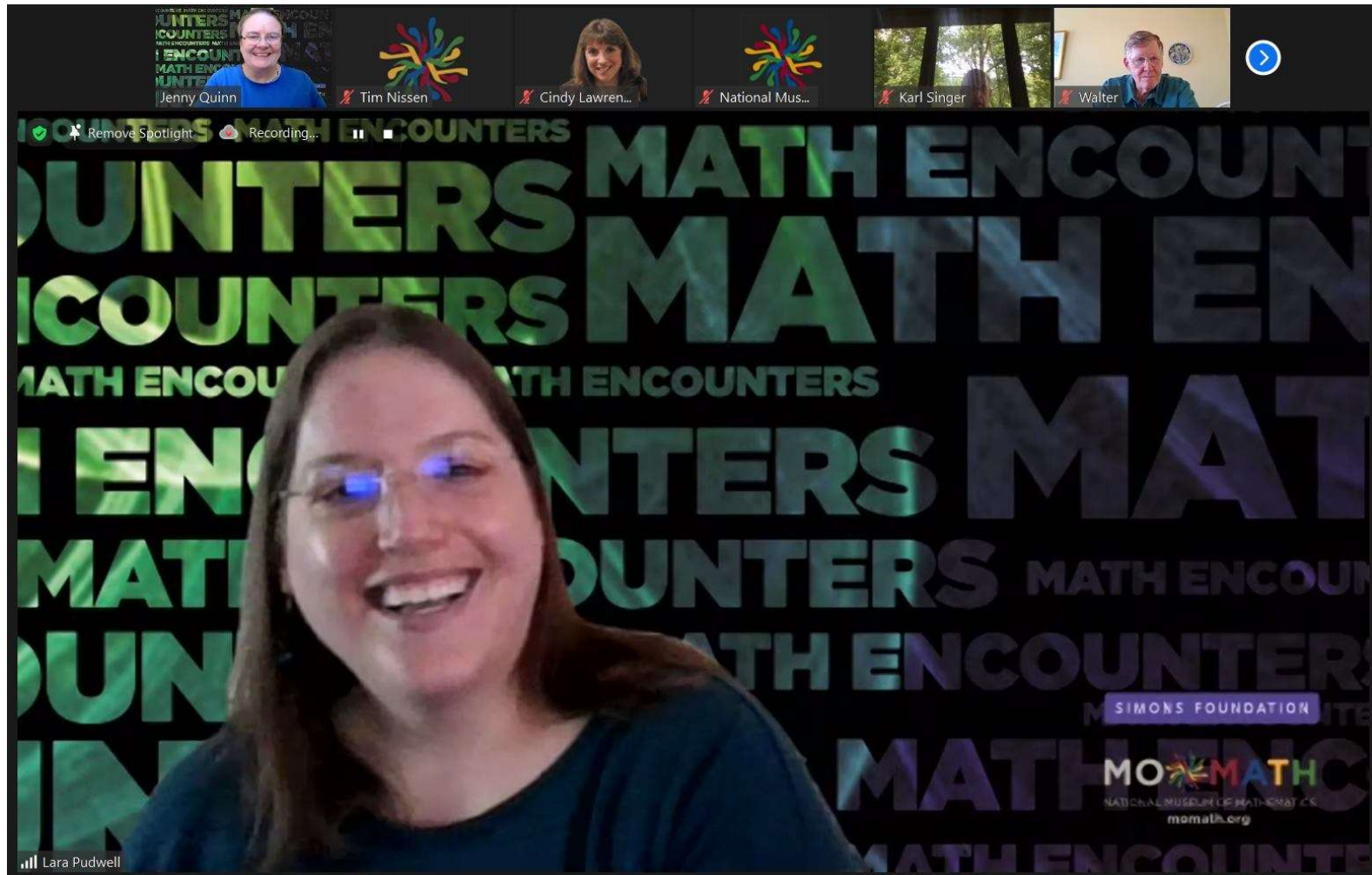


# Math in the Time of Corona

reflections on teaching during a pandemic

## June 2 Day 451: Virtual Math Encounters



Today was the last teaching day for Spring quarter 2021 at UW Tacoma. I could tell by the posts of my friends that this has been one tough term. Perhaps the Facebook quote by Peter Selkin says it best:

What if you had your last class Zoom meeting of the year and NOBODY CAME? (I have very mixed feelings....)

I am so grateful to have had a Spring quarter sabbatical. I have accomplished much—but not everything on my to-do list. There is still hope since I can keep working on big projects through the summer.

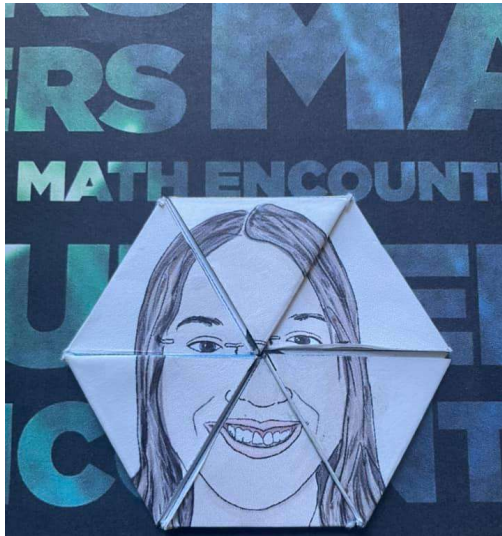
For me, today was a reminder of how connected and accessible our world has become. I had the pleasure of introducing a friend, Dr. Lara Pudwell, for her (virtual) Math Encounter presentation at the [Museum of Math](#) (aka MoMath). If the event were held live at the museum, only people in NYC would have the benefit of attending. Instead, there were more than 100 people at each of her two 90-



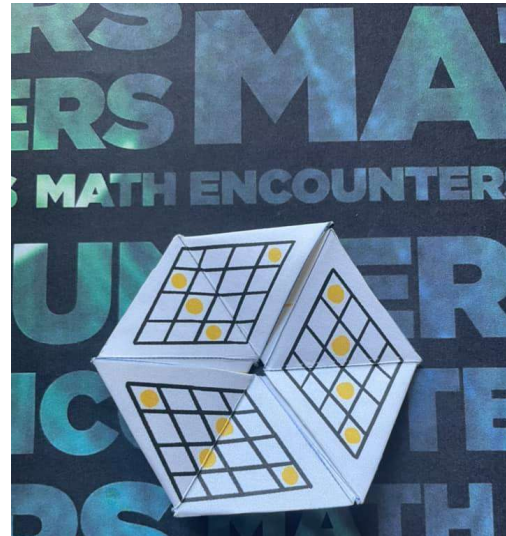
minute presentations with people attending from all over the world. And can I just say, Lara absolutely shined. It was a beautiful, interactive, simple, yet surprising talk. She started with two straightforward definitions and found authentic connections to computer science, chemistry, and popular number sequences (think Fibonacci and Catalan). We became familiar with those definitions by playing a collaborative game. And she led us from small, well understood examples to current open problems in the study of permutation patterns. What more could a math enthusiast hope for?

I wanted to make her introduction something special. So I created a “Lara Pudwell” inspired hexaflexagon to tell her story. It was a *hexahexaflexagon*, so there were six pictures that I *flexed* through while introducing Lara to the crowd.

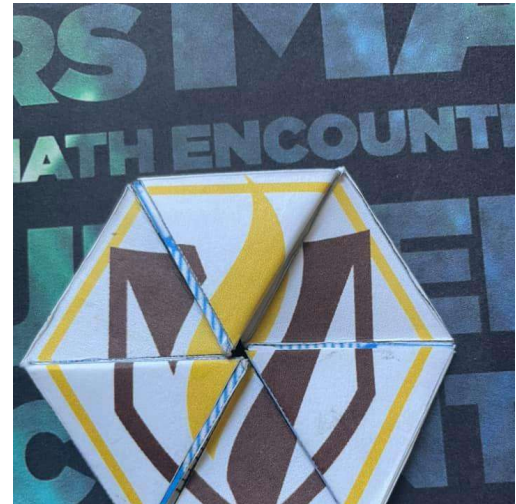
Let me share the faces and overview:



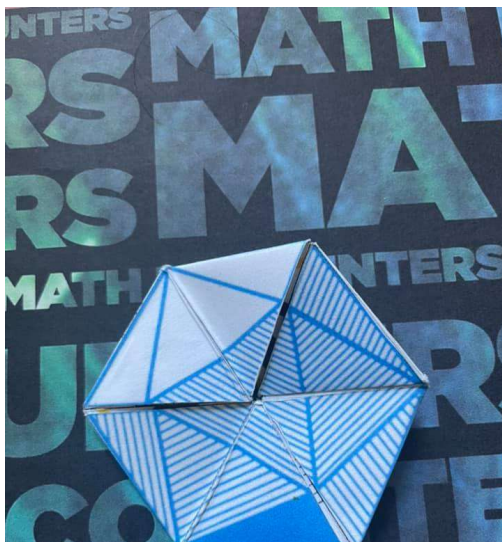
Meet Lara.



She studies permutations.



She will be a full professor at Valpo in fall 2021.



She is an MAA award winner and author.



She has lots of publications including an article that made her Twitter famous.



She plays a blue guitar and ukulele. Chord notation looks like permutation notation.

Meet Lara. She is awesome. Be like Lara. Love math and find cool bijections.

There were more words but you get the gist. (If you want see the infamous footnote, check out MAA's *Mathematics Magazine* article "Digit Reversal Without Apology" (2005).) To make your own Lara Pudwell themed hexaflexagon, you can print off this handout.

[pudwell hexaflexagon for momath-with-logo](#) Download

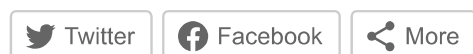
Cut, glue, and fold according to the instructions. The challenge becomes finding the pattern to flex that makes the story work in real time.

The artwork is my own but the design was inspired by Robin Moseley and the site [www.flexagon.net](http://www.flexagon.net). (I used hexahexaflexagon variation 3/3.) This introduction was only possible because we were virtual. First I would have to be in NYC, 2900 miles away. And second, I would need a document camera to project the flexing. (Admittedly, I have learned to use my cell phone as a doc cam this past year. I suppose the same technique could work when travelling.)

So a big thank you to Lara for inviting me to introduce her. Thank you to the MoMath folks for making it happen. It was a special and wonderful experience.

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