

Gender imbalance within science



MacDiarmid Institute Deputy Director and Principal Investigator Associate Professor Nicola Gaston published a book (*Why Science is Sexist*, BWB Texts, 2015) that looks at the gender imbalance within science, and asks why this is.

Associate Professor Gaston notes that of the 209 Nobel Prizes awarded in physics, only two have ever gone to women. “I wanted to figure out what is actually happening – why are women so poorly represented in science, especially physical science, at senior levels in particular? There is an unconscious bias that women don’t belong in science, because of historical differences in the contribution that women and men have been able to make. It’s important we take on board that these biases are in all of us. And by getting this conversation started, we hopefully reframe things so that it is clear that academic success is about hard work and not about some mysterious talent.”

Associate Professor Gaston has had positive feedback, with the President of the Royal Society of New Zealand Richard Bedford calling the book useful and noting that the Society would be recommending the book to all RSNZ Fellowship Evaluation Panel conveners this year.

“Even more important to me has been the many personal emails I’ve received from other women – many of whom I don’t know well – expressing a general sense of relief that it’s possible to talk about the topic. To be able to start a conversation.

“One thing we learned in the MacDiarmid Institute from Paul Callaghan, was that we can all contribute to the public space, beyond just doing our science.”

**The evidence shows
that science is sexist
because we are
sexist about science.**

Nicola Gaston