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Julie Bergner *Fun with Egyptian Fractions*

Via Zoom 7:30 pm, Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021

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Ancient Egyptians didn't have a symbol for fractions as we think about them. Instead, they only had a way to denote *unit fractions*, one part out of a whole number of parts. If they needed more interesting rational numbers, they would represent them as sums of unit fractions with none of the summands repeating. From our point of view, we can ask lots of questions about this method. Can every rational number be represented in this way? Are such fraction decompositions unique? And is there any use for thinking about numbers this way, anyway? In this talk we'll look at examples and figure out answers to these questions.

Julie Bergner is a Professor of Mathematics at University of Virginia. She does research in algebraic topology, but got interested in the topic of Egyptian fractions after writing a paper on how they connected to some research of a colleague several years ago. She has since gotten several undergraduate students involved in working on research about them. In her free time, she enjoys singing in (virtual) choirs.



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