

American Mathematical Society

Report on the Committee on Publications

A meeting of the AMS Committee on Publications (CPub) was held on September 15-16, 2006 at the O'Hare Hilton, Chicago, IL.

At the start of the meeting, the Executive Director/Publisher gave a summary of the updates on actions taken for the 2005 CPub meeting – a regular feature of all future CPub meetings.

A meeting of the Managing Editors of the four AMS primary research journals takes place every other year prior to the CPub meeting. This year three (3) of the four (4) managing editors met with the Executive Director, Deputy Publisher, and the Chair of CPub on Friday afternoon, September 15. CPub chair Beverly Diamond, reported on the discussions including a review of editorial guidelines, the terms of editors, the revised Editorial Boards Committee charge, and various operational and philosophical issues. The Managing Editors who were in attendance for the CPub meeting provided additional commentary. Since there was a fair bit of overlap between the Managing Editors' agenda and the CPub agenda, the Managing Editors' views were also expressed as CPub went through their agenda items.

Some of the other topics discussed included:

Length of Terms for Journal Editors

The Committee decided that the term lengths for book and journal editorial committees should be standardized (aside from Notices and Bulletin which are already 4 year terms). The Managing Editors also discussed this item during their meeting on Friday and were in agreement with the Committee's action. CPub moved to recommend to Council that the charge to the various editorial committees be modified to increase the current editorial terms from three to four years and to recommend that the normal number of terms for serving members of the editorial committee be no more than two.

Role of the AMS Journals

In discussing the history of AMS journals and the multiple purposes the journals serve today, concern was expressed that one of those purposes (serving as models to balance commercial journals) was being diluted. While commercial journals have increased in size, AMS journals have remained at the same size for many years. One way to invest in the future of our journals is to increase the number of pages published annually (possibly by up to 20%) to make our journals a larger fraction of the literature. Currently, the AMS is in a financial position to cover the additional costs associated with increasing the page sizes without raising prices. The managing editors of *Mathematics of Computation* and the *Transactions* were supportive of this expansion. The managing editor of the *Proceedings* was not in attendance and the managing editor of the *Journal* agreed to review the matter with the other editors at their November meeting. (Subsequently, the managing editor of the *Proceedings* agreed with the increase, at least temporarily, and the Board approved increasing the page allocations for the three journals by 10% in 2007.)

Review of Primary Journals

The report of the CPub subcommittee (members: Ken Ono, Chair, Abigail Thompson and Steven Weintraub) which reviewed the primary research journals was presented. Included in the discussion were the results from the author and editor surveys, backlog statistics, ISI journal rankings and demographics of papers by primary MSC descriptions. In summary, all four journals are meeting their objectives. A few issues were noted by the subcommittee:

JAMS - There is a heavy concentration in four (4) MSC categories.

TAMS - The backlog could be helped with an increase in pages.

PAMS - There appears to be over representation in certain areas and the backlog could be helped with an increase in pages.

MCOM - The backlog could be contained with an increase in pages.

The subcommittee determined that it was too early to evaluate CENTRACK, the new centralized manuscript tracking facility, but recommended that a review be done at this time next year. It also recommended that the new editorial guidelines be provided to new and existing editors.

Book Program

A report of the book program was given by the Deputy Publisher. Last year we did not produce the number of titles budgeted but we did exceed the income budget for the Book Program. This year we are on track to publish slightly fewer books than budgeted, however, we will exceed the budgeted revenue. We continue to focus on market expansion in China and India. The distribution channels remain relatively stable with the exception of Amazon which continues to exhibit significant yearly growth.

Centralized Manuscript Submission

In May of 2006 the AMS moved to a centralized submission policy for all journals. The change has been well received by both editors and authors. Under this new system all papers submitted into peer review area recorded, acknowledged, and then passed to the appropriate editor for consideration. Once recorded in Providence, papers are tracked in peer review by editors using the new tracking tool CENTRACK. A new version of CENTRACK will be available early in 2007 and will reflect changes suggested by the Managing Editors.

Editors Publishing in Their Own Journals-Policy

CPub discussed the need for new policy governing the practice of editors publishing in their own journals. The discussion focused on the need for a uniform policy concerning editors publishing in their own journals so the integrity of the decision making process and the journal remains intact. CPub moved to recommend to the Council the following policy:

An editorial board member must not seek to influence publication decisions on manuscripts he or she has submitted to the journal.

The Committee further requested that the recommendation to the Council be prefaced with a statement that there are no current problems with editors publishing in their own journals, however, other societies have such a policy and the AMS should as well in order to avoid any future problems. The motion carried.

ERA as an Overlay Journal

At its 2005 meeting, CPub recommended that the journal be transformed into an overlay journal to the arXiv, with the journal consisting of links to arXiv papers. After further review it was determined that there are many issues that make the transformation of ERA into an overlay not feasible. Since the managing editor of ERA is retiring in 2007 and the consensus was that there is no need for the journal to continue, the Committee moved to recommend to the Council that the Society cease publication of ERA in 2007. The motion carried. (*Publisher's note: At the meeting, it was noted by the Publisher that discontinuing publication immediately is likely impractical, and the sense of the meeting was that publication should be discontinued as soon as practical.*)

Impact Factors & Citations

The improper use of impact factors and citation data as a measure of mathematical research continues. Various groups (university administrators, government agencies) seeking a measure with absolute objectivity are relying on impact factors and citation data to measure journal quality. Mathematicians have a role to play in trying to explain why using this data to measure the quality of journals or the quality of researchers is incorrect. Further, mathematicians have an obligation to suggest appropriate substitutes for ways in which to measure research.

Math Reviews

The Executive Editor of Mathematical Reviews gave an annual update on MR which included a brief summary of the new version of MathSciNet web pages which will be released on September 28, 2006. The new tab format for easier navigation and the added search options were highlighted. The MR developed registry for the World Digital Mathematics Library was also demonstrated. Kevin Clancey reported that the transition of publishers to "electronic only" issues of journals is requiring MR to modify acquisition and in house processing procedures. In general, everything is going smoothly at MR and the timely processing of articles continues.

Standard Reports

The standard report on the Notices & Bulletin was given and both journals are doing well. In addition, the standard backlog reports were included in the agenda to keep the Committee informed.

Date for Next Meeting, Other Business

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for September 7-8, 2007 in the Providence, RI office. The meeting will include a visit to the Pawtucket Print Shop. CPub 2007 is in Year 2 of its review cycle therefore there will be a review of all other journals, including the electronic-only journals.

John Ewing
Executive Director