

American Mathematical Society

2007 Report on the Committee on Publications

A meeting of the AMS Committee on Publications (CPub) was held on September 7–8, 2007 at the AMS headquarters in Providence, RI. Beverly Diamond, Chair, presided over the meeting.

The meeting began with some members of the committee touring the Pawtucket facility, which includes both the AMS print shop and warehouse.

The traditional Friday evening discussion concerned the AMS book program and was led by two of the three Acquisitions editors, Sergei Gelfand and Ed Dunne. The Committee discussed various aspects of the book program, including its history, acquiring and selecting books, the types of books in the program (proceedings volumes are still an important part), subject areas of interest, book editorial committees (which are much different than journal committees), and the future of the AMS book program.

The discussion included an in depth discussion of the stability of the book program. We are building an enormously stable program because of an ever-increasing backlist -- a consequence of the AMS policy of keeping all monographs in print. Visibility of the book program has also grown through Internet distribution channels such as Amazon and Google Book.

Book editorial committees can sometimes be slow and providing editors with an outline of what is expected before they begin work, similar to the “Guidelines” for journal editors, may assist them with their responsibilities while on the committee.

Building a successful book program is inherently a slow process. In some ways, we are still a young publisher in building relationships with current and potential authors who will need good publishing models in the future. Publishing good examples of books will attract better authors to write yet better books for us. Up until 15 years ago the AMS published only a handful of books, and now our goal is to publish 100 or more in the most prestigious book series.

In summary, growth will require years of patience and diligence on the part of the AMS. We need to be persistent and have a clear idea of what direction we are going in to keep the process moving forward.

Before the meeting began on Saturday, John Ewing talked about organizational changes that are taking place in the Publishing Division. The AMS is separating the functions of publishing into two separate divisions in order to make it more manageable. The first division is Publishing, which includes all production and sales aspects of publishing and is currently headed by Beth Huber. The second division is Editorial, which will be headed by the new Publisher, Sergei Gelfand. This change will be effective on October 1, 2007.

The agenda on Saturday included the following topics:

CPub 2006 updates

The Executive Director/Publisher gave a summary of actions taken as a result of the 2006 CPub meeting. There was only one open item under 'Role of AMS Journals', a 20% permanent page increase is still under consideration for JAMS. (This was discussed further during the agenda item for the JAMS follow up.) *It was suggested that the book program review for 2008 include a discussion about editorial guidelines for book editors.*

Report on journal backlogs

The agenda included the standard backlog reports for the journals. The backlog for the four primary journals is trending down because of the increase in pages, and we should see a further drop in 2008. The backlog for *Transactions* is still somewhat high, but it is being addressed.

Review of other journals

The full committee discussed the report of the subcommittee reviewing the electronic-only, translation, and distributed journals. No actions were recommended.

- **Electronic-only journals** – Because an in-depth review of electronic-only journals was done in 2005, actions taken by the managing editors in response to the recommendations from that review were discussed.
- **Translation journals** – Translation activities increase the accessibility of some mathematical works and continue to be a viable activity for the Society.
- **Distributed journals** – The AMS continues to provide a valuable service to the mathematical community by distributing journals published by other organizations. 'Sale-of-Service' is also modestly financially advantageous for the Society.

Journal of the AMS -- follow up

The new managing editor of JAMS, Robert Lazarsfeld, gave a follow-up report on the issues presented in the 2006 report of the CPub subcommittee review of the primary research journals.

- E-mail circulation and tracking is better; turn-around times (submission to acceptance or rejection) have improved. More editors are utilizing the peer review (CENTRACK) system. The committee has also added a sixth editor.
- The backlog was slightly larger than last year and pages for the current year have been increased. The JAMS board will consider permanently increasing the size of the journal at its upcoming meeting.
- The heavy concentration of papers in four primary MSCs should be compared to other similar journals. The distribution of papers in JAMS seems to mirror the distribution in its competitors. Moreover, many papers published in the journal cross several areas, making the analysis by primary classification less precise.

New peer review system

In May of 2006, the AMS moved to a centralized submission policy for all journals. Papers are tracked in peer review by editors using the AMS created tracking tool, Centrack. Although the change has been well received by both editors and authors, some editors would like to have a tool that is more sophisticated and customizable. We are currently in the process of licensing and installing a more elaborate tracking system, which was developed by Mathematical Sciences Publishers.

Research assessment and mathematics

Over the last few years governments, agencies, and institutions throughout the world have decided that they need to evaluate research -- objectively. The Impact Factor plays a key role in many of these research assessment exercises, but other metrics are being promoted as well. Mathematicians have requested that the International Mathematical Union (IMU) address the misuse of the Impact Factor in assessing the quality of mathematics research. The IMU has responded by forming a small *ad hoc* committee, jointly with the International Council on Industrial & Applied Mathematics (ICIAM) and the Institute for Mathematical Statistics (IMS). The committee will report on this in the coming year. The AMS should also try to bring common sense back to the way certain statistics are used.

Report on the digitization of the *Bulletin*

The first 100 years of the *Bulletin* has been digitized through the Digital Mathematics Library Project of the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI) and was funded by the Moore Foundation. The digitization work was done through Project Euclid at Cornell, and the past issues of the *Bulletin* are available on their site as well as the AMS. The goal was to demonstrate best practices in digitizing past literature. The project was complicated and there were problems with the references, which will be corrected in the near future.

Journal backfiles

Soon after the Web began, the AMS put the backfiles of the four primary research journals on JSTOR. This was a way to make them immediately available, at no cost to the AMS. Because JSTOR requires a subscription, however, not all mathematicians have access. The Committee discussed whether the Society should engage in its own digitization effort, and recommended that staff think about options from a limited to a full-scale version of an AMS backfile project. This would complement the JSTOR offering, not replace it.

Review of all CPub policies from the last 10 years

A report of all CPub actions and policies over the last 10 years was reviewed. This information gives a good view of how issues change over time. In the future, CPub may want to reconsider some of its policies previously implemented.

Report on *Notices* / *Bulletin*

The standard report on the *Notices* & *Bulletin* was presented. Both journals are thriving. The digitization of *Bulletin* was addressed in a previous agenda item. People can now browse the entire current issue of *Notices* in .pdf format from the new *Notices* web page.

New AMS website format

The AMS is in the process of reformatting and reorganizing the content on its website. The new and more modernized style (which should be up shortly) was shown to the Committee.

Report on Mathematical Reviews

The Executive Editor of Mathematical Reviews gave the annual update on MR. The new version of MathSciNet was recently released. The most significant changes are in the citation database, which now has top 10 lists under author citations and journal citations for books or journal articles, and top 10 journals according to their Mathematical Citation Quotient (MCQ). Coupled with the unique author identification, MR can produce more accurate citation data than ISI in

mathematics. The AMS Digital Mathematics Registry, which currently shows 1,203 electronic journals, is also maintained in Ann Arbor and is available freely from the MR web page.

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for September 12–13, 2008 at the Chicago O’Hare Hilton, Chicago, IL. The Committee will review the AMS book program at that time.

John Ewing
Executive Director