

# American Mathematical Society

## 2008 Report on the Committee on Publications

---

A meeting of the AMS Committee on Publications (CPub) was held on September 12-13, 2008 at the Chicago Hilton O'Hare, Chicago, IL. Ken Ono, Chair, presided over the meeting.

The Friday evening discussion, facilitated by Executive Director, John Ewing, focused on issues related to journal publishing, specifically, the potential impacts of "open access", and the ever increasing amount of new mathematics journals being published.

The issue of new journals was discussed briefly by the Committee. It was noted that an average of roughly 50 new mathematics journals are being launched yearly, increasing competitive pressure on publishers, especially given the current budgetary constraints being faced by libraries. Combined with the growing trend of "bundling", which offers libraries a more budget-friendly option by selling journal subscriptions in packages, the emergence of an increasing number of new journals presents a significant challenge to publishers of mathematics journals.

The evening's discussion mainly centered on prospective implications of the various approaches to "Open Access" in journal publishing. To fund the publication of journals under the traditional, or "Gold", model of open access, publishers require authors to pay up-front for their material to be published. This is done in lieu of charging subscription fees for journals. The journals are then made available for free (usually via the internet). The AMS currently employs a different model, referred to as "Green" open access, under which journal subscriptions are paid for by the consumer, but material five (5) years or older is made freely available. So far, employing a "Green" model does not seem to have caused any noticeable drop in subscription rates for the AMS, but the concern is that eventually it will.

The Committee discussed the potential effects of the "Gold" model of open access, in the event this model were to become the industry standard. The Committee voiced several concerns including: the inherent conflict of interest posed to authors, the issue of author affordability, the affect on funding sources, and the affect on the overall quality of the material. The Committee felt that the AMS should make a policy statement against publishing according to a "Gold" model of open access and began preparing a draft statement.

In an addition to the agenda made as the meeting commenced on Saturday morning, CPub discussed this draft policy statement and decided it was not ready to send it to the Council for approval. A subcommittee will be appointed to continue working on the statement and the accompanying material for consideration at the 2009 Council meeting.

The agenda on Saturday also included the following topics:

### **CPub 2007 Updates**

The Publisher provided an update to the Committee on the feasibility of digitizing the journal backfiles with the intent of making them freely accessible on the AMS website, which was discussed at the 2007 meeting. It was explained that the expense of such a project remains too high at this time, and that due to other projects presently being undertaken, the timing is not appropriate. *CPub decided to revisit the backfile digitization project at their 2010 meeting.*

### **Review of the AMS Book Program**

The report of the CPub subcommittee which reviewed the book publishing program was presented. The subcommittee's evaluation was conducted to determine the overall scientific and editorial health of the book program and examined scientific scope, quality, and readership.

The following findings were presented:

- **Scientific Scope:** The AMS is doing a good job of publishing books in all areas of mathematics, although some gaps in coverage, such as in applied mathematics, were identified.
- **Scientific Quality:** The quality of AMS books is considered to be high, with very strong support of the AMS as a publisher of high quality research monographs, and strong support of the AMS as a publisher of high quality graduate texts and conference proceedings.
- **Wide Readership:** Overall the AMS book program is doing a good job of publishing an array of books for its wide readership. The results of the survey of members indicate that the AMS should work toward increasing awareness of the variety of publication types it offers.
- **General:** The subcommittee pointed out the large number of existing AMS book series and also mentioned that more translations should be included in the program. Otherwise, it was stated that the book program should keep up the good work.

A recommendation was made by the subcommittee that guidelines for AMS book editors, similar to those for journal editors, be established to serve as a resource for new and existing editors. *A subcommittee will be appointed to complete a preliminary draft of book editor guidelines, which will be presented at the 2009 CPub meeting.*

### **Report on the Managing Editors meeting**

A meeting of the Managing Editors of the AMS primary journals takes place every other year prior to the CPub meeting. The Publisher provided a report on this meeting, which was attended by the four (4) Managing Editors, the Executive Director, the Publisher, and the Associate Executive Director of Publishing. Discussion at the meeting included a review and update on centralized submission, a review of editorial committee support, a review of editorial terms, a review of communication with the Editorial Boards Committee (EBC), as well as discussion on journal backlogs, expansion, and coverage. Since there was overlap in both meeting agendas, the Managing Editors present also provided input during the CPub meeting.

### **Memoirs Pages**

Although a temporary 600 page increase has been instituted for the *Memoirs* for 2008 and 2009, the backlog continues to grow. The Committee and Managing Editor discussed factors unique to *Memoirs*, which act to contribute to the growing backlog. AMS staff will recommend to the ECBT that the temporary increase be made permanent, thereby increasing *Memoirs* production to 3,800 pages per year. It was also noted that the *Memoirs* will become accessible online in 2009, and electronic subscriptions will be available beginning in 2010.

### **Report on Mathematical Reviews**

The Executive Editor of Mathematical Reviews (MR) presented the committee with the annual report on Mathematical Reviews, noting that MR has seen a 4% growth in listings and has recently exceeded over a million direct article links. The newest version of MathSciNet was

launched on August 25<sup>th</sup> and includes a new “Author Profile” feature, which was demonstrated for the Committee. A new “Librarians” feature has also been added as a resource for libraries. The revision of the Mathematical Subject Classification (MSC) scheme has been finalized and is now in production. The addition of 400 new five (5) digit MSCs and approximately 30 to 40 new three (3) digit MSCs have been added. The expectation is that journals will begin using the new MSC scheme in early 2009.

### **Report on journal backlogs**

The committee discussed the standard backlog report of mathematical research journals that appears in the *Notices* as well as an internal production report for the four (4) AMS primary journals and *Memoirs*. The Associate Executive Director of Publishing noted that, as these reports are prepared in July, the backlog numbers reported will continue to trend down throughout the year due to the page increases implemented in 2008. In an effort to further assist in easing the backlog for *Transactions* and increasing submission rates for *Proceedings*, an increase in the page limit, from 10 to 15, will be instituted for *Proceedings* and will take effect immediately.

### **New book series**

The Publisher presented a proposal to start a new AMS book series, consisting of high-level undergraduate textbooks. The AMS has purchased the Brooks/Cole Series in Advanced Mathematics, also known as the Sally Series, from Cengage Learning, Inc. and will use these titles as a foundation upon which to build the new series. This purchase includes all inventory and publishing rights for the 12 undergraduate and three (3) graduate textbooks in the series. The textbooks will be recovered and priced significantly less than as sold by Cengage. The three (3) graduate textbooks will become part of the *Graduate Studies in Mathematics* (GSM) series. *CPub voted to recommend to the Council that a new AMS book series in undergraduate mathematics be started.*

### **Publishing books on interdisciplinary mathematics**

The Publisher discussed plans for increasing the publication of books in the area of applied mathematics, which is currently underrepresented in the AMS publishing program. The scope of the publishing program would be expanded by publishing books which focus on the essential use of mathematics in disciplines such as economics and finance; information sciences; physical sciences and engineering; and life and medical sciences. Such books would be published within existing AMS series, until the AMS becomes somewhat established in this area. At that time, an advisory board would be established to assist in developing these books into a series on Interdisciplinary Mathematics.

### **Policy on Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is an increasing problem for publishers, mostly due to advances in technology, and it may be a good idea for the AMS, as a scientific society, to have a clearly stated policy on plagiarism. The Executive Editor of Mathematical Reviews (MR) presented a proposed policy on plagiarism that could be used by the AMS and other publishers. The Committee discussed the draft and suggested various revisions but could not reach a consensus. *A subcommittee will be appointed to continue working on a plagiarism policy and a revised draft will be considered by CPub at its next meeting.*

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for September 11–12, 2009, at the Chicago O’Hare Hilton, Chicago, IL. A review of the Member Journals (Bulletin, Notices, and Abstracts) will be conducted.

Sergei Gelfand  
*Publisher*