

## State of the AMS

April 1999

Why do I give these annual reports? You are likely asking yourself that question right now. I've always assumed that the reports to the Council are supposed to tell about things that the Council is most concerned with. But I've come to understand in the past four years that the Society is a complicated organization, with finely balanced relationships between its various parts---the Council, Board, President, Secretary, and other officers, and the staff, including the Executive Director. Each has various roles; each has responsibilities; each has areas of authority. In a sense it's those overlapping responsibilities that gives the Society its own personality and character, different from many other such organizations.

While the annual reports are supposed to tell the Council about things in which it's most directly concerned (and that's what I've tried to do with these reports in the past) this year I'd like to try something different. I will put a managerial slant on the report, with more emphasis on finances and business, and less emphasis on policy and issues. It's always nice to put yourself in another person's shoes, and while the Council isn't directly concerned with finances and the business aspect of the Society, I think it helps to understand the AMS better if you spend a few minutes listening to a report that I might normally give to the Board.

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### **Background**

The AMS is a Society with almost 29,000 members in 1998. About 65% of those members are in the United States; 35% are outside this country. More than 7000 of those members are students. And remember that we have a large number of reciprocity members (nearly 4000), and about the same number of category-S (who pay \$16 for a special membership).

The AMS is also a publisher. The budget for 1998 had operating revenue of just over 20 million dollars. Of that revenue, 77% came from publication activities; 7.5% came from individual dues; 3.4% from meetings; and the rest from various activities, including contributions, grants, institutional dues, and (a big item) short-term investments. We were supposed to make a profit (called "operating income") of \$600,000 in 1998, but for a variety of reasons we made \$1,500,000 instead. This will much lower in 1999.

We have a budgeted staff of 230 employees, 154 in Rhode Island, 73 in Ann Arbor, and 3 in our Washington office. Most of those are in publishing. In fact, of those 230 staff, about 175 are *directly* involved with publishing, and most of the other 50 or so people provide support for publishing (such as the Fiscal department).

How are we organized? The AMS has four major divisions, with a number of departments within each division, and two departments that lay outside those divisions.

Publication is the largest with six departments; Math Reviews the next; Finance and Administration; and finally Programs and Meetings. The two departments are the Washington Office and mine, the Executive Director.

Here's a partial list of the activities of each division, designed to illustrate the breadth of activity rather than to give a complete picture.

**Publication:**

- We published 929 articles in 12,272 journal pages in 1998 (not counting the Notices). There were 1014 new papers accepted.
- We published 79 new books in 1998—down a bit from the year before. But we sold about 10% more units than the previous year. We now carry over 2,500 titles in print. Increasingly, we publish more monographs than proceedings. The Chelsea titles, acquired by the AMS in 1997, are doing quite well. So are books that are meant as a service—What's Happening IV, A Primer of Mathematical Writing (Krantz), and How to be a Department Head (Conway).
- We have instituted consortium pricing for Mathematical Reviews, and it is slowly catching on. Most recently the entire country of Poland was added as a consortium. This is one way for small institutions to gain access to Math Reviews at extremely modest prices.
- We added a second distributor in Japan for our book program. We hope that a new business arrangement and competition between our two distributors will increase both availability and sales.
- Promotion and marketing has produced a new membership brochure, which was distributed widely by mail and at meetings.
- Electronic Product Development created a new version of e-Math went up with only minor changes this year. We added member-only access to some areas (email forwarding and electronic CMP, for example). The Notices recently gained an improved Table of Contents. We recently replaced our preprint server with a list of servers, which will be updated regularly to reflect changes in available services.
- During 1998 we added online registration for meetings and online membership renewals. Both are extremely popular. We have now added a new notification service for journals, allowing users to select both journals and areas.
- We are currently engaged in a major upgrade of the AMS electronic bookstore. Through February of this year, we have sold over 12,000 books through the AMS bookstore.
- During 1998 a number of staff were engaged in a project to analyze and simplify the journals production process. We now post electronic copies of articles immediately; we have added the ability to include commentary with article *after* they are published.
- We recently added second large press to our printing facilities, in addition to our several smaller presses. We are currently investigating the addition of print-on-demand facilities, which are important to us because we keep all monographs in print indefinitely.

## ***Math Reviews***

- Math Reviews receives thousands of journals and monographs each year and considers more than 110,000 separate items for possible inclusion. During 1998 they listed 66,273 items in Current Mathematical Publications, and included 49,310 in Mathematical Reviews. Those numbers will increase this next year.
- For the past two years we have been engaged in a major project to rekey all reviews from 1940 to 1979 for inclusion in MathSciNet. Those half-million reviews are now completed, and we will integrate the electronic files by the end of April. By using the forward referencing feature of MathSciNet, one can trace a mathematical idea from its inception to the present by reading reviews and clicking forward to future papers. It's a terrific way to browse a half-century of mathematics. The cost of this project, including the expense for keyboarding and the staff time on the files, is more than \$600,000.
- While reviews from 1980 to 1984 are already included in MathSciNet, they are files that came from an outdated typesetting system (STI). They have mistakes and gaps, and any new system that relies on TeX for displaying the material would not work with these files. We are therefore engaged in a follow up project to rekey these files during the next year. That will cost more than \$250,000.
- We have upgraded the computer network in the Ann Arbor offices during the past year, adding a T1 connection (they used to connect through a dedicated line to the Providence offices) and adding switches. The systems group at Math Reviews supports more than 80 desktop machines and 11 servers. We are now replacing microfilm with a sophisticated scanning operation that provides digital copies of articles for internal use by the staff.
- A survey of Math Reviews users was conducted in 1993. Because much has changed since then, we are conducting another major survey during the next few months. The results of that survey will help us to formulate some broad plans both for the Math Reviews database and for the way its delivered.

## ***Finance and Administration***

- Like many organizations, we have engaged in a Y2K project for the past year. This was led by a team of people from this division and Electronic Products Development. It is now near completion.
- Our Fiscal Department is considering a new accounting package, moving to a distributed environment rather than our current package. Changing accounting software and procedures in a large organization is complicated.
- The annual audit is currently taking place along with the preparation of tax forms. (Yes, even nonprofits have to file tax forms.).
- Organizations like the AMS have an uneven cash flows, collecting revenues from subscriptions and dues in advance of the associated expenses. In recent years, we have used those temporary reserves to our advantage by investing more aggressively. During 1998 we gained over \$450,000 in income from such temporary investments.

- We have some major building repairs in 1999, including a large project to replace part of the roof on the Providence facility (we replaced a large portion of the Ann Arbor building last year). We are also installing voice mail to our telephone system as we upgrade the switch to a new system (which is Y2K compatible).
- We have upgraded the computer that serves e-Math in the past year, and we are improving our network. During the past year, we changed internet service providers in Providence. We support 154 desktop and laptop computers in the Rhode Island offices, as well as 23 servers of various flavors. We upgrade those desktop machines on a 5-year cycle, which is an ongoing process for those who provide support for computer operations.
- Each year we negotiate with the companies that provide health insurance for AMS employees. This year, we have lost one of those providers, and like many other organizations we are once again facing rising health care costs.

### ***Programs and services***

- Each year we conduct the annual employment survey of young mathematicians, joint with MAA, ASA, and SIAM. That work is supported by our individual organizations as a professional service to the community, and the many years of surveys give the mathematics community more complete information than almost any other academic discipline.
- We are now gearing up to administer the CBMS 2000 survey of mathematics departments. That large survey is conducted every five years, investigating everything from student numbers to faculty age. It is supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, but administered by the Society.
- Each summer for the past 18 years the AMS has held Summer Research Conferences, jointly with SIAM and the Institute for Mathematical Statistics. That program, in slightly modified form, will be funded for the next five years beginning in 2000.
- There are often one-time conferences held by the Society, and these are most often supported through this division. During the coming year, there will be a workshop for department leadership held in August (associated to the Task Force on Excellence), and a conference for leaders of REU programs held in October. The first is supported by NSF; the second by NSA. Both will draw approximately 75 participants.
- The Society provides services for various agencies in Washington each year, including conducting the NSF postdoc competition and supporting the NSA panel for evaluating proposals.
- For many years the Society has conducted the employment register at the joint meeting in January. In recent years, we have added services for departments that do not wish to participate in the schedule of interviews, but who want to use our facilities to meet candidates nonetheless. It has been very successful. We have also added services to young mathematicians who are still on the job market late in the season.
- There are some big meetings coming up next year—the joint meeting (with the MAA and SIAM) in Washington during January, and the Future of Mathematics meeting at UCLA in August. Both require a substantial effort from the Meetings Department. In

addition, we are now providing services to the MAA for its summer MathFest in the next two years on a contract basis.

- Hope Daly will be retiring from the Society later this year after 30 years of service. We are currently engaged in a long process to replace her—not an easy job.

### ***Washington office***

- There are many joint projects administered through the Washington office. One of those is a project recently funded, called Preparing Future Faculty. This AMS-MAA project will award grants to 4 doctoral departments who can serve as models for other departments. Each will receive \$10,000 annually for two years to help develop and disseminate ideas.
- The first of two AMS-MER-SIAM workshops on professional masters degree programs was held at Courant Institute in 1998. The second will be held during the current year.
- Although lobbying is not directly a part of the Washington office, working with Congress and congressional staff is a steady activity. Each year there is a congressional luncheon (last year on cryptography—a great success). Each year we take part in congressional visits day, which brings more than 200 scientists and mathematicians to visit members of congress and their staff. Each year there are special opportunities to meet with special members of Congress (for example, last year's meeting with Senator Frist.)
- Much of the work of the Washington office is subtle, but absolutely crucial for the future. Networking with the rest of the other scientific organizations in Washington not only establishes connections that we can use in the future (for example, with biologists, with whom we'll give joint testimony this spring) but also makes mathematics visible—a part of the scientific community. Periodic meetings with other organizations, AMS receptions, phone calls with congressional staff, sponsorship of presidential awards for teachers—each is a small activity, but taken together have made a great difference.

### ***Executive Director***

I am often asked what I do as Executive Director, and it's always a little embarrassing when I find it difficult to give a short answer. The same is true for my department—there is no short description that captures what we do each day. My staff provides support for the President and works closely with the Secretary. We include the Development Office and work on public relations. We work on special projects from time to time. But to a large extent the work of my department is aimed at coordinating everything else mentioned above, running a 20 million dollar business that is also a professional society with a complex governance structure.

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There is an overview of the AMS in spring 1999, from a jaundiced perspective. I have left out almost all mention of the policy committees, of the many other committees that deal with professional issues or makes recommendations on issues, of the many editorial

committees that provide crucial service to the Society, and of the broad governance functions performed by the Council and officers. These are essential for the Society; they are omitted for clarity and conciseness, in order to narrow the perspective for this single report.

It is useful to look at the Society from other points of view occasionally. But it is essential to remember that the AMS functions well precisely *because* it has many aspects, they are all important, and they must all work together.