

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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In the following “Turn of the Century” Book Reviews section, extracts from much earlier *Bulletin* book reviews are used to offer a remembrance and a flavor of the tremendous mathematical development which took place during the twentieth century. The books are presented without commentary; they can speak for themselves through the reviews. My choice of the selected time period, from around 1900 to 1965, reflects a sense that many *Bulletin* readers are familiar with the excellent books and spectacular mathematical developments of the last third of this century. So, perhaps it would be more informative, interesting, and entertaining to browse through the earlier reviews to find clues about the origins of the mathematics which we now take for granted.

It is interesting to note how many of the reviews from the first part of the twentieth century already reflect the growing trend towards rigor and axiomatization. Other reviews were ahead of their time, as proved by their hints about developments which were yet to come. But already from the earliest reviews and choice of reviewers, one can see the truly international nature of the *Bulletin*. While the buzzword “globalization” was not yet current, mathematical activity was global. It is also interesting to see how the reviews capture the growing sophistication of American mathematics. This is manifested by the preponderance of European books at the beginning of the century which gradually made way, especially after World War II, to more and more books being published in this country.

Searching through old *Bulletins* was a rewarding experience. However, it was also frustrating because of the impossibility, due to space limitations, of including representatives of all the important developments during this period. Moreover (as is true even today), a significant portion of important mathematics was published only in papers and not in books, and so could not be represented in this survey. Also, some distinguished mathematicians are represented only as reviewers. This is because some did not write any books or because the reviews of their books turned out to be overly technical. Indeed, in these extracts, only those portions which (in my opinion) would make for entertaining reading have been retained; readers interested in the more technical material are encouraged to consult the original reviews. The selection starts with Poincaré’s 1900 review of Hilbert’s *Grundlagen der Geometrie*, and it ends with the 1965 review of the encyclopaedic text of Dunford and Schwartz. I hope these choices will please the reader.

In this search for reviews, I have benefited from extensive correspondence and conversations with Robin Hartshorne, Jean-Pierre Serre, Raghavan Narasimhan and with many of my colleagues at UIC, especially William Howard. My thanks go to them all.

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