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How the Notices Came to Be

The Notices began in 1954 as a spin-off of the Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society. In its early years, the Notices published meetings programs and contained announcements about upcoming meetings, appointments to new positions, and new AMS publications. Letters to the Editor became a feature in 1958. In the ensuing years, it has provided a lively forum for discussion and debate about mathematics-related topics. Gradually the Notices took on its role as a vehicle for disseminating news about fellowships, grants, and prizes. Over the years, the Notices has carried more substantial articles on topics like the job market and research funding, and in 1982, began to feature a series of expository articles about mathematics.

In the early 1990s a committee was established to examine AMS member publications. The task force instigated a long-term plan to transform the Notices into a lively magazine containing widely accessible expository articles about mathematics. In 1995 Hugo Rossi of the University of Utah was named editor—marking the transition from in-house to appointed editorial management of the publication. The Notices used to be produced in TeX, but since 1995 it has been produced in QuarkXPress™, a desktop publishing tool that facilitates page layout. The Notices also went online in 1995. Anthony Knapp of the State University of New York, Stony Brook, served as editor during 1998–2000. Harold Boas of Texas A&M University is the current editor.

The Notices Today

As the journal of record of the AMS, the Notices is sent to all of the Society’s nearly 28,000 members worldwide. With its diverse international readership, the Notices strives each month to publish articles on a variety of topics, including mathematical research, professional issues, science policy issues, and education. In recent years the Notices has also broadened its outlook to include coverage of cultural developments related to mathematics.

The Notices is published 11 times a year, with a combined June/July issue in the summer. Issues are mailed about three weeks before the issue month. Given the size of the Notices’ print run—too large for the AMS’s own printshop—the issues are printed by a firm in Maryland that also handles the mailing. The nucleus of the group producing the Notices consists of four people: the editor, Harold Boas of Texas A&M University, plus three AMS staff members: deputy editor and senior writer Allyn Jackson, managing editor Sandra Frost, and production assistant Muriel Toupin.

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Who’s Who
Boas and Jackson are responsible for soliciting and editing material for the Notices. Jackson also writes articles. The 14-member Notices Editorial Board also assists in soliciting, evaluating, and editing articles. Boas makes the final decision about acceptance of articles and commentary pieces and sends these to Frost, who also receives from other AMS staff and officers such material as committee reports, the annual survey, meeting announcements, etc. Frost, with assistance from Toupin, handles all aspects of Notices production—including page layout, editorial and author changes, and graphics placement. They also create the pdf version of Notices for the Web. Other AMS staff members contribute to various aspects of Notices production—proofreading, designing, editing, and preparing graphics. See www.ams.org/notices/not-editors.html for the list of all the current editors and staff.

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How Does a Mathematics Article Get into Print?
While the Notices welcomes unsolicited manuscripts, most articles that appear in print are solicited by the Notices Editorial Board. Boas reads the articles, gathers comments from referees, and offers suggestions for improvement to the authors. After an article is accepted for publication, Frost works with the author on any accompanying graphics or illustrations.

The mathematics articles in the Notices are expository, and often the technical level of submitted manuscripts is too high. As a result, much of the editorial work involves making the articles less technical and more accessible to a wider range of mathematicians.

The Opinion column, which appears on the first page opposite the masthead, serves as a forum for views on topics such as education, electronic publishing, federal funding and public policy, prizes, and the AMS itself. Past contributors include prominent members of the mathematical community—AMS officers and Notices editors, the director of the NSF’s Division of Mathematical Sciences, presidents of professional societies, and directors of the AMS’s Washington and Ann Arbor offices. The Notices welcomes contributions to the Opinion column.

Recent Developments
The Notices is now printed on a high-quality, coated paper stock, which gives it the look and feel of a magazine and, more importantly, provides for sharper reproduction of type and illustrations.

Pdf files of the final sectional and annual meeting programs are now archived online with the Notices’ issue month in which the meeting occurred. Programs for future meetings and FAQs about AMS meetings can be found at www.ams.org/meetings.

Notices Honors
Notices articles have twice received the new AMS Conant Prize, awarded for the best expository article published in the previous five years in the Notices or the Bulletin. The prize-winning articles are “A Tale of Two Sieves”, by Carl Pomerance (December 1996) and “A Guide to Entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics”, by Elliott Lieb and Jakob Yngvason (May 1998). In 1996 the Notices received the Award for General Excellence in a Scholarly Journal from the Society of National Association Publishers.
Book Reviews

The Notices reviews nontechnical books about mathematics that may appeal to a wide audience that includes mathematicians, scientists, and interested individuals. Since the Notices first started publishing book reviews in 1995, about 75 books have been reviewed. Generally only books that have been out less than two years are reviewed, but sometimes exceptions are made. For example, a touching review by V.S. Varadarajan of André Weil’s 1991 autobiography appeared in the Notices issue memorializing Weil (April 1999). Some readers were reminded of Weil’s own famously derisive review of a book on mathematics history when they read a recent Notices book review by Robert Langlands (April 2002). The most sparkling writing in the Notices is often found in book reviews, such as Brian Blank’s review of Courant and Robbins’ “What is Mathematics?” published on the occasion of the death of Herbert Robbins (December 2001).

Coverage of Cultural Developments Related to Mathematics

Because the Notices is one of the most widely read periodicals for professional mathematicians, it is an excellent forum in which to cover new and recent works—plays, films, art exhibits, literature—that have some connection with mathematics. These articles, written by mathematicians for mathematicians, include: “Commutative Diagrams in the Fine Arts”, by Karl Heinrich Hofmann (June/July 2002); Theater Review: “QED”, by Allyn Jackson (June/July 2002); Movie Review: “A Beautiful Mind”, by Lynne Butler (April 2002); “Conversations about Mathematics”, by Rob Kirby (March 2002); Theater Review: “Fermat’s Last Tango”, by Robert Osserman (November 2001); “A Mathematician Reads Social Text”, by Michael C. Sullivan, and “A Report from the Front of the Science Wars”, by Evans M. Harrell II (October 1996).

About the Advertisers

The first advertisement in the Notices appeared on the back cover of the August 1960 issue. When the page size increased and the style was improved in 1961, the amount of advertising increased as well. Classified ads—mostly for open positions—first appeared in 1976. Now the Notices includes paid ads from educational institutions, mathematics institutes, professional societies, government agencies, publishers, and other companies. Advertisers continue to choose the Notices as the primary publication to promote awareness among mathematicians worldwide about open positions, institute events, books, and other products.
New in the *Notices*

**WHAT IS...?**

Have you ever wondered what a brane is? Or a shtuka? What about an amoeba, a dessin d’enfant, or a grope?

The aim of the “WHAT IS...?” column, a new feature starting in 2002, is to explain to graduate students and others some of the colorful terms cropping up in mathematics today. The column’s technical level will be low and its accessibility high.

Many readers are familiar with the “What is...?” column in the *American Mathematical Monthly*, which began in 1942 under the editorship of Lester R. Ford Jr. The *Notices* “WHAT IS...?” column will be a bit different; each column will focus on a single mathematical object rather than a whole theory.

Watch for the inaugural column, “WHAT IS an amoeba?”, by Oleg Viro, in the September 2002 *Notices*.

*Read more* For information on how to contact the *Notices* go to [www.ams.org/notices/not-contact.html](http://www.ams.org/notices/not-contact.html).