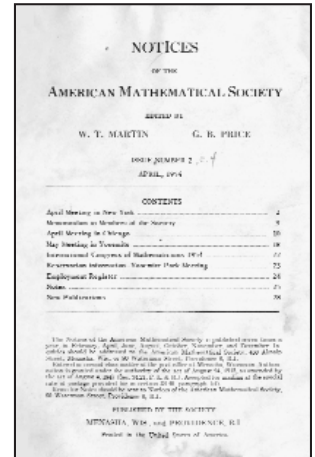# How the *Notices* Came to Be

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.

Read more *A History of the Second Fifty Years, American Mathematical Society 1939–1988*, by Everett Pitcher (AMS, Providence, RI, 1988, pp. 121–127), provides a history of the development of the *Notices*. The book can be ordered on the AMS Bookstore at www.ams.org/bookstore-getitem/item=hmpitcher.

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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.

Read more Although many members like to peruse the printed version of the *Notices* at their leisure, many use the online version at www.ams.org/notices to search for specific articles and reviews.

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.

Read more See www.ams.org/notices/not-editors.html for the list of all the current editors and staff.

Harold Boas is a professor of mathematics at Texas A&M University and has served as the editor of the *Notices* since January 2001. He is the son of the late Ralph P. Boas, former editor of *Mathematical Reviews* and a mathematician of exceptional culture and learning. Harold Boas's research specialty is the theory of several complex variables. In 1995 Boas, with his collaborator Emil J. Straube, received the $20,000 Stefan Bergman Prize.

Allyn Jackson is the AMS staff writer. She came to work at the AMS in 1986, after receiving a master's degree in mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley.

Sandy Frost (right) joined the AMS staff in 1993. With a degree in studio art and a background in magazine production, Frost became the managing editor of the *Notices* during its transformation into its present magazine-type format. **Muriel Toupin**, a thirty-three-year employee of the AMS, has worked on the *Notices* in various capacities during most of those years. She has seen the *Notices* evolve from pre-T$_E$X to T$_E$X- to QuarkXPress-produced and from a print-only to a print/electronic publication.

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.

Read more Submission information can be found at www.ams.org/notices/submissions-info.html. For more details concerning the content, form, and editing process for articles, please see the item "Information for *Notices* Authors" in the January 2002 issue on page 47 and at www.ams.org/notices/200201/ref-bklst.pdf.

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.

Read more 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).
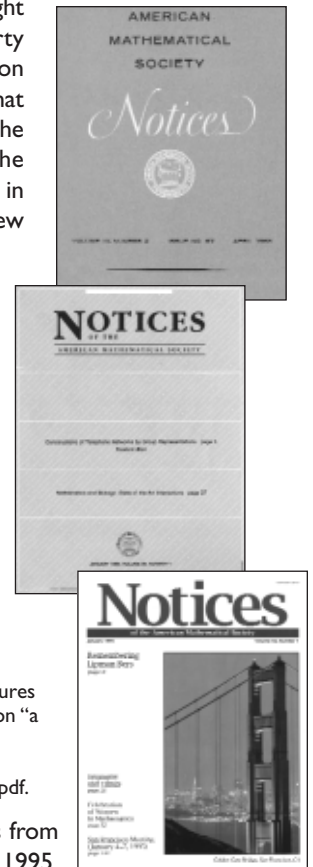
Read more   *The New Yorker* (March 11, 2002) and *Science* (February 1, 2002) mentioned that Ron Howard, director of "A Beautiful Mind", read Dave Bayer's *Notices* review of the Broadway play, "Proof". As a result, Howard hired Bayer to be the mathematics consultant for the film. (Bayer's review appeared in the October 2000 *Notices*, www.ams.org/notices/200009/rev-bayer.pdf.)

Notices Covers

The 1995 redesign of the *Notices* brought color graphics to the cover. Marty Golubitsky of the University of Houston was the first covers editor. Today that role is filled by Bill Casselman of the University of British Columbia. The general aim is to have a cover that ties in with an article in the same issue; on a few occasions, an appealing cover graphic has led to the writing of an article to go with it. One of Casselman's favorite covers, for the January 2002 issue, shows a Babylonian clay tablet from 1800–1600 BC, which demonstrates that the Babylonians were aware of the visual reasoning that led to a proof of the Pythagorean theorem for isosceles triangles. Producing that cover "was both a great privilege and a great pleasure," Casselman said.

Read more   Read Casselman's article, "Pictures and Proofs" (a mathematician's perspective on "a picture is worth a thousand words) in the November 2000 issue of the *Notices* at www.ams.org/notices/200010/fea-casselman.pdf.

From top to bottom, *Notices* covers from 1960, 1988, and 1995.

About the Advertisers

The first advertisement in the *Notices*—for four textbooks published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston—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.

Each Issue of the *Notices* Includes:

- ◆ **Feature Articles**
  expositions on a wide range of mathematical topics
- ◆ **Communications**
  shorter articles on professional issues in mathematics
- ◆ **Commentary**
  Opinion column, Letters to the Editor, Reviews

- ◆ **Departments**
  - ◆ **Mathematics People**
    prizes and awards
  - ◆ **Mathematics Opportunities**
    grant opportunities, news from math institutes, summer programs
  - ◆ **Inside the AMS**
    news from the Society

- ◆ **Reference and Book List**
  upcoming deadlines, popular books on mathematics
- ◆ **Mathematics Calendar**
  chronological list of mathematics meetings worldwide
- ◆ **New Publications Offered by the AMS**

- ◆ **Classifieds**
  open positions around the world, items for sale, services
- ◆ **Meetings and Conferences**
  upcoming AMS meetings
- ◆ **From the Secretary**
  calls for prize nominations, reports, election information, bylaws of the Society, and other matters of record.

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.