
Letters to the Editor

Harvard Calculus and IMP: Reply to Kasman and Fendel

In his letter, "On Two Points in the Article by Wu", Alex Kasman writes:

I would like to address two points in the 'Forum' article by H. Wu ["The Mathematician and the Mathematics Education Reform", December 1996]. One clear misrepresentation is the statement that "the text [by Hughes-Hallett, Gleason et al.] is written to be accessible to students with weak algebraic backgrounds."

and

In fact, anyone who has taught from the book would know that this is completely untrue. The explanations and exercises in this book require a proficiency with algebra equal to (and in many cases beyond) that expected by 'standard' texts.

It would appear that the Harvard Calculus authors, Deborah Hughes-Hallett, Andrew Gleason et al. agree with Wu. They write in the preface of the Harvard Calculus textbook:

We have found this curriculum to be thought-provoking for well-prepared students while still accessible to students with weak algebra backgrounds. Providing nu-

merical and graphical approaches as well as the algebraic gives the students several ways of mastering the material. This approach encourages students to persist, thereby lowering failure rates.

In Dan Fendel's letter, "On the Interactive Mathematics Program", he writes: "In the IMP classroom, the concept of expected value is presented in the ninth grade, rather than omitted entirely as in the traditional high school program."

Dr. Fendel's example provides insight into IMP. The concept of "expected value" is used only in the second half of the unit "The Game of Pig", but is never defined. The term first appears in a homework problem and is treated as part of everyday language. In the glossary, at the end of the whole IMP book, one finds: "EXPECTED VALUE: In a game or other probability situation, the average amount gained or lost per turn in the long run."

The *Teacher's Guide* for "The Game of Pig" informs teachers that "expected value is one of the unit's primary concepts," yet they are instructed to tell their students that "the concept of expected value is nothing new...[but] the use of such complex terminology makes it easier to state complex ideas."

It is unfortunate that the UC system accepts three years of the NSF-funded IMP as fulfilling its mathematics requirement for entering freshmen. But I concede, in spite of the absence of the quadratic formula until twelfth

grade, that IMP does appear to give adequate preparation for NSF-funded Harvard Calculus.

David Klein
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Concerning Sammy Eilenberg

It is well known that Professor Sammy Eilenberg has been ill. Professor Piotr Blass, a friend of Sammy, would like to publish a collection of reminiscences submitted by Sammy's friends and acquaintances. These short notes would be published in a book by the *Ulam Quarterly*. The tone of this volume is caught by the possible titles "I Remember Sammy", "Let Me Tell You about Sammy and Me", etc.

Contributions should be sent to Dr. Piotr Blass, 113 West Tara Lakes Drive, Boynton Beach, Florida 33436.

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Conjectured Archive Exists in Russia

A system of preservation of manuscripts similar to that proposed by Andy Magid (Editorial, August 1997) existed in the fSU and exists now in Russia. "Referativnyi Zhurnal Matematika" (RZMat, the Russian analog to *Mathematical Reviews*) labeled those manuscripts by DEP.

Any author affiliated with a university, etc., can submit a manuscript for depositing at VINITI (All-Union, now All-Russian, Institute of Scientific and Technical Information). Acceptance is guaranteed, since the author has to send a reference letter together with the manuscript. A few months after formal acceptance RZMat publishes an auto-review of the manuscript, and the author can add one more item to his/her list of publications. After that anyone can order a copy; several years ago its price was pretty reasonable.

This way was used not only for “insufficiently deep or important” results, (because only God can be certain that an article will never be used or at least cited) but also so one can quickly establish authorship priority or publish a very large article which would be impossible to put in a regular journal. This is the usual way to publish first results for many graduate students. Depositing does not prevent the author from submitting the same manuscript to a conventional journal.

I am not sure this is unique or the best way in our time of electronic journals. I just want to provide this information to *Notices* readers.

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job of an editor is to repel the barbarians trying to storm the gates. (The principal qualification for getting on the editorial board of such journals is being invited by a current member.) In “A Modest Proposal”, Jonathan Swift offered the view that one way to solve the problem of Irish overpopulation was to sell their babies as meat. In a less cruel but not tongue-in-cheek proposal, Magid recommends burying “inferior” theorems on the Internet on the off chance that they might prove useful someday. No mention is made of the fact that there are refereed journals on the Internet or that their number is growing. A gratuitous swipe at those working at “lower-tier institutions” is also included.

This kind of patronization of those employed by “inferior” institutions or who do the “wrong” kind of research is time honored. I wrote an article about it called “There are too many B.A.D. mathematicians” that appeared in vol. 15 (1993) of the *Mathematical Intelligencer*. It appears also on the Internet at the URL: <http://www.unipissing.ca/topology/t/o/p/c/10.htm> (B.A.D. abbreviates “Bigoted and Destructive”).

Some swine do not appreciate the pearls being cast before them.

Melvin Henriksen
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Proposed Archive Patronizes Membership

Whether the views expressed in the column “Theorems That Should Never Have Been Proven” by associate editor Andy Magid that appeared on p. 788 in the August 1997 issue of the *Notices* are just his own or represent the collective views of the Editorial Board is less than clear. There can be no doubt, however, that his column patronizes a large proportion of the membership of the American Mathematical Society. Some of us are naive enough to think that an important part of the job of an editor of a research journal is to encourage authors to improve the quality of their work and to treat those who submit articles for publication with dignity and respect. Seemingly, according to Dr. Magid, the main

About the Cover

Sunset reflecting off the National Aquarium at the Inner Harbor, Baltimore, Maryland. Baltimore is the site of the 1998 Joint Mathematics Meetings, January 7–10. Photograph by Paul Souders for Tony Stone Images.