

Notices

of the American Mathematical Society

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Subscription prices for Volume 45 (1998) are \$300 list; \$240 institutional member; \$180 individual member. (The subscription price for members is included in the annual dues.) A late charge of 10% of the subscription price will be imposed upon orders received from nonmembers after January 1 of the subscription year. Add for postage: Surface delivery outside the United States and India—\$15; in India—\$36; expedited delivery to destinations in North America—\$35; elsewhere—\$70. Subscriptions and orders for AMS publications should be addressed to the American Mathematical Society, P.O. Box 5904, Boston, MA 02206-5904. All orders must be prepaid.

ADVERTISING: *Notices* publishes situations wanted and classified advertising, and display advertising for publishers and academic or scientific organizations.

SUBMISSIONS: Letters to the Editor, Forum pieces, articles, and reviews may be sent to the editor by e-mail at notices@math.sunysb.edu, by fax at 516-751-5730, or by postal mail at P. O. Box 333, East Setauket, NY 11733. Electronic submissions are preferred. Correspondence with the managing editor may be sent to notices@ams.org.

NOTICES ON e-MATH: Most of this publication is available electronically through e-MATH, the Society's resource for delivering electronic products and services. To access the *Notices* on e-MATH, use the URL:

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[*Notices of the American Mathematical Society* is published monthly except bimonthly in June/July by the American Mathematical Society at 201 Charles Street, Providence, RI 02904-2213. Periodicals postage paid at Providence, RI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address change notices to *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*, P.O. Box 6248, Providence, RI 02940-6248.] Publication here of the Society's street address and the other information in brackets above is a technical requirement of the U.S. Postal Service. All correspondence should be mailed to the post office box, not the street address. Tel: 401-455-4000; e-mail: notices@ams.org.

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Printed in the United States of America.

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Editorial

Opinion in the *Notices*

Starting with the February issue this year, opinion columns by associate editors, which formerly had occupied the *Notices* editorial column, began to appear on the op-ed page under a heading "In My Opinion" or "In Our Opinion". Though mathematicians can largely agree on what is a proof, much is controversial about the field: what the proper balance is between research and education, whether some areas are more important than others, at what stage the Four-Color Theorem is truly proved, to what extent calculus needs reform, whether the universities of one country should give preference in mathematics employment to the residents of that country.

The associate editors are often in a position to know some of the current issues of interest to large groups of *Notices* readers. These editors may or may not have the answers we all seek, but their writing about these issues from particular points of view has been a way of sparking discussion.

This month the *Notices* is expanding this activity by opening the op-ed page to submissions from all its readers. The first column of this kind is by Greg Kuperberg, David Morrison, and Richard Palais. As is the case with the associate editors, these people are expressing their own opinions, not necessarily those of the AMS. They make reference to a column by Steven Krantz in the September 1997 issue, and that too was a column expressing the opinion of the author and not necessarily of the AMS.

Columns of this new kind will appear under the heading "Another Opinion". According to the current plan, there will be at most one per issue, and it will occupy the full op-ed page.

The *Notices* invites submissions of "Another Opinion", which may be sent to the usual address listed in the masthead. Electronic submissions are preferred. The intention is that such a column start discussion of a mathematics-related issue that ought to be of current interest to many mathematicians. Standards may be expected to be high. Not only must the writing be of high quality, but also the topic must be an important one appropriate for much of the AMS membership. The word limit is fairly strict—800 to 850 words. Footnotes and sidebars are permitted, but not a bibliography.

In the case of columns about large educational issues, let us heed Secretary of Education Riley's call for an "end to shortsighted, politicized, and harmful bickering over the teaching and learning of mathematics." Toward this goal, columns about large educational issues are expected to meet certain conditions: (1) Sarcasm and hyperbole have no place in this kind of writing. (2) The context of the column must be made clear to the reader, indicating the writer's affiliations and possible conflicts of interest and also revealing, more broadly, where the writer is coming from. (3) Educational jargon must be used only in acceptable ways that are understandable to the reader.

Similar principles apply to other controversial topics.

With this change the *Notices* hopes to broaden the scope of significant issues that are brought to the attention of the readers. Associate editors will continue to have occasional "In My Opinion" columns, and all of us should gain by the addition.

—Anthony W. Knapp

In This Issue

Return of the "Forum"

The "Forum" returns this month to the *Notices* after an absence of several months. Mikhael Gromov gives his view of "Possible Trends in Mathematics in the Coming Decades". This writing is adapted from an appendix to an assessment report by the National Science Foundation on U.S. mathematics, and Allyn Jackson writes about the full report elsewhere in this issue.

—A. W. K.