The "New" JPBM

The Joint Policy Board for Mathematics (JPBM) is an umbrella organization that facilitates collaborative projects of the three major U.S. organizations in the mathematical sciences: the AMS, the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM). JPBM has traditionally worked on increasing public awareness of mathematics and on tracking developments in federal funding for research. With a new director and federal relations consultant in place, JPBM is working on new ways to promote the role of mathematics on the national agenda.

JPBM is funded by the three societies and has ten members: the JPBM director, the executive directors and presidents of the three societies, and one additional representative for each society. For SIAM, this additional representative is a SIAM vice-president, for the MAA it is the MAA secretary, and for the AMS it is an individual elected by the AMS Council. Established in 1984, JPBM was originally headed by Kenneth Hoffman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. More recently, Richard Herman, now provost of the University of Illinois, served as chair and director of JPBM from 1991 until mid-1997 while he was also dean at the University of Maryland. For a number of years JPBM retained the services of a public relations firm, and it also had on staff Lisa Thompson, who was the JPBM congressional liaison until last year. Thompson is perhaps best known in the mathematical sciences community for producing the JPBM electronic newsletter *Tidbits*, which contained news and information about federal support for research and education in the mathematical sciences.

In the fall of 1998 Daniel Goroff accepted the part-time position of director of JPBM while keeping his position as professor of the practice of mathematics at Harvard University. Prior to joining the Board, he worked at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, which is headed by the president's science advisor. Goroff also served part-time for a year on the staff of the National Research Council. Also joining JPBM as federal relations consultant is April Burke of Lewis-Burke Associates. With eight people on staff, Burke's organization specializes in monitoring and analyzing developments in Congress and the government that could have an impact on science and academia. An attorney by training, Burke brings much experience providing advice to universities, research consortia, and other scientific institutions concerning federal policy and budgeting decisions.

Goroff says that the main purpose of JPBM—to coordinate advocacy for the mathematical sciences on behalf of the three societies—has not changed. In addition, most of JPBM's traditional activities will remain. A new incarnation of *Tidbits*, renamed *The Washington Polymath*, will appear at least once a month.[1] JPBM will continue to produce its annual overview of federal funding for the mathematical sciences across the government; this overview is published as a chapter in a

[1] *To subscribe to the* The Washington Polymath*, send an e-mail message to* jpbm@math.umd.edu.

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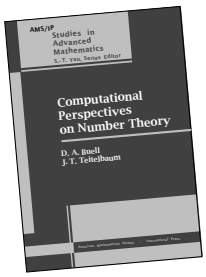
Number Theory



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Proceedings of a Conference in Honor of A. O. L. Atkin

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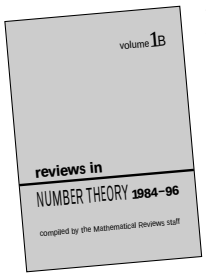

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yearly report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and also appears in the *Notices*.[2] Another continuing activity is the organization of a mathematics exhibit for the annual Congressional Visits Day, sponsored by the Coalition for National Science Funding. JPBM will keep building its Congressional Action Network, which consists of a group of mathematicians who respond to occasional alerts from the Board to contact congressional representatives about urgent issues. Once a year JPBM presents its Communications Award, which honors efforts to explain to the general public what mathematicians do.

There are also some changes in JPBM activities. For example, JPBM for many years sponsored Mathematics Awareness Week. This event has now become Mathematics Awareness Month (held in April each year), and primary responsibility for it rotates among the three societies. Up to now JPBM has not had a strong presence on the World Wide Web, but Goroff says this will change. He is planning a Web site with information on JPBM, an archive of *Tidbits* and *The Washington Polymath*, as well as other documents that JPBM prepares or endorses, such as congressional testimony by mathematicians or statements made in partnership with other scientific and academic organizations.

The importance of an organization like JPBM is that often the three societies can accomplish more by collaborating than by working individually. There are some similarities between JPBM and the AMS Washington Office in that both collect information about developments in Washington that could have an impact on the mathematical sciences community. But there are differences as well. The director of the AMS Washington Office, Samuel M. Rankin III, and his assistant, Monica Foulkes, provide a daily, sustained presence for mathematics in Washington by networking with other scientific groups, establishing contacts with members of Congress and their staffs, and attending meetings. By contrast, JPBM develops positions on specific issues that could have an impact on the mathematical sciences community and advocates those positions in Washington.

"JPBM is a resource for the whole community," Goroff said. He notes that the potential contributions of mathematics in addressing government initiatives and public priorities are too often understated, if not overlooked. "Why aren't we more proactive as a community?" he asks. "Researchers, educators, and practitioners can help shape policy rather than just waiting for government officials to announce their decisions. JPBM can help us try to stay a step ahead."

—Allyn Jackson

[2] *See "Mathematical sciences in the FY 2000 budget" in the June/July 1999 issue of the* Notices.