

# Brought to You by... AMS Staff

## An Introduction to Some of the AMS Staff Who Produce *Notices of the AMS*

The transformation of *Notices of the AMS* over the past ten years parallels the dynamic changes in mathematics publishing everywhere during this period. Whether from the point of view of author, editor, production staff person, graphic artist, or printer, the evolution of production methods for printed and electronic output has had a great impact.

With the aid of scripting programs to extract and format information from databases to the *Notices* “style” and desktop publishing tools to manipulate text and images, AMS staff have produced a *Notices* far more attractive and timely than its predecessor. The *Notices* staff led the way in producing a publication with more graphics and made *Notices* one of the first AMS journals published online (in 1995).

In the early 1990s, a committee set about examining 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. However, production of the journal remained an in-house operation. It was at that point, 1995, that the means of producing the *Notices* was changed from  $\text{\TeX}$  to Quark, the predominant desktop publishing tool of the time. The introduction of desktop publishing enabled much easier manipulation of text around graphics and resizing of fonts and graphics.

The transition to the new *Notices* style involved a learning curve for staff, and to this day it requires continuing education. Ten years ago the AMS sent key staff to desktop publishing classes; those people and their *Notices*-producing heirs continue to learn on the job as they apply what they have learned to the specific and evolving needs of *Notices*. AMS technical staff helped bridge the transition to desktop publishing, as of course the

interface had to accommodate mathematical symbols. One of the key and ongoing challenges for AMS staff has been to have and effectively use compatible versions of software packages and operating systems. The process of selecting the optimum production environment for *Notices* was and continues to be similar to the process one uses to choose a computer: set goals, determine how to achieve them, and then find the best tools by bringing together lots of research and input in order to make a decision.

Although various electronic tools enable the production of *Notices*, there is still no substitute for effective people skills, the discerning eye, and a positive attitude. AMS staff use these talents to serve as proofreaders, programmers, writers, designers, and liaisons with authors and editors, all the while learning technological advances in desktop publishing hardware and software for Macs and PCs: QuarkXPress, Mathsetter, Acrobat Distiller, PhotoShop, Word,  $\text{\LaTeX}$ , and OmniMark, among others.

*Notices* reaches far and wide in the AMS operation. In recent years nearly thirty staff members across seven departments have allocated some part of their time and effort to working on *Notices*, and that doesn't even include the staff who have some role in providing regular content for the journal.

Here are just some of the AMS staff members who, for the most part behind the scenes, serve as liaisons with authors, provide reports, edit and format manuscripts, create layout and graphics, write, and manage the production schedule for eleven issues each year.

SANDY FROST came to the AMS eleven years ago as managing editor of *Notices*, and in that position she continues to schedule and track all material for each issue to ensure timely delivery to the printer and posting on the AMS website. She communicates with authors, offsite editors, and the printer; does page and issue layouts; oversees in-house *Notices*



**Sandy Frost (left) and Muriel Toupin.**

staff; shepherds the submission of material from other AMS departments; reviews final proofs; and posts each issue to the Web. The desktop production takes place both on MacIntosh, PC, and Unix platforms, and work is in progress on three issues of *Notices* in some stage at any given time. Sandy juggles the many production tracks and ensures that each issue is complete and published on time.

Each section of *Notices* comes from a different source or author, so each section proceeds in its separate production stream. MURIEL TOUPIN first came to the AMS in 1967 and over the years worked in a variety of positions, but she has been a production assistant for *Notices* for over twenty years. She receives raw material from authors and in-house sources in various formats (L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, Word, T<sub>E</sub>X, ASCII, and email text) and codes the files for use in *Notices*-formatted pages. She inputs editorial corrections and additions to page-formatted files and creates the pdfs and Postscript files that make up the online *Notices*.

Sandy posts *Notices* on the Web the same date the approved “blueline” (the printer’s speak-now-or-forever-hold-your-peace preprinting copy) is returned to the printer with instruction to “go ahead and print” (as presumably the issue is “final”). For now, the online issue is available to everyone and at the same time. However, AMS members may sign up for *Headlines & Deadlines* to receive an email notification when issues are posted.

PETER SYKES and LORI NERO have between them twenty-nine years’ experience in the AMS Graphic Arts department, and both have served these past ten years as staff artists for *Notices*, refining and creating many of the graphics for the journal. Peter designs the ads for AMS publications and programs and works on the covers with *Notices* graphics editor Bill Casselman (University of British Columbia). Casselman says, “When the covers leave my hand, so to speak, they are a mere skeleton to

which Peter & Co. give life. I am surprised and delighted with the extra vivacity they acquire.” Lori processes all graphics for *Notices* articles, resizes or crops photographs as needed, and even enhances some of the images provided by authors. There was the time Lori used PhotoShop to lengthen someone’s necktie, and she regularly crops out unwanted and distracting elements from photographs, but most of the time she uses her skills to sharpen blurry, overexposed, or dark photographs. Lori uses the printer’s specifications to achieve optimum quality in both print and Web media.



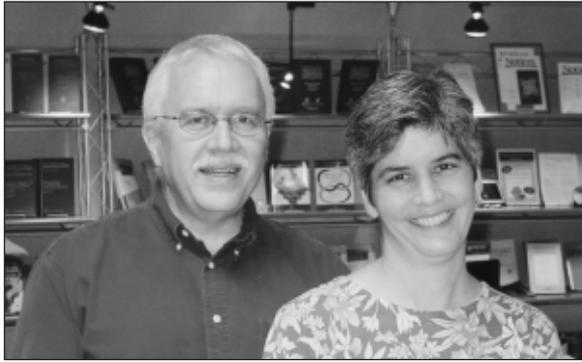
**Left to right, Peter Sykes, Lori Nero, Michelle Ogilvie.**

Peter can remember the days when the AMS sent film negatives of the inside pages and a “paste-up” board of each *Notices* cover to the printer, noting where the art was to be placed (with a slide of the artwork separately enclosed). Now, they ftp a pdf (post a file of each entire issue on a secure website for downloading by the printer). Before the issue goes to print, he reviews a printed color key of the cover to verify color and text, and both he and Sandy view and proof the issue online. Peter and Sandy also remember the uproar when graphics were introduced within *Notices* articles: a few of the letters to the editor were very critical indeed. Staff members learned from those that had valid critiques and suggestions, and these days they hear wide praise for *Notices* covers, the images that accompany articles, and the readability of the text. Readers will see yet more 4-color graphics throughout future issues.

Over the past ten years DEBORAH SMITH has been the primary copyeditor for all *Notices* articles, and many others have helped proofread and edit as well. MARCIA ALMEIDA, production editor for special projects until mid-2004, gathered material from internal and external sources and submitted the “Backlog of Journals”, “Visiting Mathematicians”, “Statistics on Women Mathematicians”, and “Thesis Titles”. The various components of her contributions to *Notices* are now distributed among staff in



**Deb Smith (top) and Marcia Almeida.**



**Stephen Moye and Karen Ouellette.**

several departments. The “New Publications Offered by the AMS” section is produced with the input and cooperation of many individuals throughout the Publications Division, all of whom have a role and interest in these announcements of new books and journals.

STEPHEN MOYE and KAREN OUELLETTE provide technical support for most of the publishing tools, interfaces between software programs, and Web posting. MICHELLE OGILVIE continues to be the liaison (as she is for all AMS publications) with the printer, negotiating prices, providing the mailing lists, and keeping abreast of the types and cost-effectiveness of paper and electronic submission and printing methods—more aspects in which staff members need to keep on top of changes and trends in the world of publishing in print.

AMS staff in various departments also play key roles in providing information—content—for sections of *Notices*.

COLLEEN ROSE, in the Membership and Programs Department, has, starting in 2004, not only overseen the Employment Center at the Joint Mathematics Meetings, but she has also taken on providing the “Annual Survey of the Mathematical Sciences” for publication in *Notices*. Colleen sends out multiple survey forms throughout the year to approximately 1,500 mathematical sciences departments. As completed survey forms are received, she reviews them for missing or questionable data, contacting departments when necessary. Once this verification process has been completed, the data are entered and used to create the tables, charts, and graphs, that accompany the report text (written largely by AMS Associate Executive Director Jim Maxwell and the chair of the Data Committee of the AMS-ASA-IMS-MAA, currently Ellen E. Kirkman). AMS production staff proofread for typos, Peter Sykes



**Colleen Rose.**



**Donna Salter.**



**Kyle Antonevich.**

refines the graphics if necessary, and readers then see the Annual Survey’s three reports in the February, August, and September issues.

Many may recognize DONNA SALTER from various AMS meetings and conferences over these past sixteen years. Since 1990 she has also overseen the work of individuals in the Meetings and Conferences Department who enter vast and varied data about each meeting in a database customized for this purpose. An Omnimark script developed by technical staff extracts parts of that information specifically for output in *Notices*. Donna and others proofread the *Notices*-formatted pages to be sure they include the most current information available before the issue goes to print. Readers see “Meetings and Conferences of the AMS” in each issue, the highlights, registration and timetable for the Joint Mathematics Meetings in each October issue, and the full program of the Joint Meetings in each January issue. Donna provides Sandy with the files of the final program of each AMS Sectional Meeting so that it can be posted with the online *Notices* issue for the month in which the meeting occurred—post facto, as the archival source.

Organizers of non-AMS meetings and conferences submit information on an online form, and from there KYLE ANTONEVICH, electronic publishing technician, produces the “Mathematics Calendar” for each issue. (Interestingly, the one remaining section in each issue still produced in  $\text{\TeX}$  is the “Mathematics Calendar”, and that is because the information is extracted from the online form for publication in both *Notices* and on a Web page in html format. But soon this too will be produced in Quark for *Notices*.) Kyle also readies the “Classified Advertisements” section—inch by inch.

MARIA MARQUIS in Promotions is the copywriter for new title descriptions and monitors the information appearing in “New Publications Offered by the AMS”; ANNE NEWCOMB in Promotions solicits display advertisements from publishers, institutes, bookstores and software companies; and LINDA BURKE in Development compiles and proofreads the “List of Contributors” published in *Notices* each spring.

ALLYN JACKSON, senior writer and deputy editor, is perhaps the most visible of all AMS staff who work on *Notices*. Throughout the ten years of the “new” *Notices*, not to mention the several years before that, her job has evolved a good deal. “I used mostly to write articles and solicit a few here and there,” she said. “Nowadays, I still write articles but am also much more involved in soliciting and editing articles, especially book reviews and ‘WHAT IS...?’ columns.”

In her role as deputy editor Allyn chooses books for review, finds reviewers, and also picks “WHAT IS...?” topics and writers. After receiving manuscripts she has them refereed and works with



**Maria Marquis (left) and Anne Newcomb.**

authors on the changes. Once the pieces are ready to be published, she sends them to Editor Andy Magid for final acceptance. Occasionally Andy asks her to read and offer comments on both solicited



**Linda Burke.**



**Allyn Jackson.**



**Elaine Kehoe.**

and unsolicited articles he has received. “He and I work closely together and talk regularly about what we are each working on and discuss how to assemble each issue,” she said. She also regularly communicates with the *Notices* Editorial Board members for advice and for refereeing manuscripts.

When asked about how she came up with the idea for the “WHAT IS...?” column (which debuted in September 2002), Allyn noted that “There are a lot of terms in mathematics that have intriguing names—*brane*, *motive*, *amoeba*, *monster*—and that are bandied about in lectures and in tea rooms of math departments but that might not be widely understood. My thought was, Wouldn’t it be great to have short, nontechnical descriptions of what these things are? There has been no shortage of intriguing objects to be described in the “WHAT IS...?” column. A bigger challenge has been to get pieces that really are nontechnical and accessible. The *Notices* Editorial Board has helped a lot with the “WHAT IS...?” column, and in particular Sue Brenner is the

designated board member assigned to work with me on the column.”

Allyn also oversees the news sections of the *Notices*, which contain announcements about prizes, fellowship and grant opportunities, announcements from mathematics institutes, and the like. Contributing writer ELAINE KEHOE researches, edits, and writes much of the material in the news sections.

Allyn’s own articles span a range of topics, including the mathematics profession, research funding, and mathematics education. She has written an occasional series of articles about mathematics institutes around the world and has done several question-and-answer interviews with prominent senior mathematicians, among them Raoul Bott, Henri Cartan, S. S. Chern, Joe Keller, Louis Nirenberg, and Arnold Ross, as well as AMS presidents. As with the production process, Allyn is writing for and working on some part of at least three issues concurrently.

*Notices of the AMS*, although “newsy”, was never conceived as a throwaway newsletter, and the staff who help put each issue together understand its value both as the Society’s “journal of record” and as a high-quality magazine. As AMS Executive Director John Ewing notes, “Creating the new *Notices* was a labor of love for the AMS staff, and everyone continues to view the *Notices* with an enormous sense of pride. The many people who keep the *Notices* running smoothly carry out their jobs with enthusiasm because of that pride.”

The *Notices of the AMS* is one of the Society’s most important publications, as it includes information from nearly every division—publications, meetings and professional services, finance, the Washington D.C. office—and AMS members and other readers count on seeing the regular sections. *Notices* readers may now have a better idea of some of the people (and the publishing tools) behind each printed and online issue.

—Annette Emerson,  
AMS Public Awareness Officer

#### **About the Cover**

This month’s cover is a compilation of several covers from the past ten years of the *Notices*. See the articles on pages 7, 54-57, and 58-61 for highlights of the past ten years of the “new” *Notices*.