

MathSciNet Matters

The “MathSciNet Matters” column appears in the *Notices* several times a year. It includes information on new features of MathSciNet and on the underlying Mathematical Reviews Database, together with tips on how to use MathSciNet to make the most of its richness of structure and content.

The Ann Arbor office. How many staff members does it take to produce MathSciNet? No, this is not another variation on the light bulb joke. (How many mathematicians does it take to screw in a light bulb? *None. It's left to the reader as an exercise.*) The Mathematical Reviews building in Ann Arbor, Michigan houses about seventy staff members grouped in eight departments. They work year round to collect, keyboard, edit, and deliver the bibliographic information and reviews found on MathSciNet. The office is a red brick building near downtown, built as a brewery in 1902. Some pictures can be found at <http://www.ams.org/publications/60ann/BuildingPhotos.html>. Stop by for a visit next time you are in Ann Arbor.

MathSciNet and the MSC. The Mathematics Subject Classification (MSC) is a scheme for classifying mathematical publications by content. Almost all items in MathSciNet have one or more MSC codes. There is a unique primary classification and zero or more secondary classifications. The primary classification is intended to most nearly capture the primary results of the paper or book. These classifications come from three sources: (1) author classifications found in the original item; (2) reviewers; (3) the MR editors. The editors make the final decision based on these inputs. The MSC is revised every ten years to better reflect current research directions. The current revision is MSC2000. Authors are encouraged to include a unique primary and optional secondary classifications on all their publications. More information about the MSC can be found at <http://www.ams.org/msc>.

Checking references using MRef. For sixty-five years, Mathematical Reviews staff have worked diligently to present bibliographic information with the highest accuracy. The electronic presentation of data on MathSciNet has made it easy to take advantage of this accurate data as you create references in your publications. Simply find the desired reference in MathSciNet and copy the bibliographic information in one of the various available forms: HTML, BibTeX, AMSRefs, EndNote, or plain text (from the Clipboard). There is another method that

in many cases may be even easier. As a service to the mathematical community, the AMS offers at no charge the reference checking tool **MRef**, found at <http://www.ams.org/mref>. MRef data is taken from the MathSciNet Database. MRef input has no fielding, so references can simply be copied directly as found, without the need to divide into fields such as author, title, and journal name. The only small formatting caveat is that author names should be first, as is the case in virtually all referencing formats. This ensures the highest probability of matching. Four output formats are offered, each with associated MR Number: MathSciNet HTML (where the MR Number is an active HTML link), BibTeX, AMSRefs, and TeX. The plain text of a link to MathSciNet is also presented. For those with a little browser savvy, there is a “bookmarklet” form of MRef that allows the user to simply highlight an HTML reference on any Web page and then use the bookmarklet to automatically transfer the data to MRef. A description of how to do this is found in the MRef Help.

Reviewers Corner. The Guide for Reviewers (<http://www.ams.org/authors/guide-reviewers.html>) contains a lot of useful information for reviewers. It has information that ranges from the philosophical (“What is a review?”) to the practical (“Reminder notices”). Another good online resource is the Reviewer FAQ at <http://www.ams.org/mresubs/faq.html>. The value of a good, independent review of an article or book cannot be overstated. Timeliness is also of importance, particularly in the electronic world. We recognize that the writing of reviews is only a tiny piece of most reviewers' lives and that there are many demands on your time. The median span of time from when an item is sent out to a reviewer until it returns is about 60 days. A gentle electronic reminder is sent out after 2 months, partly to verify that the item sent for review has been received. A second reminder is sent after 4 months, when roughly 80% of the reviews have been received. A final reminder is sent after 6 months. Should you receive one of these reminders, we hope you don't interpret them as nagging (well, maybe just a bit). The conscientious effort you put into reading and digesting original works and writing thoughtful reviews is a highly valued contribution to the quality of MathSciNet. All reviewers are invited to stop by the AMS Booth area and the MR Reception at the 2006 Annual Meeting in San Antonio.

—Norman Richert
Mathematical Reviews