

Letters to the Editor

Access to Electronic Resources

I think the AMS is making a mistake in accepting advertisements for expensive pieces of software such as *Mathematica* or *Scientific WorkPlace* or *Maple*. In the transition from having books and journals as our primary sources of knowledge to having knowledge incorporated in Internet sites and in software we have lost sight of the idea that knowledge should be available at no monetary cost—in public libraries—to all who are willing to make the effort to learn it.

Some libraries have computer terminals that anyone may use to access the Internet, but I don't know of any that make information-containing software freely available. And access to important stores of information such as *MathSciNet* is restricted, in university libraries, in ways that were never applied to *Mathematical Reviews*. I think this is a very negative development.

I am a retired mathematician, still actively interested in math. I can walk into a math library anywhere in the world and read books and journals—but special permission, which may not be readily available, is required for access to important online resources, and access to *Mathematica* (US\$2,500 for a personal copy) is generally not available at all.

I believe this constitutes a decline in our mathematical culture; I hope it can be reversed.

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Visualizing Eratosthenes in 1949

Danilo Blanusa [Une interprétation géométrique du crible d'Eratosthènes, *Glasnik Mat. Fiz. Astronom. Društvo Mat. Fiz. Hrvatske* (1949), 1–2] discovered the following beautiful two-dimensional visualization of the sieve of Eratosthenes almost sixty years ago. Let m and n be positive integers. The line $x + m(n + 1)y - (n + 1) = 0$ joins the points $(0, 1/m)$ and $(n + 1, 0)$ and intersects the line $y + 1 = 0$ at the point $((m + 1)(n + 1), -1)$, where $(m + 1)(n + 1)$ is a composite number. Conversely, if x is a composite number, then x is of the form $(m + 1)(n + 1)$ for some positive integers m and n , and is the abscissa of the intersection of the line joining the points $(0, 1/m)$ and $(n + 1, 0)$ with the line $y + 1 = 0$.

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Submitting Letters to the Editor

The *Notices* invites readers to submit letters and opinion pieces on topics related to mathematics. Electronic submissions are preferred (notices-letters@ams.org); see the masthead for postal mail addresses. Opinion pieces are usually one printed page in length (about 800 words). Letters are normally less than one page long, and shorter letters are preferred.

Identifications

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References (continued from “Opinion” on previous page)

- [1] http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/science_innovation/publications_resources/profiles/science_engineering_technology_skills_audit_report.htm.
- [2] <http://www.review.ms.unimelb.edu.au/>.
- [3] http://www.amsi.org.au/pdfs/Questionnaire_summary.pdf.
- [4] <http://terrytao.wordpress.com/support-usq-maths>.
- [5] <http://terrytao.wordpress.com/support-usq-maths/presentation-of-the-online-petition-to-chancellor-brazil>.
- [6] <http://terrytao.wordpress.com/2008/04/05/please-help-support-mathematics-at-the-university-of-southern-queensland>.
- [7] <http://austmaths.wordpress.com/>.