
Inside the AMS

Fairweather Named *MR* Executive Editor

In 1966, shortly after finishing his Ph.D. at the University of St. Andrews in his native country of Scotland, Graeme Fairweather boarded a plane for Houston, where he was to take up a visiting position at Rice University. During the flight he was suddenly gripped by a worry. Rice mathematics chair Mort Curtis was to meet him at the airport, but how would Fairweather recognize him? In fact, Curtis had already anticipated and solved the problem. He simply showed up carrying an issue of *Mathematical Reviews*, with the unmistakable orange cover. "I came from a small department in Scotland," Fairweather remarked, "but of course I recognized *Math Reviews*."

Fairweather could not have known that more than forty years later, when the orange covers would be superseded by its Web logo as an international icon of mathematics, *MR* would welcome him as its executive editor. He is retired from the Colorado School of Mines and succeeds Kevin Clancey, who served as executive editor for four years until his retirement. The two overlapped for two months in the fall of 2008 to provide an orderly transition, and Fairweather formally took up the position of executive editor in November. He brings to *MR* a wealth of administrative experience and an abundance of enthusiasm for the crucial role *MR* plays in the mathematical community.

When he first visited the *MR* office in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to find out more about what the executive editor position entailed, Fairweather was "absolutely amazed at the organization", he said. "When you step in the door, you find a very collegial and congenial operation. That was the atmosphere I detected, so it was easy to get to know people and how things work." He was impressed by the intricacy of the process, which begins with receipt of journals and continues through to finished reviews and their entry into the *MR* database, which nowadays most people access through the Web interface MathSciNet. The AMS and *MR* staff must also have been impressed: Fairweather was offered the position on the spot.

Now a few months into the job, Fairweather said that he is still learning details of the *MR* operation. He reported



Graeme Fairweather

that, thanks to the efforts of Clancey and Clancey's predecessor, Jane Kister, as well as former AMS executive director John Ewing, the *MR* operation is in excellent shape. "I don't have firm plans to make significant changes, as everything is running very smoothly," said Fairweather. "*MR* has a loyal, dedicated staff with decades of experience who keep everything working well."

Nevertheless, there are always new challenges in the fast-changing world of electronic communications. For example, *MR* has been negotiating with publishers to allow *MR* electronic access to articles for review. Another challenge is keeping up with the increase in the number of journals, an increase made possible in part by the ease of electronic publishing. "There is a growing number of journals, but little increase in resources," Fairweather said. "So we have to be more efficient." He noted that the *MR* systems support department has an excellent track record in developing tools to improve the efficiency of the editing and processing of the volume of material published on MathSciNet.

The *MR* executive editor must handle a diverse and complex set of tasks, from dealing with high-level publishing policy issues, to working with the *MR* Editorial Committee on deciding which journals to review, to managing the *MR* staff of about eighty people. And then there are inquiries from *MR* users. Fairweather said that about 90 percent of these can be dealt with quickly and easily by the *MR* editors; the other, thornier, 10 percent land on his desk. The executive editor must handle these with care and consistency.

Aside from publishing papers in his research area of numerical analysis, Fairweather had not previously been involved in a publishing enterprise. But he has always been

interested in good, clear communication and was known for using a red pen to correct students' theses at the Colorado School of Mines. He took a position there as head of the Department of Mathematical and Computer Sciences fourteen years ago, when several retirements were imminent. "I went there because of the opportunity to grow the department," he said. Before his move to Colorado, Fairweather spent twenty-three years at the University of Kentucky, where he was involved in building up the university's Center for Computational Sciences, funded by the National Science Foundation. Fairweather served as associate director of the center, whose initial focal point was an IBM supercomputer that was used by a wide range of groups on campus, from engineers to physicists to an English professor. The center also provided support for graduate students and postdocs and held a colloquium series and occasional workshops.

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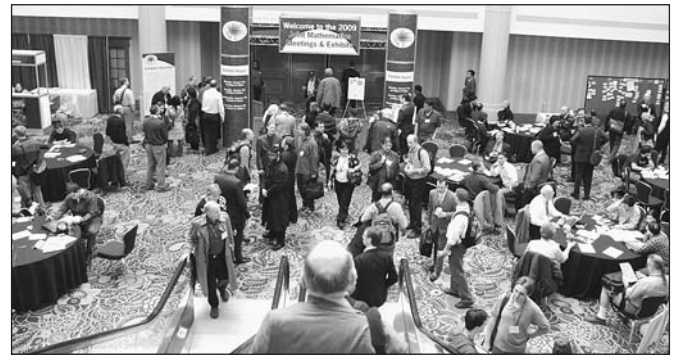
Fairweather is looking forward to continuing to learn about *MR* and to keeping it running in top shape. He said he is especially grateful to Clancey for the two months they spent together in the *MR* office so that Fairweather could learn the ropes. "That was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my career," he said. The enjoyment did not stop there, and Fairweather is very happy working in the *MR* office in Ann Arbor. He recalled the saying of Andrew Carnegie, a fellow Scot, that where there is little success, there is little laughter. "*Math Reviews* is very successful, and there is a lot of good humor in the building amongst the staff," he said. "I am absolutely thrilled to have this opportunity, as the AMS has such a great reputation, and *MR* is truly unique."

—Allyn Jackson

From the AMS Public Awareness Office

Mathematics Awareness Month—April 2009. Visit the Mathematics Awareness Month website to download the "Mathematics and Climate" theme poster, read the theme essays, use the sample press release, and link to related resources, at <http://www.mathaware.org>.

Highlights of the Joint Mathematics Meetings. See photos, and read about some of the highlights of the



Joint Mathematics Meetings in Washington DC, including prizewinners, invited addresses and sessions, exhibits, Graduate School Fair, Mathematical Art Exhibition, *Who Wants to Be a Mathematician* game, AMS Member Banquet, Employment Center, and more, at <http://www.ams.org/ams/jmm09-highlights.html>.

—Annette Emerson and Mike Breen
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Deaths of AMS Members

LEON BROWN, from Livonia, MI, died on October 19, 2004. Born on September 25, 1927, he was a member of the Society for 51 years.

SIDNEY JAMES DROUILHET II, professor of mathematics at Minnesota State University Moorhead, died on January 23, 2009. Born on August 24, 1949, he was a member of the Society for 36 years.

ALEXANDER S. ELDER, retired, from Aberdeen, MD, died on December 31, 2008. Born on July 29, 1915, he was a member of the Society for 48 years.

MICHEL EYTAN, professor emeritus, from Strasbourg, France, died on January 4, 2009. Born on January 20, 1936, he was a member of the Society for 41 years.

JOE R. FOOTE, from Hot Springs, AR, died on December 26, 2004. Born on August 17, 1919, he was a member of the Society for 37 years.

WILLIAM O. J. MOSER, from Montreal, Canada, died on January 28, 2009. Born on September 5, 1927, he was a member of the Society for 58 years.

ILYA PIATETSKI-SHAPIRO, professor, Yale University, died on February 21, 2009. Born on March 30, 1929, he was a member of the Society for 25 years.

JACOB TOWBER, professor emeritus, from Evanston, IL, died on January 3, 2008. Born on October 17, 1933, he was a member of the Society for 28 years.