Driven by the Data?


—Rick Norwood  
East Tennessee State University  
norwoodr@etsu.edu

Response to Norwood letter: The American Mathematical Society has a robust textbook program covering all areas of mathematics on the graduate and advanced undergraduate levels. High school textbooks are very different, and currently the AMS is not well positioned to properly publish and promote them.

—Sergei Gelfand, Publisher  
AMS

Mathematics or Not Mathematics

Teaching mathematics in schools is quite important. Yet it is known that most students will not be mathematicians. Hence teaching math as an abstract subject, I believe, is harmful. Relating math to real life is important, especially for such students. Almost every student should feel that math will be relevant to his/her career. Regrettably a strong tendency in many mathematicians is to neglect applications or even consider them as nonmath. Such a tendency will arise in their students who will be the future teachers!! I hope that this problem is seriously studied soon.

—E. Ahmed  
Mansoura University, Egypt  
magd45@yahoo.com

Received July 11, 2011

Plea to Publishers and Authors: Please Help Blind Mathematicians

For more than twenty-five years, \TeX/\LaTeX has imposed itself as the most efficient software for editing mathematical texts, and its use by publishers is nowadays standard. A marginal but notable consequence of this general use of \TeX/\LaTeX is that the whole present-day mathematical production is in principle accessible to blind people. Indeed, \TeX/\LaTeX typesetting is based on source files consisting only of ASCII characters, and each of these characters has a Braille translation, so every \TeX/\LaTeX source file can be read directly by a blind person using a Braille display connected to a computer. Of course, the readability of source files is sometimes questionable and strongly depends on the carefulness of authors, but it can easily be improved with very little effort (in particular, by removing all \TeX/\LaTeX commands which are useless for understanding the content and the structure of the text), and, anyway, it is infinitely better to have these files, which contain the complete information, rather than text without formulas (as one can get sometimes using converters from PDF to TXT) or just nothing. On the other hand, as for writing mathematics, it is remarkable and commendable that \TeX/\LaTeX puts blind people exactly on the same footing as sighted people.

All this is really great. The only problem is that \TeX/\LaTeX source files, though they do exist, are most often not available. Subscriptions to electronic versions of journals only give access to PDF files, in which mathematical notations and formulas are no longer encoded in ASCII characters, and therefore cannot be faithfully translated into Braille. Similarly, articles and books that can be found on professional webpages of their authors are available only in PDF or PS format. There is actually one important exception: the mathematical...
**Letters to the Editor**

**Professor of Mathematics**

The Department of Mathematics at ETH Zurich (www.math.ethz.ch) invites applications for a professor position in Mathematics. We are seeking for candidates with an outstanding research record and a proven ability to direct research of high quality. Willingness to teach at all university levels and to participate in collaborative work both within and outside the school is expected.

The new professor will be responsible, together with other members of the Department, for teaching undergraduate (German or English) and graduate courses (English) for students of mathematics, natural sciences and engineering.

Please apply online at www.facultyaffairs.ethz.ch.

Your application should include your curriculum vitae and a list of publications. The letter of application should be addressed to the President of ETH Zurich, Prof. Dr. Ralph Eichler. The closing date for applications is 30 November 2011. With a view towards increasing the number of women in leading academic positions, ETH Zurich specifically encourages women to apply.

arXiv, where the \( \LaTeX \) source files are (almost) systematically available—and hence, electronic journals which post the papers they publish on arXiv make the source files available. This is something for which I am personally thankful every day.

As a conclusion, here is my plea to publishers and authors: please find a way of making the \( \LaTeX \) source files of your publications available. Remove from them, if you wish, all the editing parameters which are necessary to print out but not to understand the text: the files will be even more readable. But please be aware that, for a (small but nonzero) number of mathematicians, \( \LaTeX \) is the only accessible document format.

Editor’s Note: This letter originally appeared in the European Mathematical Society Newsletter, issue 79, March 2011.

—Emmanuel Giroux  
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and École Normale Supérieure, Lyon  
emmanuel.giroux@ens-lyon.fr

Received July 13, 2011

**Welcome to Project Gutenberg**

A small but growing collection of mathematical works is available on the Web at Project Gutenberg, see www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Mathematics_(Bookshelf) and www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Physics_(Bookshelf). Most of these books were published prior to 1923, the current cutoff date for the public domain in the United States. Despite their age, however, these books may be of interest to readers of the Notices as resources for students, as recreational reading, or as historical references.

The more recently produced of these ebooks have been keyed in \LaTeX, with consideration for long-term compilability, and have been carefully checked for typographical errors by human volunteers. These ebooks may be downloaded gratis as high-quality, text-searchable PDF files, or as zip archives containing a single \LaTeX source file and stand-alone illustration files.

Authors of out-of-print books who would like to make their works available at Project Gutenberg are most welcome to contact me to discuss logistics. The transcription process is normally performed gratis by volunteers at the Distributed Proofreaders website, at www.pgdp.net. For legal purposes, Project Gutenberg requires a letter from the copyright holder granting permanent, nonexclusive, worldwide rights to distribute the books in electronic form on a royalty-free basis. However, the work need not be granted to the public domain; it is still copyrighted, according to whatever national laws apply, and the copyright holder retains ownership and all rights to the work. Copyleft, Creative Commons, and other licenses are also perfectly acceptable.

I invite readers to browse the mathematical holdings at Project Gutenberg and to contact me with comments, questions, or suggestions.

—Andrew D. Hwang  
College of the Holy Cross  
ahwang@mathcs.holycross.edu

Received July 13, 2011

**Correction**

Due to a production error, the “References” section for the article “Scripta Manent: Journals in Flux” by Peter Olver (Notices, September 2011) included five references from a previous article. The correct list should have included only references [1] through [8].

**Correction**

Incorrect information sent to the AMS Membership and Customer Services department led to the erroneous listing of the name of Adriano M. Garsia in the “Deaths of AMS Members” in the September 2011 issue of the Notices. The Notices regrets this error and apologizes to Professor Garsia.