



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Online Survey of Publishing Issues

In 2016 I circulated an online survey of mathematicians, to elicit opinions on various issues related to journal publishing. The survey, which was terminated after 1,000 responses, was propagated via mailing lists (for example, by the European Mathematical Society but not by the AMS) and via direct e-mails to pseudo-randomly chosen departments and societies in order to reach a wide cross-section of the international mathematical community. The raw data is available at https://figshare.com/projects/Survey_of_mathematical_publishing/16944, and an analysis of the results by Cameron Neylon, David M. Roberts, and me appears in the March 2017 issue of the *Newsletter of the EMS*.

The results show widespread appetite for change. On a five-point scale, from one being “the status-quo is completely acceptable” and five being “almost all [journals] need serious work,” 78 percent of respondents selected three, four, or five. Free-form comments concentrated heavily on peer review quality, administrative efficiency, price, and access, and almost 200 journals from fifty-seven publishers were mentioned by name as needing serious improvement. When asked what should happen if efforts by editors to reform a journal are blocked by the publisher, over half of respondents favored resignation, with 29 percent suggesting the editors join a better journal and 32 percent supporting creation of a new journal. Only 4.5 percent favored settling for the status quo. Respondents showed substantial support for innovations such as banning monetary payments to editors (43 percent) and editorial term limits (30 percent), credit for referees, open access, open refereeing, and election of editors. The results also show that reputation of journals is strongly believed to follow from peer review quality and editorial board research quality, while the identity of the publisher is almost negligibly important.

Interestingly, when asked what they thought the opinion of the community was on all these issues, respondents consistently rated themselves as much more progressive than the community at large. I hope that making this public will help dispel some of the myths around journal reform and encourage editors, readers, and authors to investigate changes to the status quo. I am currently involved in several projects to improve the current journal system, notably MathOA (mathoa.org), and welcome feedback from fellow AMS members.

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(Received March 29, 2017)

The Daughters of John Adams

On the Back Page (Volume 64, Number 5, May 2017 issue), the editor inserts “and daughters!” into John Adams’s statement, “I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy.” The implication seems to be that Adams must have intended to include his daughters, even if he did not mention them explicitly, but this may be an overly generous assumption. Adams penned that line four years after Abigail Adams’s famous exhortation to “remember the ladies,” and so he was not unaware of the issue of women’s education, but he did not make the issue a political priority. Abigail Adams Smith, the only one of his daughters to survive to adulthood, received no formal education.

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(Received May 28, 2017)

EDITOR'S NOTE. Or maybe our implication is that Adams *should have* included his daughters!

*We invite readers to submit letters to the editor to notice-letters@ams.org and post commentary on the Notices webpage www.ams.org/notices.