



State of the AMS

Report of the Executive Director



Courtesy of Marc Studios

Catherine A. Roberts, Executive Director

It will be some time before the full impact of 2020 on the mathematics community and on the AMS is understood. During this extraordinary year of profound challenges, it has been a privilege to work with the dedicated members, leaders, and staff of the AMS who persevered in advancing mathematics and creating connections within our community. What follows is a report of key activities for the AMS in 2020.

In January, just prior to the Joint Mathematics Meetings (JMM) in Denver, the AMS Council took several actions. In addition to various regular appointments and reappointments, the Council appointed Boris Hasselblatt (Tufts University) as Secretary and Doug L. Ulmer (University of Arizona) as Treasurer to start February 1, 2021. The Council also established the new Policy Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and made a statement in the name of the Society on the human rights case of Russian dissident mathematician, Azat Miftakhov. The Council established a new AMS primary research journal called *Communications of the AMS*, with Ralph Cohen (Stanford University) and Qiang Du (Columbia University) as Co-Editors-in-Chief. This journal, supported by a generous donor, will be diamond open access—completely free and open for authors and readers. We anticipate the journal will publish its first manuscripts in the fall. Along with the European Mathematical Society, the Council also approved the new AMS-EMS Mikhail Gordin Prize for an early-career mathematician from an Eastern European country working in probability or dynamical systems.

Soon after the successful JMM, the world changed with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. An ad hoc Emergency Task Force met weekly to make decisions about AMS operations and to maintain business continuity. Over the course of March 2020, AMS facilities in Michigan, Rhode Island, and Washington, DC, converted operations to remote work, except for our Printing and Distribution

facility in Pawtucket, RI. The AMS Investment Committee met weekly for several months to monitor our endowment, which, in the end, saw an annual return of 10.1%. Also, we quickly launched a new COVID-related Resources & Updates page on our AMS website. Spring sectional meetings were cancelled, and the summer Mathematics Research Communities (MRCs) were postponed to 2021. Fall sectional meetings converted to a virtual format, providing a helpful test bed to prepare us to offer JMM 2021 virtually.

Initially, the work of the Society slowed as we scrambled to equip more than 200 staff to work remotely. Then, as weeks stretched to months, AMS programs and activities adapted. A small example of this was shifting our author royalty payment system to electronic banking. A major accomplishment was converting the entire production of MathSciNet into a paperless operation, which took three months of intense effort and creativity to build. These changes will continue to be of benefit in the years to come. While the pandemic forced everyone to shift toward paperless workflows, the efforts to accomplish this feat for MathSciNet were astonishing. In spite of delays, in 2020 we managed to add 105,884 new items to the Math Reviews database (down 15% from 2019) and added 75,431 reviews (down 21% from 2019). Our Information Systems department worked on over 40 projects, many necessitated by COVID-19. The Government Relations department re-focused its activity on federal policies to mitigate the effect on mathematics research and education brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel ceased and all meetings converted to videoconferences.

The AMS pivoted from planned activities to meeting the needs of the moment by implementing multiple new services to support our members. For example, we offered a new tool for researchers to remotely pair their personal devices to access MathSciNet without having to connect through their institutional library. Our Programs and Education departments offered new webinars and resources to help faculty shift their classes online. The Board of Trustees decided to hold constant the subscription rates for our journals, MathSciNet, and membership in 2021. Two new member benefits were introduced: a free eBook per calendar year from the AMS Bookstore and a waiver of the Article Processing Charges for our two gold open-access journals *Proceedings of the AMS*, *Series B* and *Transactions of the AMS*, *Series B*.

The summer of 2020 saw a nationwide reckoning on racial justice, prompting the AMS to examine its own role in systemic racism. We facilitated conversations with staff, the Council, and the Board of Trustees. This led to an AMS statement of solidarity with the Black community and several key actions. These included the establishment of a new fellowship to support mid-career Black mathematicians named the Claytor-Gilmer Fellowship, a new endowment to support activities that address systemic inequities in

the mathematical sciences, and a special Task Force on Understanding and Documenting the Historic Role of the AMS in Racial Discrimination. Task Force members worked intensively for several months, talking with many members of the mathematics community. I thank the Task Force members, and everyone who contributed to the conversations. Their report, "Towards a Fully Inclusive Mathematics Profession,"¹ challenges our community in deeply important ways. The AMS is now engaging with the report in order to advance the recommendations contained therein.

As stories emerged about the impact of the pandemic on higher education, we recognized the possibility of a reduction in AMS subscription and membership revenues in the coming years. After fiscal scenario analysis, we undertook several mid-year budget tightening protocols. The Board of Trustees approved a conservative budget for 2021 while still supporting all essential operations. With some creativity, the Board was able to provide staff with merit raises and address salary compression, fund the aforementioned new fellowship, and engage new international sales reps. Several retirements and a voluntary separation program led to multiple staffing changes and departmental reorganizations. We welcomed a new Director of Development, as well as new Associate Executive Directors for Finance & Administration and Meetings & Professional Services.

This was the fifth and final year of implementation for our AMS Strategic Plan. Although much was accomplished, slowdowns due to the pandemic mean that some items were delayed and carried over to 2021. A new centralized Communications department now helps coordinate messaging across the range of AMS platforms to increase awareness of the exceptional offerings of the AMS. Excellent progress was made to launch our new journal *Communications of the AMS* (CAMS), with the editorial board put in place and the first manuscripts now under review. We expect the first papers will appear in the fall. A strategic review of the AMS book program from editorial, production, marketing, and sales perspectives is almost complete. Work to improve our author disambiguation process at MathSciNet advanced.

In addition, the mathematics community took several steps toward creating a reimagined JMM 2022, and I am excited by how the AMS is participating and collaborating in this effort. Our Council established a new committee structure to support the JMM as we became the sole manager of meeting logistics. Associate Secretary Steven Weintraub led the way to generate new session classification codes, in order to represent the full spectrum of interests for special sessions, talks, panels, and more. The Council approved a new AMS Lecture on Education to be given at the JMM. Perhaps most excitedly, we welcome an increasing number of JMM partners teaming up to ensure a varied and robust program that will be of interest to all members of our

¹www.ams.org/understanding-ams-history

FROM THE AMS SECRETARY

mathematics community. Visit jointmathematicsmeetings.org to see the current list of society partners. As planning for our reimagined JMM intensifies, I am confident all attendees will enjoy a terrific meeting.

As more people receive vaccines in 2021, we intend to return to some in-person meetings and conferences starting this fall. We are all looking forward to JMM2022, currently planned to be in person in Seattle.

My takeaway from 2020 is the value of everyone's participation in the mathematics community. So many people pooled their knowledge and energies to keep students and colleagues afloat and working on mathematics research, teaching, and outreach. Your membership in the AMS is truly important—you help keep the visibility of mathematical scientists high to policymakers and federal funding agencies. Your voices help steer AMS policies to best support the mathematics community. Please continue to familiarize yourself with all the offerings available to you through the AMS, maintain your membership, and encourage others to join.

I wish you a healthy, safe, and rewarding rest of the year.

*Catherine Roberts
Executive Director
May 2021*

American Mathematical Society

Policy on a Welcoming Environment

(as adopted by the January 2015 AMS Council
and modified by the January 2019 AMS Council)

The AMS strives to ensure that participants in its activities enjoy a welcoming environment. In all its activities, the AMS seeks to foster an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas. The AMS supports equality of opportunity and treatment for all participants, regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, veteran status, or immigration status.

Harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of AMS activities and mission.

The AMS will make every effort to maintain an environment that is free of harassment, even though it does not control the behavior of third parties. A commitment to a welcoming environment is expected of all attendees at AMS activities, including mathematicians, students, guests, staff, contractors and exhibitors, and participants in scientific sessions and social events. To this end, the AMS will include a statement concerning its expectations towards maintaining a welcoming environment in registration materials for all its meetings, and has put in place a mechanism for reporting violations. Violations may be reported confidentially and anonymously to 855.282.5703 or at www.mathsociety.ethicspoint.com. The reporting mechanism ensures the respect of privacy while alerting the AMS to the situation.

For AMS policy statements concerning discrimination and harassment, see the **AMS Anti-Harassment Policy**.

Questions about this welcoming environment policy should be directed to the **AMS Secretary**.

