

EDITORIAL

Since this is the penultimate issue of the Bulletin that I shall be editing, I use this opportunity to reflect on what could/should go into this publication of the IMS. The stated aim of the Bulletin is “to inform Society members, and the mathematical community in large, about the activities of the Society and about items of general mathematical interest.” Until some time ago, announcements of mathematical meetings were included; but it was agreed that a printed publication nowadays is far too slow a vehicle for such a purpose and, moreover, very few conference organisers would send in their information well in time to be included in the Bulletin. Subsequently, organisers of meetings that obtained support from the IMS were asked to write up a short summary of the outcomes of their meetings and submit these to the Bulletin; understandably, this never got to work—who bothers about the details of a conference after it is held? There is moderate success in reporting on the annual (September) meeting of the IMS—which clearly should fall under the above-stated aim—but the editor really depends on the help of the organisers in order to get the abstracts of the talks etc. in (and in time for the winter issue!).

The section on abstracts of PhD theses became more popular (I even had some interest from outside Ireland to submit an abstract!) so I hope this will continue to flourish. (Here, the responsibility rests with the supervisors to encourage their students to submit an abstract (in time).) Compared with this, the Book Reviews have not taken off, despite the fact that there is one in this volume. Far too few people nowadays have an interest to invest the time of reading a mathematical book in such detail that they could write a critical review on it (and publish it in a very small periodical).

It is a pity, in my opinion, that the Departmental News never became really attractive enough in order to catch the Departments’

Heads' attention to submit the relevant information. Fortunately, over the years, there were a number of initiatives taken by (potential) authors themselves to submit a contribution to the Bulletin or enquire whether something might be suitable. An excellent example is contained in this volume's Miscellanea, an account on a mathematical event that is intimately tied to Irish mathematics and history and is very much alive today. The editor says thanks a million to everyone who came up with an idea like this one in the past!

This leaves us with the surveys and research notes. It is indeed the editor's job to solicit good and suitable survey articles "of interest not only to a small section of the mathematical community". While I put quite a bit of effort into finding and persuading people to compose such pieces of mathematical work until recently, I came to realise that fewer and fewer mathematicians want to write substantial surveys on their and their fellows' work in a style accessible to the non-specialist. A general trend, I believe, and, once again, the fact that the Bulletin is a small, not widely known journal does not help.

I also tried to attract good short research papers and must admit that my success has been limited. It appears that a number of authors consider a small periodical as an outlet for mediocre papers they cannot publish elsewhere. This resulted in a volume of submissions that often are even not worth to be sent to a referee. Luckily there were reasonable numbers of good papers coming in so far, but it is a price to pay—by the editor: if there were no research notes, there would be far fewer to reject! Well, I leave these decisions to better hands in the future.

—MM