

EDITORIAL

Writing an expository article is quite a different task than composing a research paper. The audience one is writing for becomes very important. Often, a survey article goes along with a talk at a conference but does one really want to write for the same kind of audience that sat in the talk? The readership will probably be much wider and with different background.

The idea of a survey paper in most cases is to summarise some of the existing knowledge in a specified area, maybe to describe the historical development, to give credit to the various contributors and to highlight some of the most important exciting new advances. But usually there is different emphasis. In one case a certain recent result may have completed a very long line of thoughts, finally got the answer to that longstanding question or conjecture, and in a way brought the development of a field to an end. In another, a problem may still be wide open but some recent results have substantially contributed to an eventual solution and therefore justify a comprehensive presentation comparing them with what has been known hitherto. Or a new research area may have opened up in the last few years and novel relations to existing ones may call for contemplation on how this will develop further in the near future.

Whatever the topic of a survey paper may be, is it necessary to write one at all? After all we are all busy with presenting our research findings in high-quality research journals so to get credit within the scientific community and improve our chances for promotion. Isn't it enough to cram the necessary background into the introduction and not bother sitting back to reflect on long-term developments of an area, carefully write out all the interrelations among various approaches and finally get them published in a conference proceedings or a periodical that carries no impact factor?

I firmly believe there are many benefits of survey articles, both for the author and other mathematicians. It gives us the opportunity to learn about other fields without entering into the technical details we cannot comprehend. If well written a survey provides us with a balanced view on a number of papers by several authors, not only the perspective of one or two who, naturally, think of their own results as the most important ones. It enables us to catch up with some recent developments in our own research areas that we missed due to time constraints or simply overlooked. It helps to enter a new research area and possibly offers some guidance on how to proceed further.

*This issue of the Bulletin contains **no** survey paper. The simple reason is that there were none of good quality submitted and some solicited ones did not (yet?) come in. I think this is to be regretted and I do hope that some will find the time and enthusiasm to sit down and write a good survey paper that would fit into the scope of this journal. If in doubt on the suitability of the topic, the editor can always be contacted beforehand so that no time is wasted in composing a contribution that, for whatever reason, can not be published later.*

—MM