The *Notices of the AMS*: A Perspective

As my two terms as Editor of the *Notices of the American Mathematical Society* come to a close, I wish to reflect on the complementary roles of the *Notices* and the AMS in the professional lives of mathematicians.

Having served on numerous AMS committees and most recently as Editor of the *Notices*, I have sometimes been surprised and disturbed to hear mathematicians claim that our organization functions merely as a figurehead that benefits its members only marginally. Nothing could be further from the truth. The AMS publishes important books and journals; it organizes significant conferences; it awards fellowships and scholarships, thus ensuring a constant influx of new talent. By creating and maintaining MathSciNet, the AMS has, in addition, given a global audience access to current research. By actively promoting mathematics, both to the government and to the general public, it has promulgated the reality that mathematics is not only relevant but foundational.

As its journal of record, the *Notices* should surely reflect the diversity of the AMS, and indeed of the entire mathematical community. During my tenure as Editor, my staff and I consequently endeavored to broaden the scope of the journal well beyond expository articles about recent mathematical developments. Such pieces, written for a wide audience, are extremely valuable. But in this age of cultural (and academic) diversity, so are articles that take a more interdisciplinary approach. The last six years of the *Notices* have accordingly seen papers on mathematics and the arts, on mathematics and sports, on mathematical education at all levels, on the fast-changing world of mathematical publishing, and on mathematics and current events. Two new columns were developed, *Doceamus* and *Scripta Manent*, which allowed authors to express their opinions on education and publishing in a briefer and perhaps more forgiving arena than the feature articles would. Finally, considerable space was allotted to memorial articles in the belief that the Society's journal of record should honor those who have contributed so notably to our field and to our very identities as mathematicians.

My tenure as Editor has not, of course, been without its controversies. We felt obligated, for example, to address the Elsevier boycott. We examined the alleged abuse of the impact factor. In both cases, we had to make hard decisions about who should write and who should not, and (with the help of attorneys) what legally could be printed and what could not. Controversy also surrounded our publication of one article detailing mathematical

techniques to establish peace in the Middle East and of another one that mathematically analyzed the air crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370. All of these pieces, and many more, have contributed to the lively and stimulating periodical that the *Notices* has become. Names have sometimes been named and fingers pointed, but always, I hope and believe, in a responsible way. Readers may well disagree with authors' conclusions, may even at times be outraged by those conclusions, but the *Notices* should surely encourage both its writers and its readers to actively engage in the complex questions, the widely varied viewpoints, that characterize today's world.

Our aim, in any case, was always to foster challenging but civilized discourse. As Editor, I learned that mathematicians speak in a multitude of voices, many if not all of which deserve to be heard. I learned as well that many in our community desire to express themselves on topics in which they are interested and informed but that would be inappropriate for the research journals. Yet mathematicians often have little experience with, and are uncomfortable with, expository argument. The parameters for such writing are different from those for research writing, and the rules can be unfamiliar and daunting. Part of my role as Editor, therefore, was to educate the writers on the conventions and to guide them towards the real joy in reaching out to and connecting with a broad and diverse audience.

Throughout it all, the AMS staff have been constant lifesavers. Sandy Frost and Rachel Rossi as managing editors, Allyn Jackson as deputy editor, and all the other amazingly talented people in Providence contributed years of editorial experience as well as the all-important institutional memory that we short-term editors lack. My assistant, David Collins, was an essential participant in all *Notices* activities. Playing a special role as contributing editor was Randi D. Ruden. Bill Casselman did a splendid job with the covers. Finally, the seventeen distinguished scholars who served as the *Notices* editorial board were my primary sounding board and source of inspiration for six years. I could not have done this job without the help of all these good people and also, of course, of the writers whose words remain alive in the pages of the *Notices*.

I look forward to Frank Morgan's editorship. I say goodbye to mine with satisfaction, pride, and a little sadness.

—Steven G. Krantz
Editor
sk@math.wustl.edu