COMMUNICATION

Celebratio Mathematica

Rob Kirby

Celebratio Mathematica is a new web publication (celebratio.org) that is an open access e-only alternative to printed collected works.

Figure 1. Three screenshots (l-r: David H. Blackwell, Michael F. Atiyah, and S.R. Srinivasa Varadhan) of current volumes in *Celebratio Mathematica*.

With declining budgets, math libraries are no longer buying as many printed collected works of distinguished mathematicians. A few are still printed, but a lot fewer than in the past.

A “volume” at *Celebratio Mathematica* normally consists of a biography (occasionally an autobiography), a CV, a complete bibliography including interesting unpublished work, a list of PhD students, perspectives on the honoree’s papers and work, and photos (see Figure 1). The bibliographies are a curated list of works (including abstracts) with links to published papers and their reviews in MathSciNet® and Zentralblatt MATH (it is too

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costly to track down permissions to reproduce scans of journal papers).

Photos are fun. *Celebratio Mathematica* volumes include photos as in Figures 2–9, ranging from traditional conference photos to the more unusual, e.g., baby pictures or mountain-climbing feats.

The publisher of *Celebratio Mathematica* is MSP (msp.org), and if you pass by MSP’s booth in the exhibitors’ hall at the Joint Mathematics Meetings, you will see a long sequence of photos we have gratefully collected from sources such as the American Mathematical Society (AMS), Mariana Cook, the Archive of American Mathematics (which has Paul Halmos’ photo collection), and many individual mathematicians.

Written remarks, perspectives, and commentaries are often the most valuable part of an honoree’s volume, and also one of the hardest items to obtain, for it means inducing good mathematicians to set aside time to write knowledgably about interesting mathematical history. The perspectives in the volumes for Srinivasa Varadhan or Kai Lai Chung are good examples. Others are provided by the National Academy of Sciences who allows us to include their memoirs of deceased NAS members; for their complete collection, see www.nasonline.org/publications/biographical-memoirs/online-collection.html.

Another remarkable website that overlaps with *Celebratio Mathematica* in many ways is the MacTutor History of Mathematics (www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk) at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. It is run by John O’Connor and Edmund Robertson, and gives concise biographies of over 1,000 mathematicians.

Figure 2. Dusa McDuff receives an honorary doctorate from York University, 2000.

Figure 3. Bill Thurston in hawthers.

Figure 4. Joan Birman, from the *Bull. L.M.S.* on the occasion of her election as an honorary member of the London Mathematical Society.

Figure 5a. Hassler Whitney, age fourteen, atop a spire in the Alps.

Figure 5b. Mike Freedman, age sixteen, on Polemonium Peak, 14,080 ft., in the high Sierras.

Figure 6. Shiing-Shen Chern with Zhou En-Lai.

Figure 7. Michael Atiyah (age 3) as the “little abbot.”

Figure 8. David Blackwell.

Figure 9. Mexico City, 1956 Geometry and Topology Conference (for names in the photo, see celebratio.org/Geometry_and_Topology/groupcover/147).

A natural question was: Who deserves a volume?

editors was needed and Robert Kohn (NYU), Hendrik Lenstra (Leiden), Barry Mazur (Harvard), Ruth Williams (UCSD), and Günter Ziegler (Berlin) joined us.

A natural question was: *Who deserves a volume?* Of course within each volume there must be substantial mathematics. Prize winners fit this criterion, as would most (all?) Fellows of the AMS. If one's name is attached to a bit of math, that might suffice, but the basic rule of thumb decided upon was that each honoree should have left a lasting mark on mathematics.

Another question might be: *Is there an age limit?* These days there are a fair number of sixtieth-birthday fests, and these can come with enough surplus energy among the organizers (and perhaps money to defray costs) to produce a volume. (I sometimes say that 59 is the lower bound because that's when Atiyah's first five volumes of collected works were published.) *Celebratio Mathematica* is not without costs, for a volume averages \$4–5,000 to produce and then maintain as $t \rightarrow \infty$. The goal is to have a permanent repository and to establish an endowment to fund the inevitable changes in software and storage. We are grateful to Harry Lucas, a PhD student of R. L. Moore, who funded the Moore volume and the volumes of another half-dozen of Moore's mathematical descendants. PhD students and colleagues are natural candidates to edit and fund a volume for an honoree.

There is an opportunity for mathematics or statistics departments to have a "shelf" of volumes for past and present distinguished members of that particular department. The University of Chicago, for example, was the first to have a shelf of their own (it helps with obtaining funding when the president is a mathematician, Robert Zimmer in this case). Harvard University has also agreed to have a dedicated shelf, and a few more proprietary shelves are in the works. This is an excellent way for a university to showcase a department, and we encourage more to consider doing so.

We invite mathematicians to propose volumes. They should send a short description of their honoree to either me or one of *Celebratio Mathematica*'s other editors.

There is a great deal of mathematical lore that is passed on by word of mouth, but that tends to be lost when not written down. *Celebratio Mathematica* is a fine place to preserve that lore.

Credits

Parts of Figure 1 are courtesy of Professor Lotfi Zadeh, Michael Atiyah, and © Mariana Cook 2007.

Figure 2 is courtesy of the University of York.

Figure 3 is courtesy of Abe Frajndlich, abefoto.com.

Figure 4 is courtesy of Joseph L. Birman.

Celebratio Mathematica began with a conversation in Evans Hall on the Berkeley campus between Jim Pitman and me, and has grown at a modest rate. The website was designed by Alex Scorpan, who also directed the software development. After a while, a formal board of

Figures 5 a and b are courtesy of Mark Ionne and Roger Whitney. Figure 6 is courtesy of Chern Institute of Mathematics, Nankai University.

Figure 7 is courtesy of Michael Atiyah.

Figure 8 ©Mariana Cook 2007 and Lotfi Zadeh.

Photo of Rob Kirby is courtesy of George Csicsery.

THE AUTHOR

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Movie Review : "The Accountant"

The 2016 movie "The Accountant" was leading at the box office the last time I checked though, in my opinion, it is not a great movie.

It stars Ben Affleck as an "autistic mathematics savant" working as the Accountant for criminal organizations. This theme harkens back to the trite image of the mathematician as someone unsocial but good with numbers, who can multiply 4-digit numbers in his head and find the missing money in pages of accounts. When an opponent learns that the Accountant has knocked off a number of his agents, he asks incredulously, "What did he do, hit them over the head with an adding machine?"

The movie provides as its two examples of famous mathematicians Carl Gauss and Lewis Carroll.

The high point, mathematically, is when it mentions the nonrandomness of falsified data.

—Frank Morgan.