

## MathFest 2009, Portland, OR

The 2009 MAA MathFest, held on August 6–8 in Portland, Oregon, was the largest ever, with over 1,500 in attendance. As happens every year, this was a varied and busy meeting with activities and events of all kinds. We have our usual photographic report on pages 6–7, and a report on the writing and teaching awards on pages 8–9. We hope this will give the more than 20,000 MAA members who did not attend a sense of what went on.

### Board of Governors

The MAA Board of Governors met on August 5, just before MathFest. In addition to its usual business, the Board heard reports from various strategic planning groups, approved a budget for next year, made the changes to MAA membership described on page 3, voted on prizes and awards to be given at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in January 2010, and conducted several elections. Two new Governors-at-Large were elected: Richard Guy will be Governor-at-Large for Canadian Members and Dawn Lott will be the new Governor-at-Large for Minority Interests. For the full report on MAA business conducted at MathFest, see Martha Siegel's *Secretary's Report* at <http://www.maa.org/news/090409report.html>.

### Hedrick Lectures

Ravi Vakil was the 2009 Hedrick Lecturer. His three lectures were independent accounts of some very nice mathematics. The first, "The Mathematics of Doodling," was an impressive demonstration of the power of asking good mathematical questions; it took off from a very common type of doodling to arrive at several interesting results. The second, "Murphy's Law in Geometry," started with Vakil telling us we already knew what a moduli space is, and culminated with a stunning result on how most moduli spaces are "maximally bad." The final lecture, "Generalizing the Cross Ratio: The Space of  $n$  Points on the Projective Line," focused on how to parametrize sets of  $n$  points. It was a very successful set of lectures.

The Earle Raymond Hedrick Lectures were established by the MAA Board of Governors in 1952. The series of three expository lectures on mathematics is a regular event at the summer meeting of the Association. At MathFest 2010 in Pittsburgh, the Hedrick Lecturer will be Robert Devaney of Boston University.

### Haimo Awards

The Board chose this year's winners of the Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Awards. Haimo Award winners: Curtis Bennett of Loyola Marymount University, Michael Dorff of Brigham Young University, and Allan Rossman of California Polytechnic. The winners will deliver addresses at the 2010 Joint Mathematics Meetings "revealing some of the secrets of their outstanding teaching success." See page 29 for more information.

### Leitzel Lecture

The 2009 Leitzel Lecture was given by Joan Ferrini-Mundy, on "Communicating Among Communities and Calling for Change: Continuing the Improvement of Mathematics Education." She surveyed the last several years of the conversation about mathematics education, which has involved mathematicians, educational researchers, teacher educators, and others. She then discussed the challenges and opportunities available today and the current policy climate for continuing to call for change in mathematics education.

The James R. C. Leitzel Lecture was established by the MAA Board of Governors in 1998 and happens annually at MathFest. Next year's Leitzel Lecturer will be William McCallum of the University of Arizona.

### Task Force on Periodicals and Communications

The MAA is constantly engaged in strategic planning. One such exercise is the review of the MAA's journals, periodicals, and online publications currently being led by the Working Group on Periodicals, chaired by Paul Zorn of St. Olaf College. The task force is looking into the whole range of MAA offerings and considering many options, including electronic delivery of journals, electronic-only publication, whether the current mix of journals is the right one, the future of *Loci* and other online journals, and so on. Members wishing to comment should contact Paul Zorn at [zorn@stolaf.edu](mailto:zorn@stolaf.edu). A preliminary report from the Working Group will be presented to the Board of Governors at the January Joint Meetings, with a final report to appear in the summer of 2010.

### Treasurer's Report

Board meetings always include a report from MAA Treasurer John Kenelly. Though the MAA has been affected by the current economic difficulties, the good news is that we seem to be weathering the storm. Members can see the details in the recently-updated Treasurer's Page on the MAA web site. Go to <http://www.maa.org/treasurer> for several documents that highlight the finances of the MAA for the 2008 fiscal year and present comparative data on a macro level for several years.

## Gifts to the MAA

We also heard good news about gifts to the MAA. Over the past months, we received three substantial bequests, from Marcia P. Sward, Richard A. Good, and M. Gweneth Humphreys. Since April 2007 more than 340 individuals and organizations have purchased a brick for the Paul R. Halmos Commemorative Walk, netting the Association over \$100,000. The Halmos Endowment Fund continues to grow. It is great to know that so many members of MAA are so willing to support the Association above and beyond their yearly dues.

## Council Chairs

The MAA governance structure includes a great many committees, which are organized and overseen by the MAA Councils. Following a recommendation from the Strategic Planning report on governance, the Board now elects Council Chairs. The Board elected Gerald Porter to head the Council on Prizes and Awards, succeeding Tom Banchoff. Elizabeth Mayfield was selected to succeed Howard Penn as chair of Meetings and Professional Development. And Frank Farris will succeed Paul Zorn as chair of the Council on Publications and Communications. Harriet Pollatsek and Harold Reiter were re-elected for second terms as chairs of the Councils on Programs and Students and Outreach Programs, respectively. All terms begin after the January meeting. MAA committees and councils can be found at <http://www.maa.org/committees/>.

## Board Reviews Financial Disclosure and Conflict-of-Interest Policies

Federal laws require non-profits such as MAA to file a Form 990, which is analogous to the familiar 1040. New regulations require the Board to have an opportunity to review a draft of Form 990 before it is submitted. Accordingly, the 2008 report was available for Board review on the MAA website. In addition, the Association is in the process of revising and strengthening its conflict of interest policies. All those who work on MAA business are asked to declare that they have disclosed all conflicts of interests in accordance with a specific protocol. Council and committee chairs will receive notice of the requirements shortly. Questions should be directed to MAA Secretary Martha Siegel.

## Strategic Planning Reports

Several years ago, the MAA Board of Governors instituted what we hope will be a continuous strategic planning process. The process began with the study of three areas: revenue, professional development, and the American Mathematics Competitions. It continued with strategic planning in the areas

of membership, students, and governance. Many of the recommendations of the working groups have either been implemented or are being discussed by the relevant committees, and we expect to have further action on some of these soon. At MathFest, the working groups on MAA Sections and on STEM Issues presented their final reports to the Board. (See David Bressoud's column on page 16 for a discussion of the report on STEM issues.)

Richard Gillman presented the Strategic Planning report on Sections to the Board. The report contained several recommendations concerning the geography and demographics of section boundaries, the role of national officers at section meetings, whether participation in section meetings should require MAA membership, the improvement of various communications (especially about MAA programs and services available to members), and the need for more direction and guidance on the role of section officers within each section's governance structure. MAA committees will be carefully considering all of these.

The reports of all the strategic planning groups are available online at <http://www.maa.org/StrategicPlanning/>.

## Olympiad Results

During MathFest, news of the results of the International Mathematical Olympiad arrived: all six members of the American team received medals: John Berman – Gold Medal, 35 points out of 42 possible; Wenyu Cao – Silver Medal, 25 points; Eric Larson – Gold Medal, 34 points; Delong Meng – Silver Medal, 29 points; Evan O'Dorney – Silver Medal, 30 points; Qinxuan Pan – Silver Medal, 29 points. The team ended up in sixth place overall, behind China, Japan, Russia, and the two Koreas.

Next on the calendar was the 2009 China Girls Mathematics Olympiad, which happened on August 11–16 in Xiamen. All seven U.S. girls brought home medals: Cynthia Day – Bronze; Carolyn Kim – Silver; Jing Jing Li – Gold; Patricia Li – Silver; Ramya Rangan – Bronze; Elizabeth Synge – Silver; Joy Zheng – Gold. 🌟



### 2009 Distinguished Teaching Award Winner

Southwestern Section

Joanne Peeples  
El Paso Community College