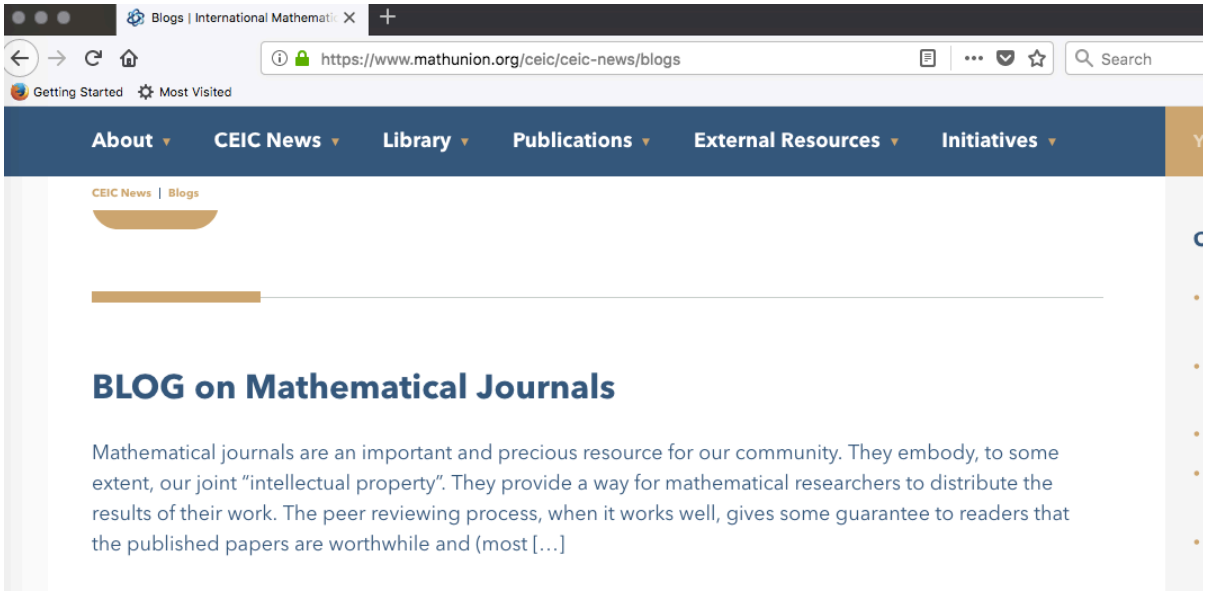
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BLOG on Mathematical Journals
Mathematical journals are an important and precious resource for our community. They embody, to some extent, our joint "intellectual property". They provide a way for mathematical researchers to distribute the results of their work. The peer reviewing process, when it works well, gives some guarantee to readers that the published papers are worthwhile and (most […]

IMU – Journals

Blog on Mathematical Journals

# More reasons to support the Elsevier boycott

Tim Gowers's excellent blog posting focused the long-standing discontent of the search community with Elsevier and nucleated a boycott which may prove to be a historic moment in scholarly publishing. I urge others to join the thousands of researchers who have signed on at the website Tyler Neylon created at thecostofknowledge.com. Recent articles in publications like Forbes and The Economist indicate that Elsevier and the rest of the business community are taking note.

The arguments Gowers laid out focus on Elsevier's high prices, their bundling arrangements and subscription agreements, and their support for new laws that seem aimed at increasing publishers' profits at the expense of wide dissemination of scholarly research. These are all very convincing reasons for the boycott. The fundamental mechanism of capitalism, that prices are contained by consumers' choices not to pay high prices for what is available elsewhere more cheaply, is augmented in this case by the fact that the consumers—researchers and their institutions—also freely donate the most crucial ingredients in Elsevier's products, that is, papers, referees, and editors.

However, there is another reason for researchers to disassociate from Elsevier, which I find even more compelling: their many lapses in ethical and quality publishing practices. Here are some examples:

The Elsevier journal Chaos, Solitons and Fractals published more than 300 papers by the journal's Editor-In-Chief (58 in a single year). That these papers were not subject to peer review was later confirmed by the EIC's declaration that "senior people are above this childish, vain practice of peer review." Although the copious self-publication had begun nearly 20 years earlier, the EIC's retirement from the journal occurred only in 2009.

Elsevier journals have repeatedly published plagiarized work and duplicate publications. A search turns up over thirty papers in Elsevier mathematics journals published in the last decade which have had to be formally retracted, mostly for these reasons. On more than one occasion, the same paper has been published in two different volumes of the same Elsevier journal (presumably by accident).

Elsevier math journals have published a number of papers that make me doubt that they were subject to any peer-review whatever. An egregious example is the 2-page paper "A computer application in mathematics" in Computers and Mathematics with Applications, vol. 59 (2010) pp. 296-297, which purports to prove the parallel postulate (!) with no formulas, no references to other published works except for two papers by the same authors, and, as best as I can tell, no meaningful content whatever. This paper remains unretracted and available for sale on the Elsevier web site.

On several occasions, entire editorial boards have collectively resigned from Elsevier, usually citing discontent with their pricing. In 1999, the entire 50 person editorial board of the Journal of Logic Programming resigned after 16 months of unsuccessful negotiations with Elsevier over pricing, and created a new journal with a different publisher. In 2003, the entire board of Journal of Algorithms did likewise. A well known-case is that of the journal Topology, whose distinguished editorial board resigned en masse in 2006, again to found a different, less expensive, journal. Elsevier has continued to publish Topology since then, even though the web page for the journal gives no indication of its editorial board or even that the journal has an editorial board!

From 2000 to 2005 Elsevier published six phony biomedical journals, with titles such as the Australasian Journal of Cardiology, in return for an undisclosed sum from a large pharmaceutical company. The journals' contents were provided by the pharmaceutical company and published without further review, mostly reporting data favorable to their products. In 2009, after the practice came to light in a law suit against the pharmaceutical company and was reported in the press, Elsevier admitted that they had "published a series of sponsored article compilation publications,

on behalf of pharmaceutical clients, that were made to look like journals and lacked the proper disclosure" and expressed regret.

In 1998, the Elsevier journal Lancet published one of the most significant examples of fraudulent scientific research in recent times, in which evidence was fabricated to link autism to measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine, thereby setting off a health scare that led to deaths and severe injuries and which continues to this day. Brian Deer, the award-winning investigative reporter whose articles in the Times of London and the British Medical Journal (BMJ) exposed the fraud and led to the inquiry by the UK General Medical Council which struck Wakefield from the UK medical register, also published a detailed and damning article in BMJ about the response of the Lancet editorial staff when confronted with the evidence of fraud. Deer describes how the Lancet responded to his carefully documented accusations, not with a formal investigation, but rather with a "5000 word avalanche of denials" and "a scramble to discredit my claims". Lancet's retraction of the paper did not come until 2010, 12 years after the original publication and for reasons that a British Medical Journal editorial describes as "far narrower misconduct than is now apparent."

Of course, Elsevier produces many journals. Without a doubt they publish good articles, as well as bad, and include excellent scientists in their editorial boards, as well as others. But the number and the nature of the incidents like those listed, cause me to doubt their commitment to and/or ability to achieve the quality and ethical standards that I believe crucial. There are many other publishers, including especially scholarly society publishers and university presses, but also some commercial publishers, that have earned my confidence and respect. I will happily dedicate my efforts of authorship and editorial work to them and not to Elsevier.

Doug Arnold

This entry was posted in Community action on February 5, 2012 [https://blog.wias-berlin.de/imu-journals/2012/02/05/more-reasons-to-support-the-elsevier-boycott/] .

## 11 thoughts on "More reasons to support the Elsevier boycott"

**David Roberts** Post author
February 5, 2012 at 23:41

Topology is officially discontinued (as of January 2012). The last published issue (a conference proceedings) was June-December 2009, the previous issue was only 40 pages (2 papers) in March 09. Though there was a four-page Corrigendum published December 2011, correcting a 1995 paper. You can buy this for $31.50, if you like!

**Clay Breshears** Post author
February 6, 2012 at 17:59

OMG! The citing of "A computer application in mathematics" should be enough to convince any credible scientist that there are problems with Elsevier. I haven't seen a paper that bad since I read a "proof" of P not equal NP by likening the two classes to exponential functions, graphing the functions, and showing that there is no intersection of those functions.

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**Teresa Krick** Post author
February 8, 2012 at 00:00

**Open Letter to Elsevier**
I want to point out the letter from COAR to Elsevier.

(Moderator's note: since comments still do not accept active links, we place the address in the "website" field.)

http://www.coar-repositories.org/news/coar-writes-open-letter-as-reaction-to-elseviers-practices/

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**Gary Hansen** Post author
February 9, 2012 at 17:32

**Another reason for boycott**
If you are an author, your published work with Elsevier may not be read. As a practicing physician, I regularly consult the internet to find answers to current medical questions relevant to patients in my practice. Whenever I see a link to Elsevier, I skip it and continue to search for other journal articles. Reason? Elsevier only offers fee-based content on the internet, in contrast to many other medical journals. Some journals do have 6 to 12 months of restricted access to content, after which articles enter the public domain. If someone publishes with Elsevier, I am never going to read it. Others may also be skipping the Elsevier content.

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**Doug Arnold** Post author
February 9, 2012 at 21:39

Boston Globe opinion piece on the boycott
Pulitzer Prize-winning science journalist Gareth Cook has written a powerful opinion piece in the Boston Globe about the boycott. He concludes:

*Researchers should sign the boycott petition and encourage colleagues to sign. Those on an Elsevier editorial board should*

*resign — and take fellow board members with them. This will not just send a message to Elsevier, but to an industry that needs to change.*

Read his piece here:

http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/02/12/why-scientists-are-boycotting-publisher/9sCpDEP7BkkX1INfakn3NL/story.html?s_campaign=8315

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**Volker Mehrmann** Post author
February 13, 2012 at 18:08

I am editor-in-chief of an Elsevier Journal: Linear Algebra and its Applications.

Elsevier is a commercial publisher and making profits is their business. They are making plenty of money with commercial publishing, but so do other publishers like Springer, Wiley, Taylor and Francis, etc. Commercial publishers essentially have two tuning parameters: cost cutting and raising the prices. They all do this whenever they can. They provide a product, a journal: typically print and electronic, they usually support quality control (not always as we have seen), and they are investing in building up electronic systems and databases. This must be honored by a fair price (I really mean fair). They should not be blamed for charging for journals and for making money.

Calling for a boycott of Elsevier is singling out one publisher that admittedly has failed in many respects and is a key player in the game of agressive selling and milking the public cow to make high profits.But I cannot judge whether Elsevier makes more money or is worse than other publishers.

Professional societies show that it is possible to publish very high quality journals in a not-for-profit manner and their work should be highly supported and I definitely do so. It would be great if the scientific publishing could be operated fully in this way, but let us be realistic. The societies certainly cannot take over all current commerically operated journals. Moreover, it will be very hard to run all these journals on a non-profit basis without a lot of voluntary extra work of the community. Are we ready for this?

The boycott call is coming from an idealistic group and I highly respect this. But we should be also self-critical within the mathematical community. In hiring or grant evaluations we look at publications, some colleages even look at numbers of papers, impact factors and other indices. Unless we change this, and I am heavily in favor of changing this, the commercial publishers will be needed, and they know this, this gives them the power to raise prices. We have to be realistic about our own behavior. I have been on enough committees where, to give an example, papers in 'Inventiones' were rated as the top criteria to define the high quality of a colleague.

But this is the most expensive journal in mathematics from a commerical publisher, who is not attacked by a boycott. Why? Is there a bias here?

I fully agree to raise our concerns loudly and to criticize unethical behavior as well as high prices, but we should not single out just one 'bad guy' but work together to improve the system as a whole.

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**Doug Arnold** Post author
February 14, 2012 at 20:21

Thanks, Volker, for your comments. I was perhaps too inflammatory in posting the quote from the the journalist Gareth Cook calling for those on Elsevier editorial boards to resign. I certainly think that is an individual choice, and I know that there are good reasons and motives behind the choice of those people who decide to continue working on Elsevier journals, as well as behind those who decide to stop. I also understand that it is a much easier decision for people like me, who have not invested much effort into Elsevier journals recently. But I do agree with Cook's comment that the boycott "will not just send a message to Elsevier, but to an industry that needs to change," and I would like to defend to decision to initiate and support this boycott.

There is much discussion in the boycott statement of purpose (at http://gowers.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/elsevierstatementfinal.pdf ) on the question of "Why just Elsevier?". It comes down to two main points:

1) A boycott of one large commercial publisher who exemplifies a great deal of what is wrong with the current system of publishing of math journals has a chance to be effective, while a very broad boycott of the entire industry does not. There is a long record of such protests, some of historical importance. One apparently successful example is on the front page of today's New York Times which reported that "Responding to a growing outcry over conditions at its overseas factories, Apple said Monday that an outside organization had begun to audit working conditions at the plants where the bulk of iPhones, iPads and other Apple products are built, and that the group would make its finding public." And from the same article: "'This is a really big deal,' said Sasha Lezhnev at the Enough Project, a group focused on corporate accountability. 'The whole industry has to follow whatever Apple does.'" My hope is that our boycott will prove similar in that focussing large pressures on Elsevier will provoke major changes from them, and also much more widely in the scholarly publishing enterprise.

2) Then there is the question whether Elsevier is the right target. The reasons for this choice are discussed at length in the statement, and I think that there are a lot of good ones. Elsevier has not built up the store of goodwill with the community that some other publishers have through more open communications and other projects, Elsevier has had a continuing sequence of ethical and quality lapses that have alarmed the community and hurt the literature,

Elsevier has gone to great lengths to hide information from the community thereby stifling informed debate, Elsevier chose to be a major advocate for the Research Works Act while the other big math journal publishers were mostly against it or took no position, etc. The best evidence that Elsevier was the right choice, was the huge response the boycott had. Tim Gowers just mentioned the idea, without any expectation of starting a mass movement, but within days there was a massive response.

By the way, I certainly am not against for-profit publishers making decent profits, nor, I think are the other people I have heard from who are supporting the boycott. But I am not comfortable with the 36% profit margin Elsevier got in 2010, and I am not comfortable with many of their business practices, independent of their profit margin. Thus I do not wish to cooperate with them, and I hope that, together with many other people who feel similarly, we can force some change.

Concerning your penultimate paragraph, I agree strongly with you that there are many things to we should be looking to change in our own behavior, inside the math community. There is much more to say on all of this, and I hope that we keep the discussion going. Thanks again for your contributions to it.

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**Vittorio Coti Zelati** Post author
February 27, 2012 at 14:58

Let me give another piece of information about Elsevier pricing. Elsevier has different subscription print subscription price lists for customers in Europe (in EUR), in Japan (in YEN) and outside Europe and Japan (in USD). This is a quite common business practice.

For example the list price for Linear Algebra and its Applications lists 5202 EUR (6977 USD at today exchange rate) or 5820 USD.

For other journals the situation is even more intriguing:

Advances in Mathematics is listed at 4994 EUR or 3878 USD

J. Differential Equations: 5777 EUR or 4614 USD

J. Functional Analysis: 5143 EUR or 4022 USD

J. Math. Anal. Appl.: 10210 EUR or 8119 USD

J. of Algebra: 7226 EUR or 5677 USD

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**Carol Hutchins** Post author
March 8, 2012 at 17:13

There is a well-considered piece by Altbach and Rapple in Inside Higher Ed today.

http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/03/08/essay-problems-state-journal-publishing

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**Henry Cohn** Post author
March 13, 2012 at 23:04

**Other remarkable failures of peer review at Elsevier journals**
Here are some other remarkable failures of peer review at Elsevier journals.

I know of several problems at Nonlinear Analysis. For example, they accepted for publication a nonsense claim of a solution to Hilbert's 16th problem (see news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3243736.stm for news coverage of the claim, and tesugen.com/archives/03/11/grigori-rozenblioum-on-elin-oxenhielms-paper for a refutation).

Nonlinear Analysis also published the following ludicrous paper, which remains unretracted despite severe criticism (see arxiv.org/abs/math/0603599 ):

Carvalho, L. A. V., On some contradictory computations in multi-dimensional mathematics, Nonlinear Analysis 63 (2005), 725-734. dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.na.2005.02.074

The journal Applied Mathematics and Computation actually accepted for publication randomly generated text produced by the program SCIgen, with no actual meaning at all:

pdos.csail.mit.edu/scigen/blog/index.php

Amusingly, Elsevier's copyeditors had eight questions and corrections for the authors, despite the fact that the text was utter nonsense.

Applied Mathematics Letters retracted the following weird paper:

retractionwatch.wordpress.com/2011/03/15/faked-data-unsubstantiated-claims-and-spirituality-add-up-to-a-math-journal-retraction/

I'm sure there are other cases beyond these, because this list is not based on an exhaustive search. How could this be happening? Each case is ridiculous – these aren't borderline papers involving a judgement call, but rather completely unpublishable in any reputable journal, no matter how low its standards are.

One case could just be a freak coincidence: maybe a paper accidentally got moved to the publication queue without going through peer review. However, there are enough of them that it suggests a systematic problem. And this is at five different journals (Chaos, Solitons & Fractals; Computers and Mathematics with Applications; Nonlinear Analysis; Applied Mathematics and Computation; Applied Mathematics Letters), so it's not likely to be one rogue editor.

Elsevier owes the community an explanation. Are they actually publishing papers without any peer review? If not, what kind of peer review process could possibly lead to results like these? Either way, this problem must be fixed.

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**Douglas N Arnold** Post author
April 10, 2012 at 17:02

New article on the boycott and paths going forward
This paper was just released on the arXiv, and will appear in the Notices of the AMS.

Mathematicians take a stand, by Douglas N. Arnold and Henry Cohn

Abstract: We survey the reasons for the ongoing boycott of the publisher Elsevier. We examine Elsevier's pricing and bundling policies, restrictions on dissemination by authors, and lapses in ethics and peer review, and we conclude with thoughts about the future of mathematical publishing.

arxiv.org/abs/1204.1351

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# IMU – Journals

Blog on Mathematical Journals

# Ingrid Daubechies on the IMU blog and journals

This will probably be the last entry of the blog in this format, as the IMU is working to open a more general IMU blog site, at which it hopes members of the mathematical community will still bring up issues of wider concern that they encounter in their interaction with mathematical journals.

This first paragraph was also the last one, in this blog entry, in the official voice of the President of the IMU — everything that follows will be my own personal opinion, as one mathematician deeply concerned with the present and future of our journals. In particular, the opinions below are not vetted by the IMU's Executive Committee, and should not be construed as an official point of view of the IMU, despite my present service as the sitting President of the IMU.

The stated goal of this blog at its start was to collect opinions from the mathematical community about a proposal that the IMU and ICIAM start a committee that would produce a rating of mathematical research journals. It has fulfilled that goal; as reported in the July issue of the IMU-Net Newsletter, the IMU has decided not to go forward with the creation of such a committee. Very soon after the opening of this blog, it became a forum where mathematicians also formulated suggestions for possible IMU roles related to various other important issues concerning mathematical journals. The early discussion here led to several prominent members of our community articulating their frustration with the present situation of scholarly publishing in mathematics, and in particular with pricing policies making it very hard for all but the most prominent and wealthy universities to keep up with the cost of subscriptions. This public discussion probably played a role in the later development of thecostofknowledge.com site, where, following Tim Gowers' lead, many of us very publicly and firmly stated our opposition to these pricing policies. The protest took the form of a boycott of one particular publisher, Elsevier, and was (as of Oct 16, 2012) signed by over 12,801 scientists (the policies we were protesting are not limited to mathematics), including 2,189 mathematicians.

As was our intention, this protest elicited many reactions, albeit not all positive. Young researchers felt that, not having tenure yet, or otherwise dependent on evaluations of their record, they could not join a boycott that would cut them off from a considerable number of well regarded journals in their area. Many mathematicians were reluctant to join the movement because they felt a boycott was not an effective or attractive protest tool. Others pointed out that Elsevier, although having a large impact on mathematical library budgets as one of the largest for-profit publishers of mathematical journals (as a result of its having acquired many other publishing companies in the mathematical arena in the last 10 or 15 years), was not the only nor even the most egregious one in practicing the pricing policies that we were protesting, and decided not to join the movement for this reason. That nevertheless so many mathematicians did sign enthusiastically indicates the extent to which many in our community are deeply disturbed by the present situation in mathematical publishing.

What is it we find so disturbing?

Dissemination of new ideas, as they develop, is the lifeblood of our research community. For a long time, print journals have been a major channel through which this dissemination took place. They have evolved to become the place of record, where new results, or new takes on old results,

are put forward, after having been vetted carefully by reviewers and editors. As a result, publication of their work in journals of good reputation is a goal for most mathematicians active in research; their success in achieving this goal is one way to measure their standing within the mathematical research community. At many stages in our careers, we are asked to produce the list of our publications in scholarly journals, and these lists figure prominently in professional evaluations. Good research journals are thus central pillars for our community. This is why we willingly invest our time and effort in them, be it as editors or as reviewers.

The publishing landscape has however changed drastically in the last few decades, and continues to do so, in many ways. Two big changes stand out. The internet has made electronic publication possible; most researchers now use the internet to search for, find and retrieve papers of interest to them. And second, journal subscription cost to academic institutions has increased out of proportion with other costs, and is causing serious budget trouble for libraries.

This latter evolution is what caused the frustration that led to the creation of thecostofknowledge website. Why?

The community of mathematicians provides the source material (as authors of the papers), the quality control (as referees and editors of the journals) and the readership for our journals. To an extent that is greater in mathematics than in other scientific fields, mathematicians provide their reviewing and editorial services to journals almost exclusively on a voluntary basis, with no expectation of remuneration. [Most of us are surprised when offered payment (as occasionally happens) to review for a journal outside the "mathematical core"!] We provide our services for free, even though these tasks take up valuable time and energy, because we are proud of the quality of our journals, and we perceive this service as one given (gladly) to our community. Papers in mathematics have a much longer "life" than in many other fields — it is not uncommon to reference even non-famous papers that were published many decades earlier, or even well over a century. As a result, we have, as a community, much more intellectual capital "vested" in our journals than most other fields.

Many of us feel that we, the mathematical community, "own" these journals to which we contribute (almost) everything that makes them worthwhile to us. From a practical, legal or financial point of view, this is not the case, however — the majority of mathematical research journals are the legal property of commercial publishers. Some of these have a longstanding association with mathematical researchers; for others, the connection is much more recent, the result (for instance) of the acquisition of small publishers with a larger presence in the mathematics literature by a larger house with much less prior mathematics exposure. That journals are legally owned by publishers is not new, of course; few mathematical researchers have an appetite for getting involved with the practical aspects of publishing, and for many very distinguished and well established journals published by a commercial house, a de facto symbiosis had developed between the (possibly specialized) mathematical community serviced by the journal and its publisher. [There are journals that are owned and published by societies that have their own publication branch, such as AMS, SIAM, EMS or ASA; others that are owned by societies that contract with a publishing house, commercial or not, to ensure publication, such as Foundations of Computational Mathematics. These are not the topic of this blog entry.] Mathematicians provided their services to the journals; publishing houses ensured that the successive (printed) issues of the journal appeared on a regular schedule, were of consistent physical quality, and took care of the distribution to its subscribers, mostly libraries in research institutions. The subscription revenue covered the price of publication and provided a modest profit to publishing houses. [In other fields, subscriptions often provided only part of the revenue. In the other natural sciences, for instance, it was common for research grants to have a budget item that covered publication costs, including page charges; many journals did ask such page charge contributions from authors of papers accepted for publication. In some journals the page charges were mandatory. Others would waive these charges at the request of authors who had no grant source from which to pay them; a slightly slower publications schedule could be adopted for papers benefiting from such a waiver. This was the policy followed by some journals at the interface between mathematics and other fields, such as the Journal of Mathematical Physics. Journals that were squarely within mathematics, whether pure or applied, typically did not request page charges from authors or authors' institutions.]

The situation started changing in the 1970s and 80s. Journals, with their steady subscriber base, provided a much more secure source of funding for publishers than books. (Very few advanced mathematics books become really profitable.) Increasingly aware of this, many publishers aggres-

sively started new journals — the number of such new starts is in itself an indication that journal publication was increasingly viewed as a lucrative business. A steady policy of raising journal prices, including guaranteed annual percentage increases that far exceed academic budget increases, made journals (or bundles of journals) increasingly expensive. [It is ironic that simultaneously mathematical authors were taking over tasks that used to be the responsibility of the publishers (e.g. mathematical typesetting); this did not lead to a decrease in prices, however.] By now, matters have gone so far that even distinguished departments decide wholesale cancellations of journals from particular publishers rather than cutting even more academic positions to keep their journal subscriptions intact (see http://www.ma.tum.de/Mathematik/BibliothekElsevier).

Electronic publishing is potentially a great game changer.

Many speculations have been made as to how the scientific publication world will be radically different 5 or 10 years from now. For those among us who view the most important function of a trusted, respected journal as bringing together papers that are more or less focused in a special subfield, carefully checked and processed through a rigorous reviewing system, a new incarnation journal could be as simple as a list of paper+version numbers from the ArXiv or some other permanent repository, periodically posted on a website. Others suggest that a return to a word-of-mouth system will prevail, albeit in a more modern, electronic version, in which established mathematicians spread the word, via their web postings, comments and pointers, about interesting new results they have learned about. Many other models are being proposed, discussed, tried out. Publishing houses have themselves been very active in working on electronic versions of their journals. It is not my goal here to propose yet another model, or to discuss which model I think is best or most suitable for our community. I expect that different journals may opt for variations of these models; in addition my age and limited information-technological fluency make my instincts in this matter less than trustworthy.

But whatever happens, it is clear that great change can lead to great upsets. Our whole community would benefit from orderly transitions for our journals to the new publication model(s). The best possible transition will happen if there is broad community support for the journals. With present pricing policies, publishing companies are undermining the possibility of a truly community-wide support. I personally know of several editorial boards of high profile journals where many members are torn: on the one hand, they agree with many of the issues raised by the statement of purpose at thecostofknowledge.com, on the other hand they don't want to cause mayhem for the excellent journals to which they have devoted considerable amounts of energy and time, in service to their mathematical communities. I have also been asked for advice by young people who are offered positions on Editorial Boards, and are tempted by this recognition of their rising status in their community, but who resonate as well with the Statement of Purpose of thecostofknowledge.com .

Let me formulate here a very simple proposal that, if implemented, would not upset the identity of the existing journals, that would enable commercial publishing houses to continue to make a living while servicing the publication needs of the mathematical community, but that nevertheless would make a real difference to the mathematical community:

EMANCIPATION of our journals : set our journals free!

In other words, I propose that from their present disenfranchised situation, our existing journals be allowed to incorporate, and become independent societies. Most journals already function as a small society: they have a Board (of Editors), with (in a well-run journal) a mechanism of regular replacement of the members, in a way that represents well the interests of its community (e.g. paying attention to emergence of new subfields, or subsiding of others); there is a Managing or Chief Editor and possibly a small board of core Editors that functions like an Executive Committee. Having official society status would not change the effective functioning of the journals. (There could be some small changes: for instance, it would be natural to have an Executive Committee for the journal that appoints the editorial board and managing editors, and also handles publishing, legal and other issues related to the journal, but of which not all members need be Editors themselves.) For the administrative duties, marketing and distribution, each journal society would have a contract with a publishing house, which would, to begin with, be most naturally the present publisher. But the journals would be able to review this contract on a regular basis, starting a few years after emancipation. [Such contracts would also govern the changing nature of journal content over time: truly electronic publishing will involve much more beyond just digitizing

the traditional journal: it will include nonlinear formats, different platforms (iPhone, iPad, etc.), active hyperlinks both internally and externally, video, audio, manipulable graphs, runnable code, crowdsourcing, etc. All this and more (that we can't imagine yet) will probably play a major role in future electronic publishing — but that is for the interaction between journals and publishing houses to figure out, in the future, and not the subject of this blog entry.]

I have been told this is a very naive proposal. Maybe. But I think it is less naive than might seem at first glance. One isolated editorial board might not be able to obtain its enfranchisement if it asked its publisher, however nicely. But if the editorial boards of several journals acted in concert, the chances of success would be higher. Moreover, if some publishing house, truly providing a service to its journals as excellent as it claims, and thus risking very little in emancipating its journals, were to set the example, what a coup this would be with respect to other publishers — what recognition among the community! And others might well have to file suit …

Emancipation of the math journals would not solve the challenge of identifying the best model for electronic publication for each journal. It would keep publishing houses involved in the publication of journals they now publish. But it would, in one fell swoop, put the mathematical community and the publication channels on a footing of partners, seeking sustainable solutions in a changing environment, together.

Messires Publishers, wouldn't you prefer dealing with us, members of the mathematical community, as partners rather than spending all this energy on trying to convince us (not very successfully) that we are much better off in our present disenfranchised situation?

Ingrid Daubechies

This entry was posted in Uncategorized on October 25, 2012 [https://blog.wias-berlin.de/imu-journals/2012/10/25/ingrid-daubechies-on-the-imu-blog-and-journals/] .

## One thought on "Ingrid Daubechies on the IMU blog and journals"

Gerhard Telschow
December 18, 2012 at 12:49

This blog including all posts and comments is allready moved to the new server.