

R. Remmert

# The Mathematical Intelligencer

sent at home & abroad to  
prevent misinformation

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I HAVE BEEN FEELING for some time that we need an informal forum for debating questions of mutual interest to the Mathematical Community and Springer Verlag. This forum should be frank, amusing, informative, and, of course, relevant. It is not without hesitation that I offer this no. 0 - the product of our spare time - for public criticism.

Let me say briefly what I have in mind.

Just because of its informal nature, we hope the "Intelligencer" will command interest by being "historical" in two senses

- (1) backwards - by printing eye-witness accounts of people and events which have influenced the course of mathematical research.
- (ii) forwards - it could be that some of the things our contributors say about current developments in science in general and mathematics in particular will one day acquire historical interest.

**Figure 1.** Excerpt from the first issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, 1971.

KP: Unfortunately, this one's not my own, I don't have any of the accordion issues. My thesis adviser, Reinhold Remmert, saved them; he lent them to me. Maybe, in this day and age, one can photocopy the whole thing in this format.

MS: How many people did you send the first issue to?

KP: Originally, about twelve thousand, I think but I cannot be sure.

MS: That's quite a bit. How did you choose them?

KP: Springer had a mailing list and I think we also used the AMS membership list.

AP: Plus Europeans.

KP: We saw this initially as a promotion piece, a clever way to have a place to promote our books in a vehicle that people would maybe read. . . .

AP: We just played around. And then, of course, these silly headings that we had, like "Sent home and abroad to prevent misinformation."

KP: Not everyone was pleased.

AP: So we printed a little note (Fig. 2).

KP: This reflects something a little deeper, namely, in any corporation people who deal with the production or marketing are much more serious, and were really offended that we said

"to prevent misinformation." The head of marketing probably came to either Alice or Walter or me, I don't remember which, and said "what are you saying here, are we misinforming people?"

AP: I'm certain that someone complained because we were trying to do something a little different and at the same time promote the books. But we didn't want to blatantly say, hello, this is promotion.

KP: We saw ourselves as part of the mathematical community rather than a publisher out there who makes money off the thoughts of mathematicians. So we decided to go ahead with a vehicle for communication. We wanted feedback from the community on what we did in order to tell them why we did things, etc. It was a communication tool, but of course, in the back of our minds, we also wanted to sell books.

AP: At the end, after we wrote whatever we wrote, we always listed new books that had come out.

MS: And how was the idea of a joint community of publishing received?

KP: I think extremely well. After a few issues, we decided to test whether people were really interested; we included a little note in the mailing that said "if you want to continue to get this, you have to send back a postcard."

AP: We had little postcards printed. I remember those.

KP: And we got four thousand back. That reaction was totally unusual. Normally you would expect to get one percent response on a promotional mailing.

AP: We tried to save space, so we just typed it without breaks.

KP: And then we got a letter from André Weil (Fig. 3). I was really impressed that he took the time to write that. At that time we didn't know him personally; later I knew him very well. I don't know if you knew him, he could be absolutely intimidating.

MS: I never knew him. I was totally intimidated so I never . . .

KP: Many mathematicians were intimidated by him. He was very fierce in his opinions but he was very nice to me; maybe he thought I wasn't a mathematician anymore, I don't know. Anyway, we got along really well. But

People in our promotion department were shocked by the INTELLIGENCER'S subtitle 'Sent at home and abroad to prevent misinformation'. Were all their combined efforts of recent years really a source of misinformation and, if so, who were more misinformed, people at home or people abroad? The INTELLIGENCER wishes to set on record that, wittingly or unwittingly, the promotion department of Springer-Verlag misinformed nobody, neither man, beast nor flower in the luxuriant garden of mathematics.

**Figure 2.** Statement for the record.

*From Mr. André Weil, The Institute for Advanced Study, School of Mathematics, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, USA:*

ihavereceivedyourmathematicalintelligencerandfinditinterestingparticularlyfor the typographical point of view why do you bother still with such costly and superfluous innovations as punctuation separation of words etc which any competent Greek epigraphist will tell you is really quite unnecessary and very disturbing for anyone used to the good old node ports by rt ne vth gim uoy doht em dl greater convenience wishing you every luck aw



**Figure 3.** Letter to *The Mathematical Intelligencer* from André Weil.

when he sent this note I had probably not met him yet.

MS: And this wonderful map in issue number 4 (Fig. 4)?

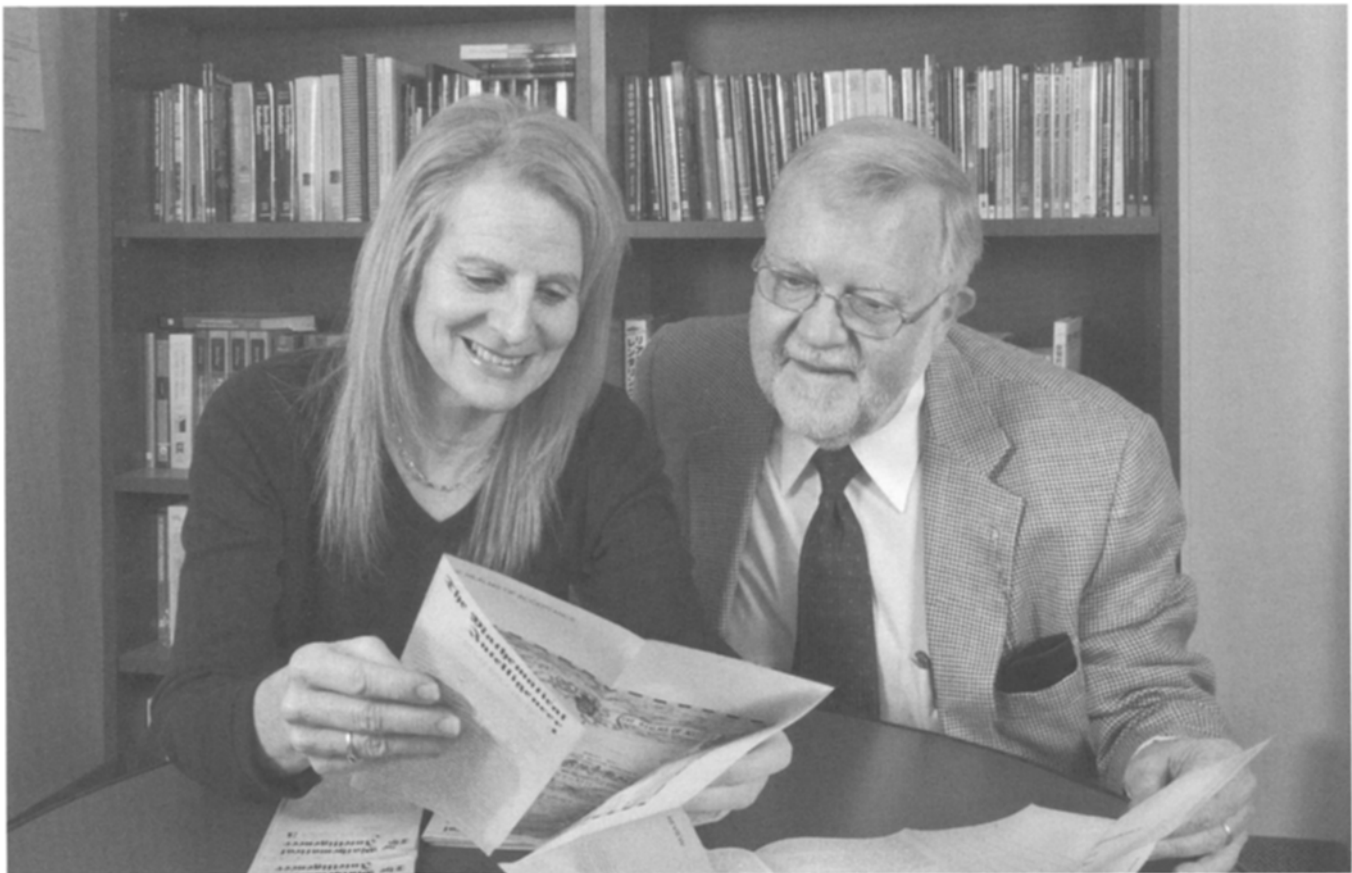
KP: Walter Kaufmann-Bühler's. It shows the world of Springer publishing then. He was a great guy. Many of the ideas in the *Intelligencer* in the first years came from him.

MS: Did he draw it himself?

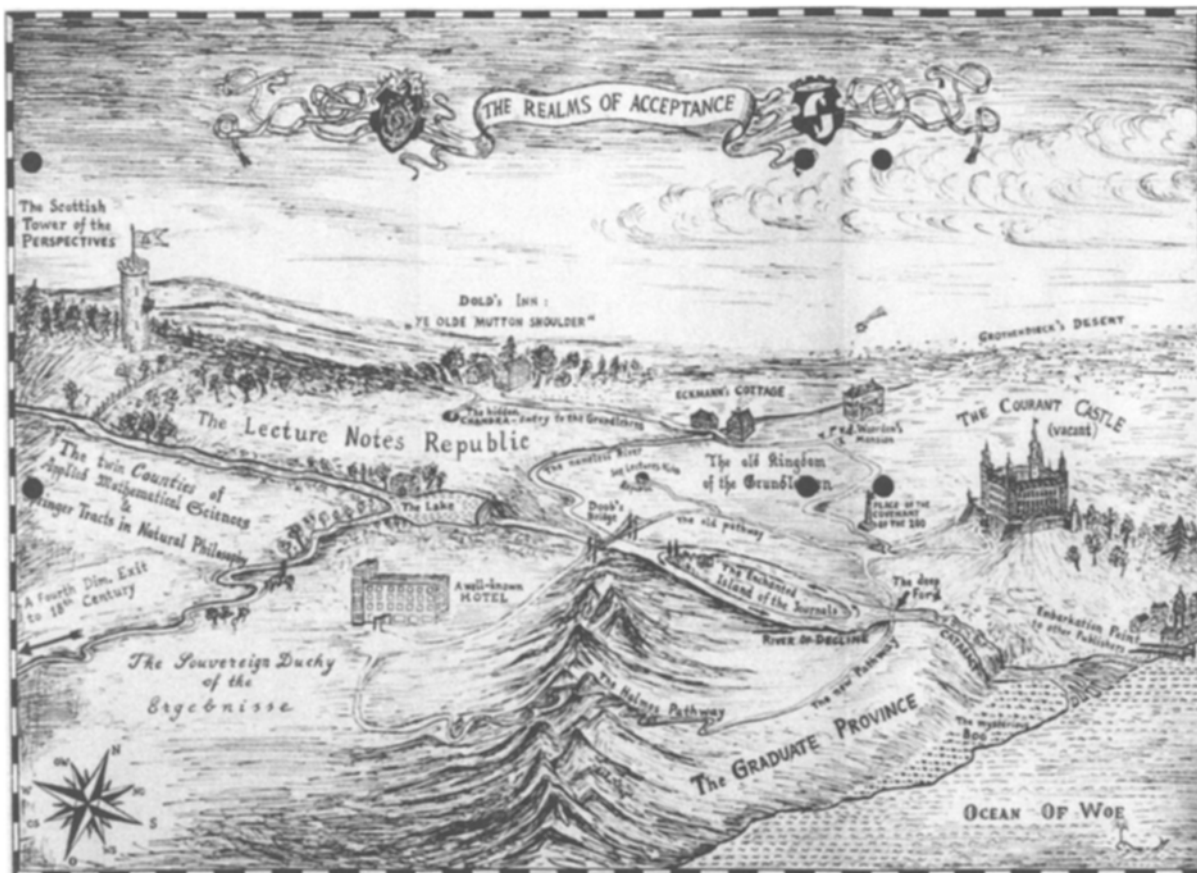
AP: Yes, we are pretty sure he did.

KP: But he credits Hilbert. He says Hilbert drew the original version in 1921, "as an overview of the main endeavors of mathematical publishing in the foreseeable future. . . . F. Springer pledged himself and his company to (this one of) Hilbert's programs."

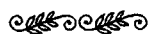
MS: Issue Number 4 also has the first "stamp column" and letters from an art historian in Canada, a mathematician in New Mexico, and a mathematician in India. Plus book reviews, in addition to the Springer ads. So the *Intelligencer* already had the seeds of some of the features it's had as a magazine, and its global reach.



Klaus and Alice Peters in 2007 holding *The Intelligencer* from 30 years ago. (Photo © 2007 Stan Sherer)



**Figure 4.** The world of Springer publishing, 1972, by Walter Kaufmann-Bühler (after David Hilbert).



From Mr. John Staples, Department of Mathematics,  
The Australian National University, P.O. Box 4,  
Canberra, ACT/Australia

I am concerned about the publication and review of  
research papers.

Such publication usually has three functions

1. A news function: informing one's contemporaries  
of one's work
2. An archival function: preserving and circulating  
one's work for the information of later workers
3. A reward function: indicating that some of one's  
peers recognize one's work as a genuine contribu-  
tion.

It does not perform a fourth, vital, function

4. A review function: publishing an evaluation of  
one's work by an independent expert.

It is absurd that we usually tolerate a long delay  
in publication so that an independent expert can  
evaluate the work - and then his evaluation  
is not published! Instead it is duplicated after  
publication and appears years later - though the  
original evaluation could appear as soon as or even  
before the paper itself!

**Figure 5.** A letter to the editor.

KP: The *Intelligencer* usually avoided political subjects, but in one issue we printed this note: "The following note concerned with the January meeting of the AMS was communicated to the *Intelligencer*: Should the American Mathematical Society support organized crime? Presumably not. Organized prostitution? Again, probably not. But what of the organized exploitation of man's weakness, cupidity, and stupidity for financial gain? . . . this spectacle is unseemly. Let the individual be free to choose but let not learned societies lend their respectability to this choice. PJH." That's Peter Hilton.

AP: That had to be 1972, when the meeting was in Las Vegas. We never really anticipated that the community would actually participate in *The Mathematical Intelligencer*. But it kind of evolved that way and it became a lot of fun (Fig. 5).

AP: One of the other crazy activities that we did was put together a booklet called "The Underground Guide to Helsinki" for the Helsinki International Congress.

MS: Was that the forerunner of the special *Intelligencer* issues for each ICM?

KP: Yes. We were very lucky. We had a secretary in the mathematics department who was Finnish and she helped us find all the good, unknown local restaurants that were not on the list of the big restaurants. She also made a language guide to Finnish, how to get a taxi, how to say thank you, and such things, and that went into this booklet. And then we reviewed the best beers in Helsinki. In Finland beers come in, I think, four levels of alcohol content, and we made a review for each level, the best beer in each level, and published it.

MS: Did you do the grading?

KP: No, she did that. And a funny thing happened then! A year before the Congress we had organized a book exhibit. The booksellers in Helsinki did not want us, the publishers, to have an exhibit, for complicated reasons. There's a big mark-up of books in Scandinavia—about 20–30%—and the booksellers didn't want us to sell at our price. But the head of the Congress said, I'll give you a room if the booksellers don't want to do it; Springer can organize it and get all the other publishers involved. When we told that to the booksellers, they relented and said OK, we'll do it. So anyway, we held this book exhibit, and on the first day a small truck drove up at the back door and started to unload cases of beer and beer glasses and put them in our booth. They said, "This is free for giving our beer the highest ratings; this is the least we can do." So they provided us with free beer. And then on our first evening in Helsinki we went to one of the restaurants that we had recommended, a small restaurant, and it was packed. We had a hard time finding a table, but finally we sat down and as we were sitting we opened *The Underground Guide*, and the owner of the restaurant came over and said, "Where did you get this thing?" And we said, "We wrote it." "You wrote it? Everybody comes in here with this guide, and that's why we are so packed. We don't normally have so many people." So the whole Springer group had a free dinner!

AP: Looking through these old issues, I think we began running out of steam after awhile, because number 10 is

dated 1975 and number 11 is dated 1976. It began as a quarterly, as it is now. But by 1975 we were only getting it out once a year, and the issues were getting longer and more complicated.

KP: The other thing is that Walter had moved to New York. You know, Alice was the first mathematics editor at Springer in New York. And fortunately, or unfortunately, we decided to get married very soon after I had hired her—this posed a dilemma. I couldn't leave Heidelberg, because I had just been named the scientific director. I explained this problem to Walter, and he said, "That's not a problem at all. I'll take Alice's job in New York, and she can take my job in Heidelberg. The only problem is, it seems difficult to find a place to live in New York." Then Alice said "That's not a problem, I have an apartment with low rent."

AP: It's really amazing that the management at Springer allowed us to do that, because the point of hiring me was to have an American mathematician working as an editor for Springer in the New York office, working on a textbook series and things like that. But they were very accommodating, and Walter and I just switched places.

KP: So we decided to turn *The Mathematical Intelligencer* into a magazine. The first Editors-in-Chief in the new format were Ed Edwards and Bruce Chandler.

AP: They did it for a while and then thought they might pass on the scepter. So we asked John Ewing.

KP: That was, if I'm not mistaken, in 1978—we had a meeting about it in Helsinki at the International Congress.

MS: After John Ewing, Sheldon Axler was the editor, and then Chandler Davis, is that the right order?

KP: Yes. They all carried on and did a really good job. They devoted a lot of time to it. You joined recently?

MS: Yes, I edited the "Mathematical Communities" column for many years, and then Chandler invited me to be Coeditor. I was very glad to do it; I enjoy writing and editing, and also I saw it as a way to prevent Chandler from retiring. After 13 years as Editor-in-Chief—and he'd been the Book Review editor before that—he wanted more

time for his own mathematics and his poetry. So we divided the responsibilities.

When you went to the magazine format, what were your thoughts about it? It had been a newsletter, almost a personal communication; what did you have in mind for the bigger format?

KP: There was no popular magazine for mathematics really. There were the *Notices* and things like that, but nothing like *Psychology Today*. We thought we could do something like that, and since there was great interest we also thought it could be done a little bit more professionally with good editors who really would devote time, find longer articles, things like that.

AP: We had always thought, gee it would be nice to have something like that, and we were amazed at how many people encouraged us. Our dream was that it would be sold at newsstands just like *Scientific American*. We looked into what we would have to do for that to be possible. But it was very hard to get into it.

KP: Twenty years ago, mathematics was not a very popular item in the literature. That has changed tremendously. If you look at what is published today, books about mathematicians, a book like *Prime Obsession*, sells very well. There are lots of popular books in mathematics.

MS: Some of them upset mathematicians, but appreciation is a two-way street. If there's an excellent novel or play or nonfiction that can be appreciated by the general public, we should try to appreciate what the author was trying to do.

AP: Yes, there was one review of our book, *The Honors Class* by Ben Yandell, which is otherwise so widely acclaimed, that said it didn't present enough of the mathematics. That was, of course, not quite the point of *The Honors Class*. So with that kind of a review you say, oh well, they didn't understand.

MS: Was that review in the *Intelligencer*?

AP: No, no.

MS: We want to broaden the scope of the *Intelligencer* and broaden the readership but still keep mathematicians writing in and expressing opinions and so forth.

AP: In the early years, the mathematical community was much more closely knit. There was a real community sense. When we were going to mathematics meetings there was a different spirit than I now find. That's one of the difficulties, I guess. Naturally, you can't maintain that and have growth.

KP: But there are things that one can do. For instance, it just occurs to me that you might publish important expository lectures. And announce forthcoming lectures in the *Intelligencer*. There's a lot that can be done to increase the *Intelligencer's* circulation, but with the current culture of more interest in mathematics in the general audience, one would have to make a little switch in the *Intelligencer*. You might want it expanded to include more literary things. But we've strayed from the original subject.

MS: No, actually we haven't. When did you leave Springer?

KP: In 1979. We came to the United States and started Birkhäuser Boston. Then after many years Birkhäuser was sold to Springer, and we left again and went to Academic Press. Then when Academic Press was sold to General Cinema we left again.

MS: *General Cinema?*

KP: Yes. and then we spent a couple of years with Jones and Bartlett, but it turned out that they were more interested in textbooks than in research mathematics. Don Jones, Sr. said, "you know, if you feel comfortable, why don't you start your own company? You can take all the books that you developed here and purchase them from us, including the open contracts." So we decided to form A. K. Peters, Ltd. We'll celebrate our fifteenth anniversary at the same time as the *Intelligencer* celebrates its thirtieth.

### **Bruce Chandler and Harold Edwards, Coeditors, 1978**

The second volume of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* lists the two of us as "Founding Editors" and lists no other editors except a "Research News Editor" (Fritz Hirzebruch) and four "Consulting Editors." Readers no doubt took this to mean that we were the editors overseeing the publication of these four issues, and that the magazine had been

our idea beginning with the first issue. Both of these impressions are wrong.

The original *Mathematical Intelligencer* was the conception of Klaus and Alice Peters and Walter Kaufmann-Bühler, with the later participation of Roberto Minio. They wrote and/or assembled twelve, pamphlet-sized publications, numbered 0 through 11, that they called *The Mathematical Intelligencer*. These issues, appearing sporadically in the early 1970s, succeeded in attracting the attention of mathematicians—they were amusing, informative, and unpredictable. They drew attention to Springer publications, and they seemed to provide the small band of editors a great deal of pleasure.

*The Mathematical Intelligencer* had yet another incarnation before we took over as "Founding Editors." Volume 0 of a NEW *Mathematical Intelligencer* appeared in the summer of 1977. It contained an editorial labeled "Please Comment" that referred to the now-forgotten 1975 publication by the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences of a "mock issue" of a proposed publication called *Mathematical World*, and the editorial says that Volume 0 was created when "the financial committee of MAA decided by one vote not to continue the efforts toward publication of *Mathematical World*." One vote launched *The Mathematical Intelligencer*.

Volume 0 already offered subscriptions—\$9.50 for four issues of the projected first volume, shipping and handling included—so Springer was committed to going ahead. Because the magazine was to be mostly if not exclusively in English, and because the main office for Springer books in English was in the Flatiron Building in New York, Klaus and company decided to look for an editor for the projected magazine who lived in or near New York. Walter was their man in New York, and he proposed Bruce Chandler for the job.

Bruce was not interested in taking on such a big job by himself. He already had a full-time faculty position. But he said he might reconsider if Harold (Ed) Edwards joined in as coeditor and if Springer would furnish a managing editor to do the heavy lifting associated with the production of the magazine. Springer accepted his terms. In this way it came to pass that the two

of us, Bruce and Ed, who were both attending an international congress on the history of science in Edinburgh in the summer of 1977, took a day trip by plane from Edinburgh to London's Heathrow airport where we met Klaus, who made a stopover of a couple of hours on his way from Springer headquarters in Heidelberg to the US.

We discussed ideas for the proposed magazine and found ourselves in sufficient agreement that, at the end of the meeting, it was decided that we would go to work on the project with the intention of producing the promised first issue for January 1978 to coincide with the Joint Meeting of the AMS, MAA, and SIAM in Atlanta. Springer chose as managing editor Irene Heller, a promising graduate student, and the three of us went to work in earnest in the Fall of 1977.

We soon discovered that it was not easy to find the kind of material we hoped to publish, especially not for a magazine that did not yet exist. There were some tense times that Fall as we wondered whether we could find enough material of the quality we wanted to fill the issue, but looking at the finished product thirty years later we feel we did do well. One help was the death of three outstanding figures in mathematics—Paul Bernays, J. E. Littlewood, and Marston Morse—for whom we found excellent mathematicians to write brief obituaries.

Another help was our willingness to deal with controversial topics. Perhaps we could even be accused of deliberate provocation. The excerpt from the book "Why the Professor Can't Teach," by Morris Kline, was sure to provoke a response—which can indeed be read in the following issues. And John Guckenheimer's article on the controversy surrounding "catastrophic theory" addressed what was at that time a hotly debated topic. Even Erwin Neuenchwander's historical article about Riemann's example of a continuous, non-differentiable function (solicited as an accompaniment to Riemann's picture on the cover) turned out to provoke some intellectually vigorous responses.

We made no secret of our intention. As we wrote in our first editorial: "Our primary goal in terms of the style of the magazine is *readability*. If it comes to a choice—and it probably will—be-

tween articles which 50% of the readers will throw down in disgust because they don't understand them and articles which 50% will throw down because they disagree with them, we will always choose the latter. Indeed, with an article of the latter type, 1% of the readers will probably take pen in hand to provide what they feel are necessary corrections or refutations, and this sort of intellectual give-and-take, provided it is conducted with the appropriate degree of tolerance and civilized respect for differing points of view, is the lifeblood of a scholarly community."

This year is the 300th birthday of Euler, as well as the 30th of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, so it seems fitting to quote the next paragraph of our editorial as well: "The patron saint of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* is Leonhard Euler, not so much because of his enormous contribution to mathematics as because of his open, give-and-take style. Euler published theorems without proofs but with intriguing plausibility arguments, published critical examinations of various aspects of controversial subjects such as divergent series or logarithms of imaginary numbers, and even published things that were striking but just plain wrong, along with his many lasting contributions. Euler hardly ever published the last word on anything. At the end of one of his articles one feels that he has simply chosen a convenient place to stop and that soon either he or someone else will have something further to say and Euler, confident of his standing and eager to know the truth, does not much care whether it is he or someone else who does take the next step."

Our third issue coincided with the International Congress of Mathematicians in Helsinki in the Summer of 1978. Much of the material for the fourth and final issue of 1978 had already been lined up, but it was agreed between us and Klaus Peters in Helsinki that, although we would remain as the editors of that fourth issue, we would end our active involvement, and Roberto Minio would take our place. The reasons for this unexpected turn of events were complex and not altogether clear to us, either then or now, but we look back on it without regret.

A change in command at Springer resulted in interruption at the *Intelli-*

*gencer*—the following three years saw only two years' worth of issues—and it was not until John Ewing took over as Editor in the Fall of 1982 that the *Intelligencer* resumed regular publication. We continued to be listed as "Founding Editors" through the end of Volume 4.

Our thanks to Chandler Davis and Marjorie Senechal for remembering our role at the *Intelligencer* and for inviting us to provide this look back on the beginnings 30 years ago. And our best wishes to them for the fourth decade of the magazine!

### **John Ewing, Editor, 1979–1986**

Writing a book is a creative act, like painting or sculpting; it may take years to finish, but the work of art comes to life all at once, to be measured and admired (or critiqued) by the world soon after its completion. Editing a journal or a magazine is more like raising a child. A journal is conceived; it develops slowly over time, passing through phases, and it matures into something that often captures the spirit of the original concept, but with its own personality. Books are created; journals grow up.

The *Intelligencer* was conceived by Klaus and Alice Peters and Walter Kaufmann-Bühler, and the first eleven numbered pamphlets (not easily found these days) represented its infancy. Chandler and Edwards set the rules for the *Intelligencer's* early childhood when they packed into the first volume surveys, history, opinion, and whimsy, all mixed together in a slightly disjointed format that reminded the reader of the magazine's roots as a typewritten pamphlet. Although they parented for only a single volume, their influence was felt far beyond.

And then came adolescence. I began as an editor of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* in 1980, just as it headed into its teenage years—lazy in some ways, rebellious in others, and often unappealing. It was lazy because it was unstructured; the commitment to the concept of the *Intelligencer* had not been matched by a commitment to editorial structure or production support. It was rebellious because it lacked a clear understanding of who had authority; Springer's in-house editor seemed to make all final decisions, when they were made at all. And it was unappealing to many potential authors be-

cause it offered little assurance of certain readership and absolutely no assurance of prestige.

I was new to editing and made many mistakes. When material was unsuitable, I wrote long letters explaining the reasons, to which authors replied with even longer letters explaining why I was wrong. I soon learned to be polite and concise ("Thanks for thinking of the *Intelligencer*, but your article isn't suitable."). I frequently confused the job of editing (making decisions) with the job of copyediting (rewriting), and spent vast amounts of time working on each and every article. Some authors were appreciative; others were offended; and some huffed away to find a journal that didn't confuse the tasks of editing and authoring. And I made some bad decisions . . . as well as enemies.

To a large extent, both the bad decisions and the enemies arose from desperation. The *Intelligencer* had been darling as an infant, but it quickly lost its charm. The nuggets of ready-made material, new and old, were gone. The amateurish format, which was quaint in the first few issues, soon became off-putting to readers. The lack of editorial and production support caused many typographical errors. Few manuscripts flowed in for consideration (in fact, *none* did!). As a consequence, I sent out hundreds of letters to mathematicians around the world: Such and such would make a terrific *Intelligencer* article; people have expressed a real interest in this topic; wouldn't you like to express your opinion about this? Most produced nothing; some eventually brought a response and occasionally an article as well.

Alas, solicited articles can be both wonderful and dreadful. When they are great, they provide not only good material for the journal, but satisfaction for the editor who initiated the process. When they are not so great, however, they provide a dilemma that often ends badly. Can they be fixed? Sometimes, but the author is frequently annoyed at the extra work an editor demands. And once the fixing process is started, it's hard to reject the article, once the author has done not one but several "favors" for the editor. But immediately rejecting a solicited article is hard as well, and there often are no good options for dealing with a poorly written solicited article. In those days, virtually *every* ar-

ticle was solicited. Some were brilliant when they arrived; some required lots of extra work; some remained dreadful and were published nonetheless; and some were rejected—not an easy task for any editor.

Articles were only part of the *Intelligencer's* personality, however, and in many ways they were less important than all the other material—opinion, photos, quotes, cartoons, contests, news items, book reviews, and odd bits of historic documents. To a great extent, the impetus for shaping the *Intelligencer's* personality in this way—for giving it a quirky personality that would persist for the rest of its life—came from Walter Kaufmann-Bühler.

By the *Intelligencer's* teenage years, the Peterses had left Springer-Verlag, and only Walter remained. He had delegated control of the *Intelligencer* to others, but he watched over it like an indulgent parent, forgiving the *faux pas* and providing a steady supply of encouragement and advice.

It was Walter who brought the *Intelligencer* to adulthood. He wrote to me regularly with ideas:

Attached is a short summary paper by P.D.T.A. Elliott, which might, with some but not extraordinarily much effort, be expanded into a paper for the *Intelligencer*.

I just saw the attached diagram in the proofs of N. Koblitz's forthcoming new book. This might make a nice paper filler for the MI.

MacLane might be somebody to ask for a paper on the question of whether there are good and bad areas (deserving and undeserving) of mathematics. He has been interested in these things: an article by him could be quite entertaining and sharp.

There were dozens of such letters every year, filled with ideas for articles and fillers. But Walter's letters were also filled with wit and a wry sense of humor that made our correspondence a pleasure:

Your *Intelligencer* bill (office and incidental expenses) is reasonable, even though any non-negative number is too large.

Many thanks for your letter of June 15 and Truesdell's review [from the

*Monthly*, for which I was then Book Review Editor]. We do get copies of the *Monthly*, actually more than we would like, but they come so often that it is important that we throw them away quickly to make sure that we won't be buried.

There is trouble ahead. I have heard from a third party (strictly speaking, Serge Lang) that \_\_\_\_\_ is preparing an article which he wants to submit to the *MI*, pointing out how bad \_\_\_\_\_'s article was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are enemies: Springer is on \_\_\_\_\_'s side.

Walter had a fine intellect and an encyclopedic knowledge of mathematics and mathematicians. He always protested that he was *not* a mathematician, but I've known few people over the decades who were more mathematician than he. Walter died at age 42 in 1986 from an asthma attack.

By the middle of 1982, it became clear that the informal editorial and production support was not working. Volume 4 was falling further and further behind, and subscribers had not received issues for which they had paid more than two years before. After some tough discussion, we decided to make changes: I became the Editor-in-Chief and a Springer staff person was put in charge of production. The first issue of Volume 5 began with a brief piece by me with the title "Not-an-Editorial."

Beginning with Issue 5.1 the *Intelligencer* changes (once again) both in format and in editorial organization. At one time, I thought of writing a lengthy editorial detailing these changes and outlining future plans. I will spare you; such editorials are interesting often to editors, sometimes to publishers, and seldom to readers.

Good or bad, the changes will speak for themselves. Making promises for the future will not convince you that the *Intelligencer* is better now; we hope you agree in the future that it is a better, more reliable journal.

The purpose of the *Intelligencer* remains the same: to inform, to entertain, and to provoke. It is our deep conviction that mathematicians are intellectually curious about mathematics as a whole, and that

satisfying this curiosity is a worthwhile endeavor.

The new *Intelligencer* had more structure: 50 and 100 Years Ago (edited by Jeremy Gray), regular Editorials (by Ian Stewart or me), Book Reviews (Gary Cornell and Ian Stewart), the Problem Corner (Murray Klamkin), the Stamp Corner (Robin Wilson), the Evidence (Stan Wagon), and the quirky "old *Intelligencer*," which often contained strange old material, and sometimes contained even stranger new things (see "Odd to Obscurity" by M. Gemignani in 5.2). The magazine appeared regularly, four times a year, almost on schedule. Each issue had the same format, which now looked as if someone had designed it (somebody did), and each issue had a cover that tied to something inside. The *Intelligencer* had grown up.

The covers of Volume 5 were atrocious in one respect. In an effort to make the new style different from the old, the shade of yellow was changed—to a bilious mustard color that everyone hated from the first issue. In one last act of teenage rebellion, the *Intelligencer* adopted a different color for each subsequent issue, carefully previewed in advance so as not to repeat the mistake of Volume 5.

I stayed on through Volume 8 in 1986. My final editorial (with the title "A Final Editorial") reflected on my experience as Editor over the previous seven years. It began by recalling Hardy's introduction to *A Mathematician's Apology*, in which he wrote that "exposition, criticism, and appreciation" was work for "second-rate minds." I replied:

Hardy was wrong. Was Poincaré a second-rate mind? Weyl? Artin? They all devoted time to writing about mathematics, to explaining mathematics both to other mathematicians and to the outside world. Many others have done the same. Should all these people have spent their time proving theorems instead? We might as well suggest that musicians should spend all their time writing music rather than performing it. Is there something suspicious about mathematicians who want to know more about their mathematical culture and heritage? If so, then we ought to be equally suspicious of

musicians who want to listen to music and study it. A painter may despise art-critics, as Hardy says, but a painting that is never viewed is also never admired.

Over the ensuing years, *The Mathematical Intelligencer* moved on and indeed was admired. It has matured into a magazine that is known to mathematicians around the world for its sparkling, informative, and sometimes quirky articles and commentary, and it is a magazine that sits on coffee tables in mathematics departments everywhere.

Living with the *Intelligencer* while it was growing up was a pleasure, and it shaped my professional career from that point forward. Hardy also wrote in *A Mathematician's Apology* that he thought writing about mathematics rather than doing it was a melancholy experience. I suppose he would judge editing such work to be even sadder.

But I never did, and I still don't.

### Sheldon Axler, Editor, 1987–1991

#### Changes

*The Mathematical Intelligencer* was already a terrific publication when I became Editor-in-Chief, inheriting that position from John Ewing for issues starting in 1987 and continuing for five years. Although I had loved reading *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, I could not resist tinkering. Five noticeable changes occurred during my first year:

- The Opinion column replaced the Editorial column. The Editorial column had been written by either the Editor-in-Chief or one of the other editors, while the Opinion column was potentially open to anyone who wanted to present a strong view on a topic of interest to mathematicians. Disagreements and controversy were welcomed.
- Mathematical Entertainments replaced the Problem Corner, with Steve Weintraub as the new column editor. The name change here suggested that this column would contain more than just problems. For example, one issue included a mathematical acrostic. As another example, this column ran a contest to name the five most influential mathematicians of the period 1800–1914, with the winner (who received a free

Springer book) decided by the entry that most agreed with the total vote from all entries. According to the votes received, the five most influential mathematicians from 1800 to 1914 were Cauchy, Gauss, Hilbert, Poincaré, and Riemann.

- 50 and 100 Years Ago was renamed Years Ago, with Allen Shields as the new column editor. The name change allowed for more flexibility in focusing on important developments in mathematics from the past, without a restriction to two particular years.
- The Book Reviews section was renamed Reviews, with Chandler Davis as the new column editor. This name change was intended to encourage reviews of more than just books (software, movies, plays, etc.).
- The Mathematical Tourist was a new column, edited by Ian Stewart, highlighting sights for traveling mathematicians. Here is the description of the kind of material that this column sought:

The catapult that Archimedes built, the field where Galois fought his duel, the bridge where Hamilton carved quaternions—not all of these monuments to mathematical history survive today, but the mathematician on vacation can still find many reminders of our subject's glorious and inglorious past: statues, plaques, graves, the café where the famous conjecture was made, the desk where the famous initials are scratched, birthplaces, houses, memorials.

In 1988 Springer hired Madeline Kraner to improve the design and production of their magazines. With Madeline's help, *The Mathematical Intelligencer* became even more visually appealing. The journal soon began winning recognition for best all around scholarly publication, production quality, and design, including a highest achievement award from the American Association of Publishers and best-in-category awards for the covers.

#### Having fun

The spirit of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* is to have fun, to be irreverent, and to publish items of interest to mathematicians that would not appear in a traditional research journal. Here are a few of the nonstandard items that I en-

joyed publishing during my time as Editor-in-Chief:

- The Personal Column was aimed at lovelorn mathematicians, with entries such as the following:  
30, 6'2", Lebesgue look-alike seeks attractive, affectionate, 24–34, non-smoker analyst for causal integration. Measurements not important.

Shy combinatorialist, 37, just coming out GWM, seeks same. I'm tired of going through life not knowing whether I'm included-excluded. Let's get together for coffee and see if we're a complete match. Naturally, I'm discrete.

- The Cartoon Contest sought and published original cartoons related to mathematics or mathematicians.
- The Poetry Contest sought and published original poetry related to mathematics or mathematicians.
- The readers' vote on which theorem is most beautiful out of 24 theorems on the ballot led to the following results:
  1.  $e^{i\pi} = -1$
  2. Euler's theorem for a polyhedron:  
 $V + F = E + 2$
  3. There are exactly five regular polyhedra.
  4.  $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (1/n^2) = \pi^2/6$
- Several pieces of mathematical fiction showed that mathematicians can write more than theorems and proofs.
- The Summer 1989 issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* contained an article by Carolyn Gordon entitled "When You Can't Hear the Shape of a Manifold." So that readers could hear the results, Dennis DeTurck had produced music that depended upon the shape of a manifold. Each copy of that issue contained a plastic record (the kind that one plays on a phonograph) with the manifold music. Today one would put these sounds on a web site and provide a link in the article, but at the time this was a unique addendum to a mathematics article.

#### Covers

The cover of each issue, like the cover of a book, should not matter much, but it seemed to make a huge psychological difference in the way people perceived each issue. Thus I paid attention



to what went on the cover. Before each issue, I would send to the Springer office in New York one or two pieces of artwork that might make good covers. These choices depended upon finding visually interesting artwork or graphics that accompanied an important article. The talented Springer staff would then usually send me back two potential layouts for the cover, and I would choose one of them.

Usually the covers were printed in shades of two colors. However, when I had a compelling graphic that needed full color on the cover, Springer was willing to spend the extra money. Two articles while I was Editor-in-Chief absolutely needed full color inside, which at the time was considerably more expensive than full color on the cover, and both times Springer generously agreed. One of those two articles was David Hoffman's "The Computer-Aided Discovery of New Embedded Minimal Surfaces," which later won the Chauvenet Prize of the Mathematical Association of America.

Only once did I reject the suggested Springer cover layouts. For the Summer 1990 issue, we were publishing a fascinating interview with Hoàng Tụy, Director of the Hanoi Mathematical Institute. Professor Tụy is the author of what is probably the first mathematics book published by a guerrilla movement. This book, a geometry textbook, was published by the Viet Minh resistance press in 1949 during the Vietnamese struggle against French occupation. I had a copy of one page from that book, and I thought that it would make a splendid cover. But the Springer staff in New York said that the copy was not of sufficiently high quality to reproduce well, and they sent me two other potential cover designs using other artwork that accompanied the interview.

However, I badly wanted to put on the cover that page from the first mathematics book published by a guerrilla movement, because I thought that it was a dramatic part of the story. So I asked the Springer staff to try again. They came up with an outstanding design, making one of the best covers during my time as Editor-in-Chief. The main part of the cover shows three Vietnamese schoolgirls, smiling in front of a computer that they are using. The page from Professor Tụy's 1949 geom-

etry textbook appears in the lower right corner at about 20% of its actual size, but quite legible and making a beautiful juxtaposition with the photo.

### Controversies

Controversies can make for interesting reading, especially in mathematics where we rarely argue about the scientific validity of a result. I was happy to air controversy within the pages of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*: exciting controversies helped keep the publication edgy. Because *The Mathematical Intelligencer* is published only every three months, I often had time to send a controversial article to someone with an opposing viewpoint and publish a response in the same issue. Sometimes I was able to bounce things back and forth several times. The record for this within one issue was the Summer 1987 issue, which included a back-and-forth on constructive mathematics. The last item in the string of rejoinders was subtitled "Ian Stewart rebuts Fred Richman's reply to Ian Stewart's response to Fred Richman's reply to Ian Stewart's review." Three of the controversies, discussed below, were not so whimsical.

### Controversy One

In 1986 and 1987 Serge Lang had conducted successful and highly publicized campaigns within the National Academy of Sciences to reject the membership nomination of Samuel Huntington, a social scientist. Lang felt that Huntington had misused mathematics in his scholarly work, presenting pseudo-mathematics more for mystification than for explanation. I thought that this dispute would make an interesting article for *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, so I asked Lang to write something about the Huntington affair.

Lang told me that he had already written everything he wanted to say on the subject, but he suggested that I ask Neal Koblitz to write an article. Koblitz's earlier article, "Mathematics as Propaganda" (published in *Mathematics Tomorrow*) had in fact first alerted Lang to Huntington's use or misuse of mathematics.

Thus I asked Koblitz, who produced a fascinating article titled "A Tale of Three Equations; or The Emperors Have No Clothes." Naturally I sent a copy (prepublication) of Koblitz's arti-

cle to Huntington and told him that I would be happy to publish a response from him. Huntington replied that he would not write a response but that Herbert Simon, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics, would be willing to respond to Koblitz. So I wrote to Simon, who indeed wrote a defense of Huntington in an article titled "Unclad Emperors: A Case of Mistaken Identity." Koblitz's article and Simon's response, along with a brief reply from Koblitz to Simon's response, were all published in the Winter 1988 *Mathematical Intelligencer*.

The next issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* included further back-and-forth between Simon and Koblitz, this time starting and ending with Simon. All of this generated a lot of mail—in the next three issues I published a total of twelve letters to the editor on this nasty dispute. I saw no need at the time to weigh in with an editorial comment of my own, but I can say now that it was absolutely clear to me that Koblitz and Lang were completely correct in their analysis of Huntington's work.

This controversy had a sad aftermath. After the articles and responses had been published, Lang changed his mind and told me that he wanted to submit an article about the Huntington affair. I had already offered him the opportunity to do so, before I had approached Koblitz, but Lang had declined then. I told Lang that to be accepted, his article would need to contain new material not contained in Koblitz's excellent account.

When Lang did submit an article, it contained nothing new that was relevant. Unfortunately I could not use the limited space in *The Mathematical Intelligencer* for repetition. I tried gently telling Lang that we could not publish his article, but he became furious with me. This was painful because I had known and liked Lang since my senior year as an undergraduate, when Lang spent some time at Princeton. I had wanted to study for my senior comprehensive exam from Lang's *Algebra*, but I could not find a copy. Lang graciously gave me a copy of *Algebra*, with the provision that I would then go to a bookstore and buy a copy of his *Real Analysis* book (which I did, thus getting two good books for the price of one).

Lang refused to speak with me for a few years after I rejected his article, but gradually his anger dissipated and we were again able to have pleasant conversations.

### Controversy Two

In 1988 Steven Krantz submitted a review of *The Science of Fractal Images* (edited by Heinz-Otto Peitgen and Dietmar Saupe) and *The Beauty of Fractals* (by Heinz-Otto Peitgen and Peter Richter) to the *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*. Krantz's review was accepted for publication in the *Bulletin*, and he circulated preprints of it.

Benoit Mandelbrot took exception to Krantz's review in preprint form and wrote a rebuttal. Krantz was willing to have Mandelbrot's rebuttal published in the *Bulletin* along with his review, but the editorial policy of the *Bulletin* does not allow responses to reviews. The *Bulletin* then took the unusual step of retracting its acceptance of Krantz's review.

*The Mathematical Intelligencer*, which welcomes controversy and encourages rebuttals, was happy to publish both Krantz's review and Mandelbrot's response in the Fall 1989 issue. As I had expected, this controversy generated a fair amount of mail. I published letters to the editor about the Krantz/Mandelbrot dispute in the next four issues.

### Controversy Three

The Spring 1989 issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* contained an interview with the Soviet mathematician Igor Shafarevich, conducted by Smilka Zdravkovska, who was an Associate Editor at *Mathematical Reviews* and who had been an undergraduate at Moscow State University. Shafarevich had been elected as a Foreign Associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences for his outstanding work in number theory, algebra, and algebraic geometry.

As part of this interview, Zdravkovska asked Shafarevich about his long essay *Russophobia*, adding as part of her question about this essay that "some consider it unfair, and even accuse you of anti-Semitism." I believe that this question and its response by Shafarevich was the first time that *Russophobia* was brought to the attention of mathematicians in the English language.

Soon after the interview with Shafarevich was published, Lawrence Shepp and Eugene Veklerov submitted an article to *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, detailing what they considered to be errors and anti-Semitism in *Russophobia*. I read *Russophobia* and found it to be badly done history containing a huge dose of anti-Semitism. However, unlike Huntington's writings that had led to controversy a year earlier in the pages of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, *Russophobia* contained no pseudomathematics. There was nothing remotely mathematical in the pages of *Russophobia*; the author did not use mathematics to buttress his arguments. In fact, there is no way to tell from reading *Russophobia* that the author knows any mathematics.

In other words, *Russophobia* is a political document discussing history, with no connection to mathematics except that the author is a mathematician (which was not stated anywhere on my copy). *Russophobia* comes to what seemed to be absurd conclusions, but I did not think that an article dissecting a purely nonmathematical political/historical document was appropriate for publication in *The Mathematical Intelligencer*—too many good articles with some connection to mathematics had to be turned down because of lack of space.

Thus I rejected the article by Shepp and Veklerov, although I agreed to publish a critical letter to the editor from them about Shafarevich and *Russophobia*. That letter appeared in the Summer 1990 issue.

Then Shafarevich submitted to *The Mathematical Intelligencer* an expository article titled "Abelian and Nonabelian Mathematics." This was the kind of article appropriate for *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, and experts told me that the content was very good. The content was purely mathematical, with no political aspects and no political/historical comments. One prominent mathematician advised me not to publish the article because of Shafarevich's anti-Semitism, warning that there would be repercussions if Shafarevich's article appeared in *The Mathematical Intelligencer*.

I did not like Shafarevich's political views, and I found *Russophobia* to be highly offensive. But no one had ever asked me about my political views

when I submitted a mathematics paper for publication, and I was not about to start subjecting authors of papers submitted to *The Mathematical Intelligencer* to political screening. Thus I accepted Shafarevich's article for publication. It appeared in the Winter 1991 issue, and I got ready to hear the criticism. I was pleasantly surprised when no complaints arrived.

### Tragedies

Two tragic deaths marred my term as Editor-in-Chief:

- Walter Kaufmann-Bühler was Mathematics Editor at Springer New York. He was one of the founders of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, which could not have survived and flourished without Walter's support. Walter had appointed me as Editor-in-Chief. Shortly before my first issue came out, Walter died suddenly of heart failure caused by a severe asthma attack. Mathematics had lost a good friend who cared far more about scholarly quality than the bottom line. The Fall 1987 issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* was dedicated to Walter, with several articles of reminiscence from Walter's colleagues and friends.
- Allen Shields, who wrote the Years Ago column during my first three years as Editor-in-Chief, died of cancer in September 1989. Allen's columns sparkled with insight and demonstrated his unusual knowledge of history as well as mathematics. He and I were good friends and mathematical collaborators—we wrote six research papers together. The Spring 1990 issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* was dedicated to Allen, with several articles of reminiscence from Allen's colleagues and friends.

### Soliciting and refereeing articles

During my time as Editor-in-Chief, about half the articles published in *The Mathematical Intelligencer* originated because I asked the author to write an article, with the other half arriving unsolicited. The rejection rate among unsolicited articles was high because of space limitations and the large number of articles submitted. I quickly rejected over half the unsolicited articles without sending them to referees; these articles were simply not appropriate for

*The Mathematical Intelligencer*, and I saw no reason to waste referees' time. My most unpleasant duty as Editor-in-Chief was having to send rejection letters to many people who wanted to contribute. The rejection rate among solicited articles was low, partly because I was careful whom I asked to write the articles and partly because it's tricky to twist someone's arm to write an article and then reject it. In the rare case where a solicited article turned out poorly, I usually asked for extensive revisions, and then more extensive revisions if the second version still was not good, and so on, until either a good article was produced or the author gave up in frustration at all the requested revisions.

My agreement with Springer was that I and the column editors that I appointed would have complete control of the contents of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, except for advertisements. Springer scrupulously adhered to this agreement, never pressuring me to stifle a controversy or suppress a review that might adversely affect Springer's interests as a commercial publisher of mathematics. I'm truly grateful to Springer for the creative opportunity it gave me as Editor-in-Chief. Editing *The Mathematical Intelligencer* was lots of fun!

### **Chander Davis, Editor 1991–2004, Coeditor 2005–**

When the possibility was floated that I might become Editor-in-Chief of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*, I was already in pretty deep. In addition to the material I was generating as column editor and occasional contributor, I was reading every issue in its entirety and hashing it over—delightedly but frankly—with the Editor, my old friend Sheldon Axler. I hope I wasn't such a burden as to speed Sheldon's decision to leave his position! But leave it he did, and he recommended me to succeed him.

So I leapt at the opportunity, right? Well, yes, I spoke up for it eagerly—but after considerable hesitation. Other editing jobs I had taken on with no fuss—even, years ago, the enormously challenging one at *Mathematical Reviews*. The difference I felt about *The Intelligencer* was that the duties are largely the editor's to invent. In an ordinary mathematical editing position, one knows what the community ex-

pects. The task is still many-faceted, and I wouldn't slight the creativity required. The difference at *The Intelligencer* is that one doesn't only follow the flight plan: one writes it.

The creativity needed was what made the enterprise exciting, but it was a little scary, and it still is. Most of my jobs, teaching as well as editing, have been living up to the expectations of those in austere, ivy-covered institutions. Here we are with no ivy-covered walls. We pull up our soap-box and say our piece.

Does anyone other than me still remember Henry Morgan's radio show in the USA? He sassed establishments with such glee, in the spirit of the soap-box orator—yet there he was, on national radio! And here we are, in glossy magazine format!

So I began my editorship with a concrete and lofty image of the position, but with no great certainty that I could live up to it. I had a head start, with a tradition already there and with a continuing editorial team: Ian Stewart, David Gale, and the rest—and Bob Burckel, ever-vigilant, checking every manuscript. Best of all, the tradition, the team, and the readers were international and diverse.

Naturally enough, I also inherited an unresolved debate or two. The Shafarevich controversy was still bubbling when I took over. Smilka Zdravkovska had interviewed I. R. Shafarevich just as he was turning toward activity in a political movement that was disturbing to many of his colleagues. She learned of his privately circulated *Russophobia* and with great diplomacy secured his permission to insert a question or two about it into the published interview. I agreed with Sheldon that it was not incumbent on *The Intelligencer* to demonize Professor Shafarevich, or to sanitize him; we cast about for ways to display the contradictions. Readers came to our rescue with passionate, diverse opinions. I published letters pro and con from different lands; but I had to call "time's up": I couldn't let Russian politics crowd mathematics out of our pages. I'm still proud of the clincher I found: a sorrowful tribute by Boris Moishezon to his revered teacher Shafarevich, in an obscure Russian emigré paper, from which I translated a long excerpt (see our vol. 14, no. 1, 61–62).

The tribute recognizes the evil, and it remains fair to everyone involved. The tragic complexity of life is in view.

I recall another controversy that elicited more earnest letters than I could justifiably print. I had accepted an article from a Texas numerical analyst expounding the "Intelligent Design" (ID) position: that the organisms we observe could not have arisen by random modifications with natural selection, but must be the intentional product of a guiding intelligence. A hornet's nest of outraged *Intelligencer* readers swarmed to rebut. I busily edited the letters to reduce duplication and to keep the total length of the debate within reason; this involved many friendly e-mail and telephone exchanges with readers. After a couple of issues, the proponent of ID was given the last word. Some of my correspondents thought I ought to have rejected his article in the first place (as I might have done—not for being too outrageous but for having too little relationship with mathematics). One friend and mentor, a leading applied mathematician, put it this way privately: "I'm sorry you were taken in." I replied, "I wasn't taken in. I thought we'd have a good debate, and we did." The arguments were incisive, and some not at all familiar. I especially relished Alexander Shen's (see vol. 23, no. 4, 3). But in hindsight, some things were disappointing. It would have been much better drama if at least one of the responses I received had supported ID. None did. And some of my own views on evolution happened not to be expressed by any of the letter-writers, nor did I presume to interject them—leaving me feeling somehow let down.

More important, *The Intelligencer* has been a forum for exploring the uncertainties we feel about the nature of mathematics, and society's input to mathematics. How can it be that our subject, a plainly social enterprise, consists so largely of apparently certain statements, seemingly invariant under any change in society? Some mathematicians see no puzzle here—but we need to draw them into the dialogue, too, because some of them are conspicuously offended by it, and we wish to understand and learn from the sources of their hostility. Remember the strong feelings let loose by the "Sokal hoax," or the contempt some mathe-

maticians display for the history of mathematics—especially social history. This is just the sort of disputation *The Intelligencer* likes to host.

We've had such debate, yet I feel we might have had more! Look around. The bases of mathematics are in turmoil: the challenge of intuitionism has not really been met; the challenge of experimental mathematics is crowding on its heels; and most mathematicians are now willing in principle to incorporate physical truth within mathematical truth, but don't see how. We would like the different views to confront each other in *The Intelligencer's* pages, and now and then we achieve this confrontation, as with Doron Zeilberger's provocative piece (vol. 16, no. 4, 11–14) and Martin Gardner's (vol. 23, no. 1, 7–8). Both drew sharp ripostes, as did the symposium set up by Marjorie Senechal in the Communities column, vols. 22–23, on social construction of mathematics. Surely there is much more you have to say, and we look forward to hearing it.

When you feel your colleague's viewpoint is preposterous, whether or not you are the type to say so in conversation, you may say, "You must be kidding," in this magazine; please do—that very phrase was used in at least one of the debates I've mentioned.

A major purpose of *The Intelligencer* from the outset has been to talk mathematics to each other, *without* controversy, in a discourse uniting all of us across national borders and transcending divisions into fields. Here's how I put it years ago in an editor's note "Our Own Babel" (vol. 19, no. 2, 4):

There is a famous joke about a boy in a cultivated Central European

family. His mother spoke to him in French, his father in German, and his nursemaid in Hungarian. The child understood them all, but didn't say a word himself until he was four: he thought he was supposed to have his own language. Alas, the joke is true of us. Each of us is entitled to make up a new private language and start speaking it.

Is there salvation for us? Well, maybe there is. Let's see. We should really try, here and there, to create an island of comprehension in the middle of the din—a privileged space where mathematicians speak to each other and are understood. It is the highest aim of my editorship that one such island shall be—shall continue to be—*The Mathematical Intelligencer*.

Or, as I often exhort authors, here we must try to do what a good colloquium talk is supposed to do: make sense to everyone in the audience. Visuals help. Informality, descending at times to silliness, helps. Expressing everything in English doesn't help, really; sorry about that. I'm consoled by seeing other magazines occasionally translate our articles into other languages (in the last few years, often including Chinese), but I doubt that the silliness translates well. I have a private game of sometimes sneaking an untranslated bit of another language into our pages: retaining English as the *lingua franca* yet acknowledging that other *linguae* stand on their own on a par with English.

So I took a crack at this daunting editorship in 1991, and, as my predeces-

sors had found, it was wonderful fun. If I have kept careening along this ill-marked highway so unduly long, it's not just because there was fun. It's certainly not because I think I've lived up to the aspirations I saw and undertook. Rather the reverse: my awareness of how much we ought to have achieved makes me thirst to have another go. Sharing responsibility with Coeditor Marjorie Senechal—we've been in this together since 2005—adds to the fun, enlarges the vision, and increases my optimism that the vision can be achieved. Wait till next year!

### **Chandler Davis and Marjorie Senechal**

Thank you, Alice and Klaus, Bruce and Ed, John, and Sheldon! We're glad you look back with such pleasure on your years of editing this remarkable magazine, despite all the hassles, controversies, scrambles, and scrapes. It's still a pleasure in 2007.

In 1971, when the first accordion issue unfolded from Alice Peters's typewriter, the mathematical community was small enough to send postcards to, yet large enough to need an *Intelligencer*. In the years since then, the mathematical community has burgeoned and diversified, like mathematics itself. What is the role of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* in an e-mail age, in an ever-growing community, in an ever-growing mathematical landscape? Should the *Intelligencer* go online, or remain in the reading room? Can we, should we, reach a wider public?

These are questions for you, its readers. We welcome your responses, now more than ever.

**Bios of the Editors—Past and Present  
follow on the opposite page.**