Mathematics Today
Twelve Informal Essays

Mathematics Today Twelve Informal Essays

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Preface

The objective of the present book of essays is to convey to the intelligent nonmathematician something of the nature, development, and use of mathematical concepts, particularly those that have found application in current scientific research. The idea of assembling such a volume goes back at least to 1974, when it was discussed by the then-newly-formed Joint Projects Committee for Mathematics (JPCM) of the American Mathematical Society, the Mathematical Association of America, and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics. Currently, the nine members of the JPCM are Saunders Mac Lane (Chairman) of the University of Chicago, Frederick J. Almgren, Jr. of Princeton University, Richard D. Anderson of Louisiana State University, George E. Carrier of Harvard University, Hirsh G. Cohen of the International Business Machines Corporation, Richard C. DiPrima of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Robion C. Kirby of the University of California at Berkeley, William H. Kruskal of the University of Chicago, and George D. Mostow of Yale University.

The JPCM decided to make production of this volume its first major project and requested the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences (CBMS), of which its three sponsoring societies are all member organizations, to approach the National Science Foundation on its behalf for support of the undertaking. A proposal submitted by the CBMS in December 1974 and in revised form in July 1975 was granted by the Foundation in May 1976, and work on assembling the volume got under way. Direction of the project has been carried out by a five-member Steering Committee formed for this purpose by the JPCM. The Steering Committee has consisted of Paul R. Halmos of the University of California at Santa Barbara, Allen L. Hammond of *Science* magazine, Jack C. Kiefer of Cornell University, Harry Schwartz of the New York Times, and Jacob T. Schwartz of New

York University (Chairman). Throughout the course of operations, Lynn A. Steen of St. Olaf College has served as Editor and coordinator, while CBMS headquarters has provided administrative management.

The Steering Committee would like to acknowledge the contributions of all those who have been involved in this essay project. First of all, it is to the individual essay authors that prime credit will be due for whatever success the volume achieves. All who served on the JPCM while the project was in progress deserve thanks for their helpful advice and support. Lynn Steen's able and energetic work throughout as Editor and coordinator was invaluable, as was the role of the CBMS in securing the grant for the project and managing operations under it. The publisher, Springer-Verlag, specifically its production and editorial staff, has cooperated in admirable fashion in the production of the volume. Finally, for itself and on behalf of the JPCM and the CBMS, the Steering Committee would like to express deep appreciation to the National Science Foundation and its Office of Public Understanding of Science for support of this project.

August, 1978

Jacob T. Schwartz
Chairman, Steering Committee

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