EDITORIAL

A 20th Anniversary Message from the International Commission on the History of Mathematics

JOSEPH W. DAUBEN

Department of History, Herbert H. Lehman College, The City University of New York,
Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, New York 10468

The year 1993 represents an important landmark for the International Commission on the History of Mathematics, and for its journal, Historia Mathematica, which celebrates with this issue the appearance of its 20th volume. When the very first number of the journal made its appearance, Ken May wrote of his aspirations and hopes for what was then an uncertain undertaking:

There are about $10^3$ scholars throughout the world teaching or doing research in the history of mathematics. They are the heirs of a long tradition which goes back beyond Eudemus, who flourished in the 4th century B.C., and includes among its practitioners many of the great mathematicians. By the late 19th century, it had a substantial literature and place in mathematical bibliography. . . .

But after World War I, with the new growth of general history of science and the founding of broad journals such as Isis, the historians of mathematics seem to have become less visible. The literature was more than ever scattered in the journals of mathematics, education, popularization, and the general history of science. In the sixties the continuing tradition, which had been kept alive by a number of distinguished workers, enjoyed a revival whose most notable feature was a rapid increase of interest in the mathematics community. At the same time, history of science had developed sufficiently in size and maturity to support specialized journals.

At the Twelfth International Congress on the History of Science at Paris in 1968, René Taton and A. P. Yushkevich suggested the formation of a sub-commission on the history of mathematics to consider the founding of a specialized journal. The Commission was formed the following year and initiated discussion by correspondence. It met for the first time at the International Congress of Mathematics in Nice in 1970. At the Thirteenth International Congress on the History of Science in Moscow in 1971, it was made permanent, an executive committee was appointed, and definite plans for the journal were formulated. The following three years were devoted to establishing communications, publishing a world directory, and preparing for the birth of the new journal. . . .

With the first issue of HISTORIA MATHEMATICA, the Commission, its executive committee, the editors, collaborators, and many other colleagues have reached a milestone in the development of history of mathematics as a scholarly discipline. . . .

I hope that the journal will prove sufficiently useful to assure its continued existence and high quality. This, of course, depends on the continued participation of colleagues throughout the world, their ability to provide a flow of papers and other contributions, their success in obtaining subscribers, and the willingness of a few to take over the work that has inevitably been centralized in the beginning but must not remain so if HISTORIA MATHEMATICA is to be truly the international journal of our profession [1].
Initially, the journal had about 700 paid subscribers from 39 countries, most of whom were English-speaking. Since then, library and institutional subscriptions have increased considerably, and the international diversity of individual subscribers has also broadened. The major difference today, however, is in the amount and quality of material available to the journal. As the first issue of Historia Mathematica went to press, May worried that "we have several excellent manuscripts being prepared for printing and others being refereed, but there is no backlog. We need a steady flow of manuscripts."

He need not have worried, for Historia Mathematica has built steadily on the interest and reputation of its early issues. In fact, on several occasions, the number of articles accepted for publication has reached the point where Academic Press, its publisher, has agreed to issue a separate volume to accommodate quality work exceeding the space limitations of the journal's regular issues. Another such special volume is now in preparation, edited by Eberhard Knobloch and David Rowe. It will include nine articles and appear as Volume 3 of The History of Modern Mathematics (Academic Press).

Clearly, Historia Mathematica has more than succeeded in living up to the high hopes and professional standards Ken May set for it more than 20 years ago. To mark the appearance this year of Volume 20, the International Commission on History of Mathematics will celebrate with a special evening's party for historians of mathematics attending the next, XIXth International Congress of History of Science, to be held in Zaragoza, Spain, August 22–29, 1993.

Professor Mariano Hormigón, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, and Professor Jean Dhombres, Chairman of the Programme Committee, have been working diligently to ensure that the Congress as a whole will be a challenging one, with many special symposia, lectures, and other events to provide a productive and memorable Congress. Many of the symposia, in fact, will be devoted to a wide variety of topics on history of mathematics. One of these in particular will be a special Symposium on "The History of History of Mathematics," dedicated to the memory of Kenneth O. May, and commemorating the 20th anniversary of Historia Mathematica. Among nearly 20 symposia related to history of mathematics for the Congress, the Commission has undertaken to sponsor five under its own auspices:

"Arts and Mathematics" (organized by Kirsti Andersen and Eberhard Knobloch)
"Islamic Mathematics: Theory and Practice" (organized by A. Djebbar and Jan Hogendijk)
"Logics and the Foundations of Mathematics, 1885–1905" (organized by Ivor Grattan-Guinness and Francisco Rodriguez-Consuegra)
"Mathematics in Asia" (organized by Karine Chemla, Liu Dun, and Chikara Sasaki)
"National Schools in the 19th and 20th Centuries" (organized by Sergei Demidov and Mariano Hormigón)

For further information about the XIXth International Congress of History of Science, readers may request a copy of the "Second Circular," with full details
about the Congress, including registration forms, from the Chairman of the Organizing Committee:

Professor Mariano Hormigón, Chairman
XIXth International Congress of History of Science
Facultad de Ciencias (Matemáticas)
Ciudad Universitaria
50009 Zaragoza, Spain

Fax: 76-565852
E-MAIL: ICHS@CC.UNIZAR.ES

Those who wish to apply for a grant to help defray anticipated costs of attending the Congress (including in some cases the registration fee, transportation, and living expenses in Zaragoza) should send a copy of their curriculum vitae, specifying the kind and amount of support that is needed, to the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, Professor Hormigón, at the Ciudad Universitaria, Zaragoza, Spain.

In addition to the scientific program, the Zaragoza Congress will provide the second occasion on which the Commission will honor Kenneth O. May by awarding a special prize in his name. The award, which is intended to acknowledge significant contributions to the history of mathematics, is supported by the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at the University of Toronto; by the International Commission on the History of Mathematics; and by individual contributions to the ICHM May Prize Fund [2].

The award, which consists of an engraved bronze medal, a commemorative certificate, and a cash prize, was first awarded at the ICHS-1989 in Hamburg, Germany, to Dirk J. Struik and A. P. Yushkevich. The medallion, designed by the Canadian sculptor Saulius Jaskus, has just been struck in Toronto, and the Commission is pleased to acknowledge the help of Miriam May, Chandler Davis, and the May Committee at the University of Toronto for their help in planning and overseeing the entire process of the medal’s production.
On behalf of the International Commission on History of Mathematics, I am pleased to wish historians of mathematics everywhere, in virtually every part of the globe, a prosperous and productive New Year. We look forward to the coming International Congress of History of Science with considerable anticipation, and hope to see a substantial number of historians of mathematics in Zaragoza for a Congress that promises to be especially rich in activities for the history of mathematics. It will doubtless provide an especially congenial atmosphere in which to meet historians of mathematics and science generally, to see old friends, and to make many new ones as well.

¡Felicitaciones anticipadas y los cordiales saludos!

NOTES


2. An endowment fund has been established by the ICHM to help support the Kenneth O. May Prize. Anyone wishing to support the work of the Commission while honoring the memory of K.O. May is invited to contribute. Donations in any amount will be greatly appreciated. For further information about the Prize, or to make a contribution to the fund (checks should be made payable to the International Commission on History of Mathematics, May Fund), please write to the Commission's Treasurer, Menso Folkerts, Director, Institut für Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften, Deutsches Museum, Postfach 260102, D-8000 München 26, Germany.