

August 2009 MAA Seaway Section Governor's Report  
Cheri Boyd

MathFest 2009 was held in Portland, Oregon from August 6-8 with record attendance of approximately 1500.

### **Strategic Planning Progress to date:**

The Board of Governors meeting featured discussion of final reports from Strategic Planning Groups on *Sections* and *STEM Issues and the Mathematics Program* as well as new business introducing electronic MAA membership. Two other Strategic Planning Groups gave interim reports: Periodicals and Communications and Meetings. See the Members Only Section of the MAA Website for the final reports including recommendations now being considered by the Governors, Executive Council and appropriate Councils of the MAA.

### **Financial Position of the MAA:**

John Kenneally reported that the MAA Investments have weathered the economic downturn very well, due to serious fiscal responsibility at Headquarters and a quick move to cash equivalents which are still being held. His Treasurer's Report is also posted under Members Only at the MAA website.

### **Electronic Membership Option in 2010:**

Membership renewal forms will offer electronic membership as an option, which includes electronic access to all three journals (the Monthly, the College Mathematics Journal, and Mathematics Magazine) at the same cost as a membership with only the Monthly in print. Student memberships (\$30) will be restructured to feature electronic journals only, and a new Departmental membership category will include print journals intended to be available in the department, rather than the library. The electronic membership option is intended to offer members the opportunity to "go green". In the future there will be an option to add on print journals for an additional cost to the electronic membership. There was an amusing moment when the Board of Governors took a straw vote and practically everyone indicated that they would choose the electronic membership, including those who professed to love carrying their print journals around with them.

### **Let Your Concerns be Heard:**

Paul Zorn invited communication from members with concerns about Periodicals and Communications, *with a deadline of Halloween*. He will be preparing an interim report from that Strategic Planning Group for the Board of Governors at the 2010 JMM in San Francisco. There was a suggestion to feature the MAA Periodicals as well as books at the Section Meeting Booksales.

### **Read about the Seaway Section in FOCUS and MAA Alerts (Do you Twitter??):**

Ivars Peterson reported for the Council on Periodicals and Communications, and Fernando Gouvea described the serious look they are taking at FOCUS. What features do we like to see in print in FOCUS? What would be fine to see online instead? Currently FOCUS is printed bimonthly, reduced from previously monthly printing. So there is a crunch on what information can be printed. However, they very much invite Section information to be submitted that seems useful to all members.

A monthly MAA Alert is now sent electronically via email, and also on Twitter (maanow). It's quite easy to post articles that can't fit in the print FOCUS through MAA Alert. Postings are very much invited. Note also that MAA Reviews are available through Twitter. The Communications members have been working hard to reach out and communicate in different ways. What will the MAA look like ten years from now??

## **How is the Seaway Section doing?**

### **Do you think of yourself as an MAA Member, or a Seaway Section Member?:**

The planning group on Sections identified what they see as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as they studied the relationship between the Sections and the national MAA. Members of the Executive Committee have made a concerted effort as National Visitors to Section Meetings, where they attend Executive Committee Meetings, Section NExT Programs, and Business Meetings as well as give talks and workshops as national MAA Invited Speakers. They see many differences among the sections, yet some common issues have been found. Read the final report and see what you think of their recommendations. Rick Gillman is the new Chair of the Council on Meetings and Communities. He will be contacting Section Chairs, asking them to review the report with their Executive Committees and provide feedback. Of particular interest is the structure where each section is its own entity, yet it exists as a part of the national MAA. (It's an if and only if relationship. A Section can be formed if and only if it exists as a section of the national MAA.) The report begins with a (draft) mission statement on/about/for MAA Sections, although *the national MAA hopes that each Section will create its own mission statement, and then begin to assess how well it is meeting its stated mission.* It also identifies communication and leadership development as areas that can use attention and work in many sections.

The national MAA is interested in supporting its sections and members in the following ways:

- Keeping the membership list and database
- Running elections
- Providing National Visitors to section meetings
- Providing a current, useful list of speakers and workshop leaders
- Increasing the frequency that Sections can have a Polya Lecturer
- Offering national MAA Programs (like PREP) at the Section level, perhaps in conjunction with Section Meetings, including funding
- Working with members to propose a fundable idea to the NSF
- Providing a template for and hosting a section website that the section officers fill in with information
- Archiving newsletters and other section information
- Hosting listserves for Section Officers that increase vertical (section to national) and horizontal (section to section) communication
- Posting up-to-date Guidelines for Section Officers (responsibilities and timelines) and Guidelines for Hosting Joint Meetings (between sections, or with other organizations)

An interesting feature of the report on Sections is a discussion of **“the ideal geographic description of an MAA Section”**, aimed at addressing the difficulties that members and sections have in supporting and attending section meetings. Since the MAA is a “grassroots” organization, where the members have to propose to the national MAA that they become a Section, *the sections and members are being invited to consider their geographic boundaries and population density and the ability to function and meet face-to-face effectively often. This question seems particularly pertinent to our northern, northeastern, southeastern and western members. Have the Section Officers been successful in arranging meeting locations that allow you to travel to meetings “often enough”? Should we consider some other different practices in the future? Can we make better use of virtual communities? Should Section boundaries be redrawn in some way? Should this be a discussion forum at a future meeting, as well as in some online forum?* You might be interested to hear that there are about 1000 MAA members in western Europe who may propose to become a section, and others in Central and South America. The Northwestern Section held a very successful meeting in Alaska, and the Pacific Southwestern Section has the issue of members in Hawaii.

The final report from the Strategic Planning Group on **STEM Issues and the Mathematics Program** is quite broad. The recommendations in the report consist largely of questions to address. Focus groups and surveys *reveal that even the most involved MAA Members were largely unaware of information, advice, recommendations and reports by MAA sponsored and convened groups* on many issues. Processes for communication and access to useful information need review and overhaul. Suggestions were raised to make this process not just about “posting information”, but rather “linking to people who created and are willing to talk about the information” – best practices, current models that work, “if you have this project... this information could be quite useful”.

Data was provided to highlight the lack of growth in mathematics programs. In the last 25 years, the total number of undergraduate students has increased by 50% yet the total number of math majors has remained the same. Similarly for numbers of students taking math courses above the developmental level. (See Bressoud’s report.)

Trouble with transitions:

- from high school to college
- from 2 year to 4 year schools
- from lower level to upper level math courses
- from undergraduate to graduate mathematics

Addressing these transitions will provide opportunities to change this state of affairs.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheri Boyd