

Governor's Report

Robert Rogers, Fall 2007

I attended the Board of Governors' Meeting at Mathfest 2007 on Thursday, August 2 in San Jose, California. There were three topics of discussion that I would consider to be of direct interest to the membership of the section.

The first topic was the Carriage House. It is fairly clear that having such a facility benefits the MAA by providing a venue for joint endeavors with other scientific organizations and groups that promote mathematics and mathematics education and this, in turn, benefits the membership as a whole. I have been concerned, however, about the direct benefit to the members of the MAA. For example, a question that I asked at the meeting was what the charge would be if a member wanted to use the Carriage House for an MAA approved event such as a workshop. Would the Carriage House be available "at cost?" I didn't get an answer to this question directly at the meeting as I was told that such details had not been worked out yet. Looking back, there is a possibility that my question was misunderstood. I subsequently emailed Michael Pearson, Director of Programs and Services for the MAA, for clarification to which he replied, "Any event which is planned for the Carriage House that is deemed an MAA event would certainly not be charged the full rental rate; in fact, it is likely there would be no charge at all." Again, there is yet no pricelist, but I am confident that any member who wishes to sponsor such an event will be satisfied.

The second topic I wish to address was a topic for discussion during our breakout sessions. The general question was where the MAA fits in with other comparable organizations such as AMS, NCTM, etc. In the past, we had talked about the fact that MAA's stated mission is to promote mathematics, primarily at the undergraduate level. This was with regard to the previous discussion of our role in servicing graduate students. The present discussion focused more on how we should be affecting the high school level student, if at all. It was suggested that we should have a hand in this as these are our future members (at least at the undergraduate level). It was suggested that in many cases, the NCTM has a major focus on helping lower end students to succeed under the auspices of No Child Left Behind. Perhaps, the MAA could fit in by offering more enrichment programs to satisfy the needs of more gifted students. This is done to some extent by programs such as the American Math Competitions, etc., but perhaps more can be done in terms of actually putting together enrichment programs that schools could adopt.

The third item that came up was a motion that the MAA should post the following statement in Focus and Focus Online before the January meetings and on all MAA print and electronic employment ad sites. The following statement should also appear in the material for both employers and job-seekers using the Employment Register at the JMM.

"The MAA strongly discourages the use of personal hotel sleeping rooms as the site for professional interviews of prospective employees. This practice is intimidating for some job-seekers, particularly those who find the situation uncomfortable and possibly unsafe. This practice also has the potential for serious legal consequences for the interviewer."

My understanding is that this motion is a reaction to an incident that occurred at a professional meeting in another discipline. Given this, along with the fact that this really carries no weight as the interview is really between the prospective employer and employee, I voted against the motion. I thought it was an intrusion by the MAA. I was the only one who voted against it. I can certainly sympathize with the prospective employee and agree that every precaution should be taken to conduct interviews in a professional manner. However, having been through the chaos of the Employment Register on both sides of the desk, I certainly can see the desire for prospective employers to look for a more relaxed atmosphere. It was suggested by someone that the MAA needed to look into making the space provided for the Employment Register less distracting for the interview process. Until the MAA acts in such a manner, I consider such statements above as being somewhat hollow.