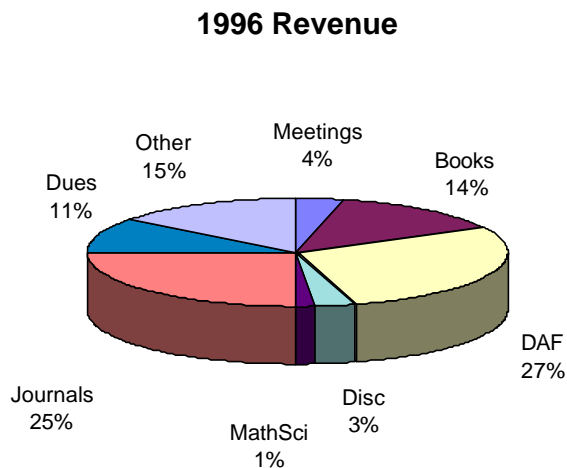


## State of the AMS

The AMS is a professional society undergoing change. Our aim is to promote research and scholarship in mathematics, and for over one hundred years we have focused on that goal by publishing, holding meetings, and providing services to the community. That much remains the same. But we have changed. Fifty years ago the Society had 8 employees, a budget of \$86,000, and ran its operations from a few rooms; today we have 230 employees, a budget of \$20,000,000 and operate from 4 locations. As the professional culture changes, our job is not only to respond, but to sometimes lead as well.

A year ago, I spent much time explaining our changed financial situation. In 1996, we lost nearly 1.5 million dollars in revenue from the Russian translation journals. We made some



direct cuts in the translation program, but when we started the year, the financial situation looked grim. I asked for help, from the staff and from you, and I received it. We cut costs in almost every area of operations, increased revenues in many others, and sensibly restructured programs to save money. We had some good luck—no surprise expenses and some unexpected revenues—but the response from staff and volunteers was the main factor. We had planned for an operating loss of about \$250,000; we finished the year with operating income of over \$875,000.

This is good news. It is an achievement accomplished by many people, and everyone ought to be pleased that an organization as large and complex as ours can work together to cut costs and increase revenues so quickly. But the achievement is most important because of its relevance for the future: Much of that change I mentioned above is yet to come, and we have shown that we can adjust financially when necessary.

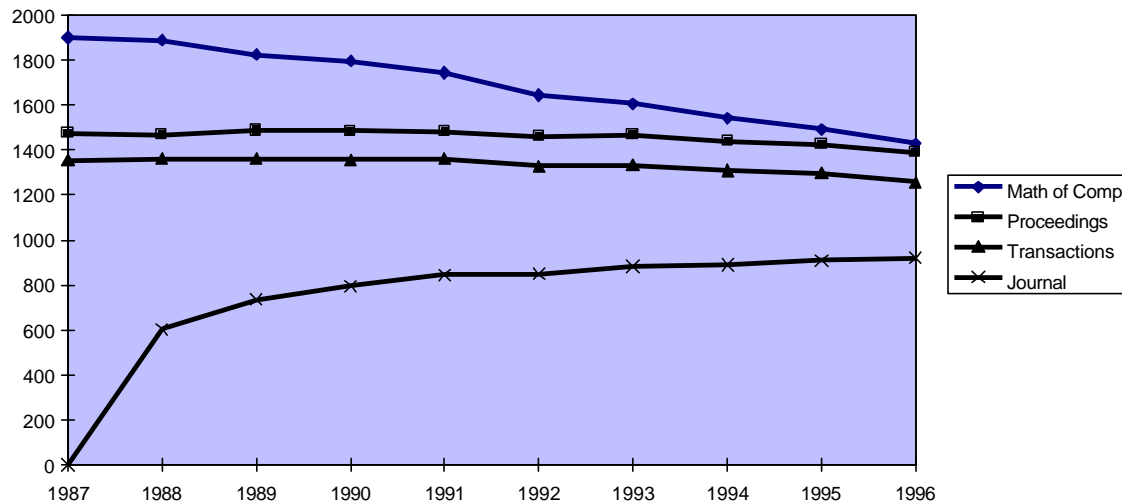
How are we responding to change in the three main concerns of a professional society, publishing, meetings, and outreach? Here are a few comments about each, not meant to be complete but merely representative.

Scholarly publishing is changing; we know that. As we move into an electronic age, Math Reviews plays an increasingly important role, providing organization and advice. MathSciNet, the internet version of Math Reviews, has been a wild success: People continue to exclaim that in a few minutes at their desk they can obtain information that previously required an afternoon poring through great orange volumes in the library. We will invest in Math Reviews to make it even better. Over the next two years, we will spend over half a million dollars to add the reviews from 1940 to 1979. We are planning to add

other databases—for statistics, for computing, and for older mathematical literature. We are adding links from Math Reviews to anything available online, and we are encouraging links in the opposite direction as well. And lastly, we are promoting consortia, to help smaller institutions afford Math Reviews by joining with larger ones.

Our book program is healthy, robust, and growing. In 1996 we exceeded all expectations for the program—more books sold, more published, more revenue. We are changing the mixture of books, from proceedings to authored. We have established a presence both in book stores and overseas markets. During the summer, a new acquisitions editor will join our staff, working with Sergei Gelfand in a professionally run acquisitions department. Our book program serves both the Society and the mathematics community. We make money, of course, and that finances other activities, but we publish books because they serve a scholarly or a professional purpose. We keep books in print indefinitely, and overall, we now have the lowest prices of *any* high level mathematics publisher.

Subscriptions: Ten Year Study



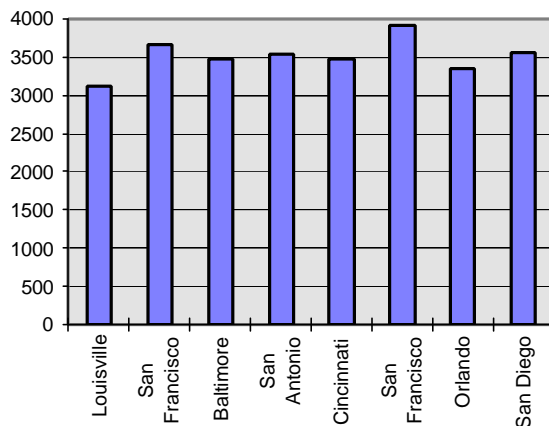
Our journals face a less certain future. That's one reason we have worked hard on changing Math Reviews and our book program. Even for our journals, however, we appear to be accommodating change smoothly, for the moment. For over a year now, *all* our primary journals (Transactions, Proceedings, Math of Comp, and the Journal of the AMS) appear in dual form, both paper and electronic. We have gained much experience in delivering journals electronically, and we understand better both the technology and the costs. What happens in the future? Some people predict that a combination of financial pressures and technology will cause the demise of scholarly journals, at least as we know them. But there are many uncertainties about who pays the costs or who takes responsibility for preserving journals. We have invested much in electronic publishing, and in some ways have led the community of society publishers. Our primary job as a scholarly publisher, however, is not necessarily to foresee the future but to be prepared for it ... no matter what it may be.

Math Reviews, books, and journals. We are supporting *all* these programs with professional marketing and promotion, which includes the new electronic bookstore as well as extensive direct marketing to members and bookstores. The support we provide our publication program is essential: Publication is more than a way to communicate mathematics—it pays for the rest of what we do as a Society.

From the beginning of the AMS, meetings have played a central role in the Society's activities. They still do. While we no longer participate in the joint summer meeting, we continue to hold our annual winter meeting, about 8 sectional meetings, and periodic international meetings. In June of this year, we participate in a joint meeting with the South

African Mathematical Society and the London Mathematical Society in Pretoria; in December, we will join the Mexican Mathematical Society in Oaxaca, Mexico for our biennial joint meeting. In the summer, we hold our usual series of summer conferences covering seven topics.

**Winter Meeting Attendance**



Dropping the summer meeting has meant change for our Meetings Department. We have adjusted by reducing the number of staff and taking on outside work. But the largest change in meetings took place more gradually, over the past 25 years, and its effect has only recently become apparent. Our winter meeting has slowly

expanded, in content if not in numbers. Until 1963, the annual meeting consisted of the retiring presidential address, the Gibbs lecture, one or two hour addresses, and many 10-minute contributed papers. In 1963, special sessions were added—5 that year, but the number has now grown to as many as 22. The number of hour addresses was increased to 8, and then soon after cut back to 6. The 5 day meeting became 4; the separate AMS and MAA programs became interspersed. Short courses were added, and over the ensuing 25 years, panels, discussions, policy addresses, and various other functions were added to the program.

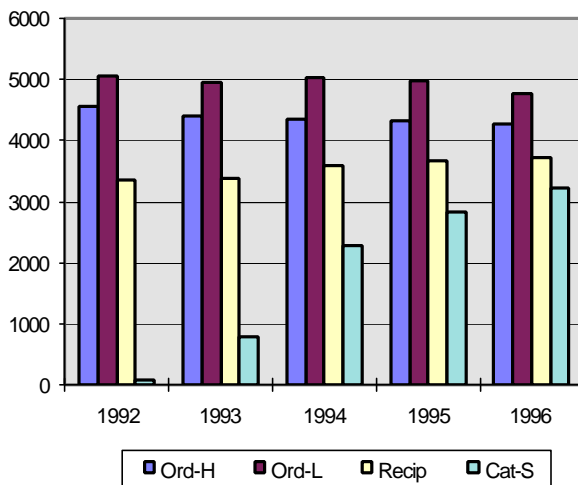
Is there less research in the present program? Absolutely not. But many people have the impression that there is, because the program is complex and full of ancillary activities from early morning to late at night. Why is it so full? Because the culture has changed, and those who designed the meeting were trying to accommodate every possible variation. We might have been too accommodating. We need to review how much activity can be squeezed successfully into 96 hours each January.

Publishing and meetings are what we do for ourselves, but outreach and advocacy are what we do for the profession. And it is essential that our outreach responds to changes in the professional environment. During the past year, we have extended our activities at the annual employment register. We continue to conduct surveys and publish the results, and

we continue to publicize our statement on supportive employment practices. We are publishing and promoting a successful series of how-to books on writing, speaking, teaching, and even heading a department. Along with 15 other societies, we will participate in a conference on adjuncts this fall. We are cooperating with the MAA and NCTM on establishing an office to promote minority participation in mathematics. We have made a commitment to help support a future proposal for a bridge program for minority students to make the transition from undergraduate to graduate school. And we awarded five Centennial Fellowships this year to young mathematicians who are just beginning their careers. We do much more that is quietly hidden in the background. For example, we subsidize nearly 4,000 mathematicians in currency weak countries each year through our Category-S memberships; we continue to provide substantial help to libraries in the former Soviet Union as well as other countries; and we raised over \$128,000 in the past 4 years for the International Mathematical Union, to help mathematicians from certain countries to attend the international congress in Berlin.

Advocating for mathematics has become as important as outreach in our new environment. The Working Group on Public Awareness, chaired by Steve Weintraub, has accomplished a great deal in a short time. *What's New in Mathematics*, their section on e-Math, has attracted the attention of both professionals and amateurs. So has our continuing publication, *What's Happening*. We produced a 30 second public service announcement, which will air on television stations across the country. In March, Arthur Jaffe moderated a joint news conference in which a coalition of 23 scientific societies, representing over a

Some Categories of Membership



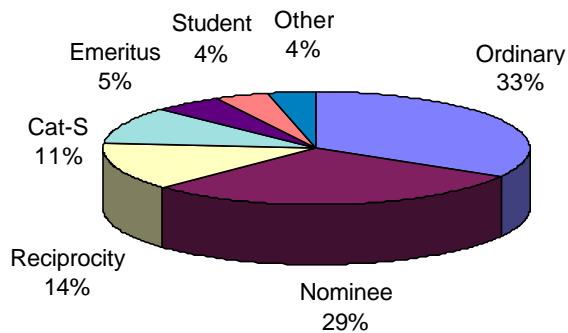
million scientists and mathematicians, urged an increase in the support of science. A day later, the AMS held a congressional luncheon promoting the importance of mathematics; several key congressmen, many staffers, and a total of 76 people attended. We are making progress in all this, but it's only a start: Success in public awareness requires persistence more than panache.

One final external change ought to concern us greatly as a Society. For a complicated set

of reasons, membership in professional societies is decreasing—everywhere and in every discipline. While our membership has decreased less than some, the number of ordinary members has gone down in recent years. We ought to respond. A professional society is many things—publisher, convener of meetings, advocate for the profession. But a professional society without members can do none of these things effectively.

In the next year, we will gather information about those who are not members and deliver a simple message to the community:

### AMS Membership 1996



Membership in a professional society—*any* professional society—is an important part of being professional. We will look for ways to provide additional member benefits, including improving the member journals (the Bulletin and the Notices) which are now the primary benefits for members. But we need to emphasize that one joins a professional society not just to receive but to give back to the profession as well. That’s a corny message, but we should not be embarrassed to say it.

Is the Society healthy? I think so; I think all the projects and the accomplishments – *your* accomplishments – show the vitality and health. We still face plenty of problems in the future, however, both professional and financial. We are *solving* those problems, one at a time. When solving those problems, I like to remember a bit of advice I read some years ago in little book for new college students:

“When solving problems, dig at the roots instead of just hacking at the leaves.”

Good advice. We are digging.

*John Ewing*