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WHY PRIMUS?

Brian J. Winkel

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WHY PRIMUS?

Brian J. Winkel, Editor

The lightning spark of the thought generated in the solitary mind awakens in another mind... Thomas Carlyle

IT IS SIMPLE

Last year I was reading a set of interesting problems authored by Roland Minton, a colleague at Roanoke College. I found myself wondering what my students would do with these problems. Indeed, I found myself wondering what *I* could do with these problems *before* I shared them with my students. I began to play with them. This was pedagogical play. It was not a significant attempt on my part to solve the problem. It was a mind game to see how a new slant, a new twist, or a new presentation could introduce *my* students to something fresh, to build on Professor Minton's ideas. I was thoroughly enjoying the mental stimulation from the "What if?" issues associated with thinking about the questions raised by Professor Minton and the prospects of introducing my students to these questions. It would have been nice to see what Professor Minton really had in mind.

There was only one way to get to learn about such problems and the methods used by colleagues to introduce, discuss, use, and test teaching materials. It was by one-to-one correspondence. Current mathematical journals, many with their THEOREM PROOF approach, were not offering teachers at the college level a chance to exchange exciting pedagogical and mathematical ideas which were appropriate for their immediate needs, i.e., teaching mathematics. Traditional gatherings of mathematicians, e.g. national meetings, regional sessions, and MAA section gatherings were not producing enough speakers who were talking about what really went on in their classrooms and why they perceived it to be worthwhile to offer students a given approach to a topic or problem-solving strategy. And while the professional societies were finally producing monographs and summaries of specific programs with regard to teaching mathematics at the college level,

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the format was too rigid: monographs – often years in the making, lofty prose with little "take this idea and run with it" type content, summaries of projects and programs which demanded personal contact to move ahead and offered very few details, etc. And the price of postage for personal correspondence and the cost of travel for meetings was going up - they were always going up!

IT IS TIMELY

The idea hit home – *We* can provide a forum for the exchange of ideas in mathematics education at the college level. There is an obvious need for a more active exchange of ideas, a forum for fresh new ideas and detail. And after all, in 1977 we began *Cryptologia*, a quarterly journal devoted to all aspects of cryptology. And in 1983 we begin *Collegiate Microcomputer*, a quarterly journal devoted to all aspects of uses of microcomputers in higher education. That meant we had four months free each year - just enough to work on another quarterly! Why not offer a journal to colleagues of like mind: colleagues who want to get into specifics concerning teaching approaches and materials, colleagues who want to read about the very important issues of exactly what one does to become a better teacher of mathematics at the college level, and colleagues who need to have a forum for sharing with others what processes they believe can enhance the quality of the professorate in mathematics education. Thus the journal was conceived.

Now for the hard part – what to name it? We did not run a contest! We thought about what we wanted to do in the journal and we thought about being catchy - the latter we learned from watching too much TV, the former we have addressed above.

PRIMUS

Problems, Resources, and Issues in Mathematics Undergraduate Studies.

That's it! *PRIMUS*!

IT IS COMPLEX

PRIMUS will be a refereed quarterly, devoted to dialogue among those interested in undergraduate mathematics.

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This readership includes those who prepare students for college level mathematics, those who teach college level mathematics, and those who receive students who have been taught college level mathematics. There are a number of goals for this new forum.

- Bring forth problems and activities.

  There is great interest in creating and finding problems and activities which are engaging, interesting, applicable, real, and appropriate to enable teachers to teach and students to learn mathematics. Further, *PRIMUS* will discuss the problems of our profession and our efforts to address the issues of mathematics education.

- Share resources.

  There are a wide variety of old and new resources for ideas. Resources include sources of ideas and problems, be they books, bibliographies, histories, computer software, collections, other disciplines, colleagues, conferences, workshops and meetings, electronic gatherings, etc.

- Discuss issues.

  There are always issues related to pedagogy, choice of topics, methods, means, ends, and levels, which bring out the best in us when fully presented and discussed.

- Relate experiences.

  There are many who are exciting teachers and who will use this forum to share experiences with colleagues, thus helping all to grow.

- Report results.

  There are a wide variety of curriculum movements and reform activities whose views need public discussion, e.g. discrete mathematics and use of computer algebra systems.

- Facilitate building and growth.

  There is a value in seeing the methods, actions, results, and work of colleagues and building on that foundation makes better teachers and sharers.

- Document improvements and developments.

  There is a need to provide historical documentation of developments to improve mathematics education.

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IT IS USEFUL

All areas of collegiate mathematics education are of interest. There is no limit to the coverage in *PRIMUS*. New expressions and rediscovered methods are worthy of consideration. Nuts and bolts discussions and overviews are of interest. Microcosmic views of one problem, one method, or one idea are as valued as broad sweeping surveys of a field or a trend.

Dialogue is the order of the day. Exposition and discussion are the methods. We encourage you to join the conversation, share your ideas, and learn with colleagues. We welcome your contributions.

As to details, the journal is published in March, June, September, and December of each year. Volume I, Number 1 is the March 1991 issue. You are looking at it! All articles are refereed by peers. Each issue contains relevant and worthwhile material for those interested in collegiate mathematics education.

Come join us and share your enthusiasm for your chosen profession - teaching mathematics in the collegiate community.