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Editorial

TEN YEARS OF THE ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS

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We take this opportunity to welcome the ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES (EJMAPS) to the family of electronic journals, and to share some of our experiences while founding and managing the Electronic Journal of Differential Equations (EJDE, http://ejde.math.swt.edu) In November 1992, with Professors Gregory Passty, and Ricardo Torrejon, we discussed the creation of a first refereed e-journal in mathematics. Our motivation stemmed from the difficulty of our respective universities in keeping the existing subscription to journals, due to financial constraints. While the internet was already available, a graphic interface was only minimally available. Our basic idea was to take advantage of the fact that the mathematics community was already quite familiar with the mathematics word processing system arguably the most useful tool in mathematical publication of the last fifty years.

At that time, we were firmly convinced that electronic journals were here to stay. Actually we were not the only believers at the point of putting into action. At about the same time efforts were under way to develop The Electronic Transactions on Numerical Analysis, The Electronic Journal of Combinatorics, and the 'New York Journal of Mathematics. The last ten have ratified our belief in electronic journals. An easy way to verify the success of electronic journals is to go to a popular site such as the Electronic Library of Mathematics of The European Mathematical information Service (EMIS) to encounter a wealth of first rate mathematics information available worldwide and free of charge. Within months of deciding to develop the EJDE, the editorial board was formed and the first submissions were sent to our referees. Since then the EJDE has grown, faithful to its goal of providing free access for all Internet users. Currently we receive about 170 submissions and publish 70 articles a year. In addition, we publish a Proceedings of Conferences series raising the articles published to over a hundred. The EJDE currently has over 1400 subscribers worldwide. The receive automatic notification and a copy of the abstracts as soon as new articles are posted. Initial skepticism could be seen from questions in early days:

- "How do I know that your journal will be around 10 or 20 years from now?"

The EJDE has reached the 10-year mark.

- "How do I know that my article in not going to be plagiarized?"

So far we have encountered no plagiarism.

- "Is my article in the EJDE going to be counted towards tenure and promotion?"

Unfortunately we do not have hard data in this respect.

- "What is the technology changes?"

Certainly the change of technologies is an issue to watch. However, our experience is that electronic journals adapt very easily to these changes. When the EJDE was founded, only FTP and telnet protocols were available. Soon after, "gopher" appeared and we made the transition effortlessly. The move from gopher to the web took a little bit of learning, but again went on without hitch. Once PDF became available, we adopted that format for making articles available in addition to the previous

formats. In any case, all changes in technology have provided only further visibility and ease in management to all electronic journals. Editor has the responsibility of determining scientific standards, which is a difficult balancing act. The choice ranges from very strict standards with a small number of articles and relaxed standards with a larger number of papers. We can find electronic and print journals have standards that range from "all submissions accepted" (e-print archives) to a very stringent editorial policies. For print journals standards can also be affected by having a certain number per issue and by the ratio of the subscription price to page count. The EJDE, as many free journals, depends on the support from academic institutions, and on the willingness of editors and referee to run the journal. This introduces a certain degree of uncertainty. At the other end of the spectrum we find print journals with high subscription prices. While some of the latter may survive due to special historical or economic circumstances, high prices also have an inherent degree of instability. Any considerable down turn in either the economy or the local budget may force a university library to cut print journals. Restarting subscriptions is generally not regarded as a very good investment. Obviously, high prices constitute a barrier to the spread of scientific knowledge. At the EJDE we have considered various mechanisms to generate income that could guarantee stability for the journal. Collecting voluntary subscriptions generated income that did not justify the paper work on billing. An avenue that some have experimented is charging a publication cost to the authors. Most journals from large publishers copy-edit manuscripts to ensure a uniform presentation. This is a time consuming process that has been avoided by many free journals. At the EJDE, we ask the authors to submit LaTeX files, and we do some editing afterwards. Some manuscript, from first-time authors or from non-English speaking authors, requires a significant amount of work (up to ten hours in some cases) to ensure an acceptable presentation in the style of the journal. We would like conclude by wishing well to Professor Jalbout and his associates in their effort to disseminate scientific knowledge worldwide through EJMAPS. We offer our expertise to help them in this enterprise.

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