



President's column

Michael Cowling

One of the roles of the AustMS President is to travel. I attended a meeting of the Council of the European Mathematical Society in Turin as an observer in early July, and have circulated a detailed report to Council about it. I will shortly attend the meeting of the International Mathematical Union in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) as a member of the Australian delegation, and then the ICM in Madrid. I am very optimistic that Australian mathematicians will figure in one way or another at both these meetings, and in any case I will look for ways to promote us, and I will continue our discussions with some university presses and other bodies about having them publish our journals.

At the European Mathematical Society (EMS) meeting, a number of issues were raised that resonate in Australia. Their newsletter (see <http://www.emis.de> for samples) is now published commercially—there is an editorial committee, responsible for content, but the typesetting and distribution are the responsibility of the publisher, who has been soliciting advertising, in order to try to make a profit. There was discussion about the legitimacy of associating the EMS with advertising. There is a separate independent publishing house set up to produce books and journals, which is looking to expand its operations. I spoke with their representative about the possibility of their publishing our journals. The very new *Journal of the European Mathematical Society* has managed to achieve a high impact factor. The main reason for its success has been the enthusiasm of the editorial board and the willingness of top European mathematicians to submit papers.

A Brussels-based member of the EMS described lobbying the EU for recognition

for the mathematical sciences. The basic problem is that there are 10,000 professional lobbyists in Brussels! The mathematicians only have a few amateurs who spend a bit of time at it. The buzz words in Brussels in scientific research are Terrorism and Natural Disasters, and mathematics is not seen as a high priority—indeed the EMS President Sir John Kingman (a statistician) said the European Union takes mathematics for granted. It was remarked that the publishing house needs to be a financial success so that the EMS can afford its own lobbyist.

The EMS is fighting to maintain *Zentralblatt für Mathematik*, so that *MathSciNet* does not have a monopoly on mathematical information. I would be curious to know how many Australian mathematicians use *Zentralblatt*; I know that my own university abandoned its subscription some years ago.

I attended a meeting of the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS) on educational issues. There is grudging recognition in a recent skills audit (<http://www.dest.gov.au>) that Australia is not able to produce enough scientists, engineers and technologists to meet the needs of business, industry and government. FASTS is pushing government to recognise that action needs to be taken. The meeting in Canberra brought together professional societies with DEST representatives, who were unable to say whether we will be able to overcome the shortage of science and mathematics teachers in high schools by importing them from other countries where the teaching culture is different. The meeting resolved to push for cooperation between Science and Education Faculties to try to produce more and better-trained teachers.