

The ICIAM Newsletter — a new venture for ICIAM

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As many readers will know, ICIAM is the umbrella organisation of the world's applied mathematical societies. For the impressive list of member societies see 'About ICIAM' in the present issue. Like the International Mathematical Union, ICIAM organises a major Congress every four years. The next Congress will be held in Beijing in 2015 (see 'Countdown to ICIAM 2015' in this issue).

In an excellent initiative, the current ICIAM President, Barbara Keyfitz, recently launched a quarterly ICIAM Newsletter. It is freely available online — see www.iciam.org/news for the first issue. Some items from the Newsletter are reproduced in this issue of the *Gazette*. For information on subscribing (free of charge), see the Newsletter itself.

Australia has had a significant role to play in the development of ICIAM. Many Australian mathematicians will have fond memories of the ICIAM Congress held in Sydney 10 years ago, under the leadership of Noel Barton AM. I had the privilege of chairing the Scientific Program Committee, which has the important role of choosing the invited speakers for the Congress. Though ANZIAM was the host society, the Australian Mathematical Society played a pivotal role: it not only rolled the AustMS annual meeting into the Congress, but also acted as underwriter, since only the Society had the formal structure and pockets deep enough to make this possible. Many Australian mathematicians played important roles in organising the Congress. It is invidious to mention names, but I may perhaps be allowed to mention Jan Thomas OAM, who made sure that the event was culturally as well as mathematically enriching; Bill Summerfield OAM, who had the challenging job of managing the money; and David Hunt, who had oversight for the AustMS involvement.

The months before the 2003 Congress were clouded by uncertainty because 2002/2003 was the time of the SARS epidemic, making many potential participants reluctant to travel, especially through Asia. But in the end the sun shone (in July!), and the Congress was a success in every respect, and is still fondly remembered by many mathematicians around the world. Australia came out smelling of roses, because the Congress finished up making a voluntary financial contribution to the Council, which helped the Council to begin charging a fee to the organisers of future Congresses — for unlike the IMU, which in the end is supported by governments, ICIAM has only the funds it raises from the small membership fees paid by member societies and the Congress fee.

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The involvement of Australians has continued. I had the privilege of serving later as ICIAM President for a four-year term, and Ross Moore, who had managed the electronic side of the Sydney Congress (including the preparation of the program and the abstract book) went on to become ICIAM's Webmaster, a role he still plays.

ICIAM started life in the 1980s as a committee of representatives of four major societies, whose sole responsibility was to oversee a Congress, but its role is by now much larger. What is that role? ICIAM promotes mathematics and its applications in the developing world, supports regional conferences, works with the IMU and ICSU on projects, and of course arranges future Congresses. But instead of giving details here I cannot do better than suggest you read Barbara Keyfitz's article 'What ICIAM does for its members' in the current ICIAM Newsletter.