



Chair's Report 2008/09

The 16th Annual Conference of ALM is the occasion of this year's AGM. In preparing this, my first report as Chair since being elected at ALM 15 in Philadelphia, I reviewed some previous reports from my predecessors. It is quite clear that every year has had its challenges and, through the efforts of the Trustees on behalf of (and supported by) the membership, each year also has its successes and ALM continues to evolve and mature. In his 1999 report, then Chair John O'Donoghue observed that

'...we as an association have continued to make a difference internationally in adults' mathematics education. ALM conference proceedings are well regarded by our peers and publishers.'

I believe this to be as true now as it was then. To this we have, of course, added the ALM International Journal, which has been well received since its inaugural 2005 edition. ALM can and should have a voice and we must continue to work diligently on building ALM's international reputation.

It is always a pleasure to acknowledge the public work of ALM members, particularly book publications, since this is a very visible way of making a significant contribution to the field of adult mathematics education, so I am proud to congratulate Kathy Safford-Ramus (ALM Chair 2004-2007) on the publication of 'Unlatching the Gate: Helping Adult Students Learn Mathematics'.

In reflecting upon the past year, I have been mindful of the particular objects that comprise ALM's stated mission and of the 'vision' that was uppermost in my mind when I came to the Chair. Collectively we possess considerable knowledge and professional expertise in what is a vitally important yet often marginalized area of education. Moreover, we have considerable passion for what we do. I believe we also have a responsibility to share that passion, to share our experience and expertise, to raise awareness of the issues with which we are so familiar - of adult innumeracy and of the particular challenges that confront both adults who seek to learn mathematics and those who would teach them (at whatever level and for whatever purpose). That can only happen if we become much more dynamic as an organization, growing our membership *and* our voice.

Such thoughts were prominent during the Board's discussions in Philadelphia in July last year and since then considerable work has been undertaken by the Trustees, some of which is now visible to members visiting the ALM website and accessing the members' list-serv email discussion board. Conducting ALM's business when Trustees are scattered across the globe in different time-zones is challenging. In other organizations, a Board can meet in person for a couple of hours once a month. For us, meetings last for weeks, if not months! To facilitate the activities of the Trustees, it was vital to improve communications, which had hitherto been dependent on email-based technology, and we established an ALM-Trustees Google Group by which to conduct on-line meetings and to readily exchange and edit documents. This has been very successful and has considerably aided the management of meetings, both formal and ad-hoc. While the



Trustees have had two formally-declared on-line meetings, in fact we have been in almost permanent session for most of the year.

In our meetings, we have considered the benefits of ALM membership – that is, what do people get for their membership? What do/will members (and prospective members) value? Clearly, the conference proceedings and the growing repository of literature that they contain must rate highly. Along with that, ready access to a web-site that can serve as an information hub together with opportunities to facilitate interactions between members, whether researchers or practitioners, between conferences. Critical to the value of the conference proceedings are (a) their timely publication; and (b) their ready availability to members. In terms of the first, I wish to convey, here, on behalf of the Trustees, our gratitude to Kathy Safford-Ramus (and, of course, to those who assisted her) in achieving the very speedy publication and distribution of the ALM-15 proceedings. In terms of the second, I'm delighted that we now have most of the past proceedings, from ALM-1 to ALM-14, available on the web-site, with the exceptions to follow soon. While some of these are image-only (i.e. the text is not searchable), over coming months these will be re-processed with OCR software and replaced as fully-searchable documents. The intention is that the penultimate conference proceedings will be added to the collection each year.

Considerable effort has been expended in an effort to resolve a number of issues relating to the maintenance of membership records, including financial standing, methods of prompting membership renewal, and making the payment of dues easier for members. A significant achievement this year has been the addition of a 'PayPal' facility to the web-site. While our present membership is low (a little over 60 paid-up members), this is not a new situation. In some respects, it can be rather nice as everyone knows everyone (more or less), which really makes our conferences feel like a family affair. In other respects, though, it is hard to see how ALM can further its mission without significant additions to its membership base. A serious membership drive is needed and I would like to urge all members to take every opportunity to promote ALM and encourage colleagues and associates to join us.

A new edition of the ALM Newsletter appeared in December 2008 after a long absence, thanks to the worthy efforts of Gail FitzSimons. This was particularly valued as Gail undertook the work after stepping down from the Board of Trustees in August for personal reasons. On behalf of the Trustees and members, Gail, thank you! (Gail has graciously accepted appointment to the ranks of ALM's Honorary Trustees.) The future of the Newsletter very much depends on the contributions of members. It is also a fairly labour-intensive task to produce each edition. We have given some initial thought to alternatives, such as an 'active' newsletter on the web-site to which members might contribute directly.

ALM-IJ matters have taken up a considerable amount of Trustees' time. Two of the journal's editors, Juergen Maasz and Mieke Groenestijn, completed their respective terms as members of the editorial team and stepped down, leaving vacancies that have



yet to be filled. I would like to use this opportunity to publicly thank Juergen and Mieke for their considerable and highly valued service to ALM.

As an interim measure, Kees Hoogland and myself stepped in to assist the Chief Editor, Janet Taylor, with the production of the last two editions. We are deeply grateful to Janet for her considerable efforts, which include staying in the role after having advised that she, too, needs to step down after gaining a professorship in a new position at Southern Cross University. Thus there is considerable urgency in securing the appointment of a new editorial team, including Chief Editor, which we hope to resolve during the course of ALM-16. The Trustees have also given much thought to a range of policy and procedural matters concerning the operation of the Journal, which have now been formalised and appropriately documented.

Every year, there is a group of people who deserve our special thanks since their efforts are so much a part of making our annual gatherings feel like a family reunion – these, of course, are the conference organizers. I would like to offer sincere thanks to Kathy Safford-Ramus and the local team responsible for the very successful ALM-15 conference in Philadelphia last year. I have it on good authority that the London team is ‘on track’ to ensure that ALM-16 will be equally successful.

I wish to give my warmest personal thanks to my friends and colleagues on the Board of Trustees – Graham Griffiths, Kees Hoogland, Joanne Kantner, Ann McDonnell, Ruth Moulton, and Sarah Richards – and also to the support and wise counsel afforded by our Honorary Trustees. There has been a vast amount of work for just the seven of us to undertake and the contributions, often under very difficult circumstances, have been an astounding effort that makes me proud to be part of the team.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all of those individuals and institutions whose invaluable support of ALM in many various ways, whether in academic, professional, or material terms, is greatly appreciated.

Finally, if I have omitted any acknowledgements or thanks, please forgive me – I assure you it isn’t personal.

Chris Klinger
Chair, 2008/09