

One Hundred Years with the MAA

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Rick Gillman

The Mathematical Association of America was founded on December 31, 1915, after a call was made to create a new national mathematical association. The call, which was published in the pre-existing American Mathematical Monthly, was signed by four hundred fifty people from across the country, and one hundred four gathered at Ohio State University for the organizational meeting.

There were nine representatives from the state of Indiana present at the organizational meeting. Purdue University sent the largest contingent, consisting of W.H. Bates, L.C. Cox, C.T. Hazard and A.M. Kenyon. Representing Indiana University were S.C. Davisson, Cora B. Hennel, and D.A. Rothrock. W.O. Mendenhall from Earlham College was there, as was W.M. Steirnagle who taught at Fowler High School. Eventually, there were twenty-nine Hoosiers among the 1028 charter members of the Association.

D.A. Rothrock was elected to the editorial board of the American Mathematical Monthly, which became the official journal of the Association. A later essay will tell the story of his life and work with the Association.

The initial bylaws of the Association allowed for the formation of sections for the purpose of “holding local meetings.” Notably, the bylaws also said that the Association was not responsible for any section expenses. Groups from Kansas, Missouri, and Ohio immediately requested to organize sections, so a committee was formed to consider how to make this process work. It was the very first Committee on Sections!

The March 1916, issue of the Monthly saw the publication of regulations for the formation of sections of the Association. The Indiana Section of the Mathematical Association of America was formed later that year, becoming the fifth official section of the Association. (Iowa was the fourth and Maryland-Virginia-DC was the sixth.)

The new section was the child of the Indiana State Teachers’ Association and the College Association of Mathematics Teachers. The latter group had merged into the former in 1891 to form the Mathematics Section of the ISTA, and had broadened the scope of its mission to include secondary as well as collegiate mathematics. By 1916, the Mathematics Section was ready to stand independently from the ISTA and again focus on the needs of collegiate mathematics faculty. Thus the INMAA was born. Its initial executive committee consisted of S.C. Davisson (Indiana University) as chair, W.O. Mendenhall (Earlham College) as secretary-treasurer, and F.H. Hodge (Franklin College) as member.

Unfortunately, things must not have gone as planned. Although other sections regularly reported on their meetings in the Monthly, the Indiana section did not until 1925. At that time, it reported on a first meeting being held in October 1924. F.H. Hodge, having moved to Purdue University, organized this meeting and was subsequently elected chair of the section. The meeting was held at Shortridge High School in Indianapolis and was attended by twenty people. The report in the Monthly stated that the section was “re-organized, after a lapse of several years.”

The section has met at least once every year since then.

References

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