ICMI NOTES

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COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE
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ON MATHEMATICAL INSTRUCTION)

ICMI NOTES

1. NEW MEMBERS. ICMI is pleased to welcome into membership Costa Rica and Mozambique.

2. REGIONAL MEETINGS. We regret that the Sixth Inter-American Conference on Mathematics Education announced for November, 1983 has had to be postponed because of financial problems.

The ICMI-sponsored meeting of the Southeast Asian Mathematical Society will be held at Prince of Songkla University, Haad Yai, Thailand in May 1984. The principal theme is "Mathematical Education in the Computer Age". ICMI is represented on the planning committee by Professor Nebres and our President, Professor Kahane, will be one of plenary speakers. The Conference Secretary is Dr. S. Nualtaranee, Department of Mathematics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10500, Thailand.

3. NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES. We give below some amendments to the list of National Representatives printed in the last issue of *L'Enseignement Mathématique*.

ARGENTINA: Professor N.D. Patetta, CAECE, Ave. de Mayo 1396, 1085 — Capital Federal, República Argentina.

COSTA RICA: Professor B. Montero, Asociación Matemática Costarricense, Apartado 5186, San José, Costa Rica.

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: Professor K. Weber, Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften, Otto Grotewohl-Str., 1080 Berlin, German Democratic Republic.

ISRAEL: Professor J. Gillis, Department of Mathematics, Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot 76100, Israel.

USA: Professor D.M. Hill, Department of Mathematics, Florida A and M University, Tallahassee, FL 32307, USA.

4. ICMI 4. The Proceedings of ICME IV held at Berkeley in 1980 have now been published by Birkhäuser. This large volume contains some two hundred papers on all aspects and levels of mathematics education and is clearly a must for any library. (ISBN 3-7643-3082-1).

5. ICMI 5. Adelaide, Australia, 24-30 August 1984.

The second and final announcement concerning the Fifth International Congress on Mathematical Education has now been published. Copies may be obtained from

ICME 5, GPO Box 1729, Adelaide 5001, South Australia, Australia.

The announcement includes forms for registration, accommodation, and submission of abstracts of short communications.

Early submission of these forms (by airmail) is requested. As an encouragement to 'early birds', the registration fee for those registering and paying on or before 29 February 1984 will be $(Austr)140. The regular registration fee will be $175 and for those paying on or after 1 July 1984 the fee will rise to 195 Australian dollars.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
ON MATHEMATICAL INSTRUCTION
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

by A. G. Howson (Secretary, ICMI)

This year ICMI celebrates its 75th birthday, for it was at the 1908 International Congress of Mathematicians that it was agreed to establish a commission to study programmes and methods of teaching to be found in secondary schools. Over thirty nations expressed an interest in the commission's work and under the Presidency of Felix Klein it soon set vigorously to work.

One of the Commission's first decisions was to reject the remit given to it at the Rome ICM. To study secondary schools in isolation was thought impossible — ICMI had to consider the teaching of mathematics in all types of schools, and also in universities and other institutions of higher education.

A great survey of practice in the member countries was carried out (five volumes from France, eleven from the USA...). Meetings were held to discuss particular topics — questions which are as relevant now as in pre-First-World-War days (although changing mathematical, social and economic contexts mean that 'solutions' rapidly become out-of-date). For example, in Milan in 1911 attention was concentrated on "What mathematics should be taught to those students studying the physical and natural sciences?", "What is the place of rigour in mathematics teaching?" and "How can the teaching of the different branches of mathematics best be integrated?"

The 1914-18 War brought ICMI activities effectively to a standstill and, in fact, there was relatively little activity in the inter-war years before once again, in 1939, ICMI relapsed into a coma.

When ICMI was reconstituted, in 1952, it was as a sub-commission of the newly-established International Mathematical Union.*

Since that time mathematics education has grown enormously in importance; mathematics is now taught to a vastly greater percentage of the world's population and technological and social changes have combined to present mathematics educators, curriculum developers and administrators with a variety of new challenges.

ICMI, which now has fifty-four member countries drawn from every continent, still seeks through mutual cooperation to study and improve all aspects of mathematics education. It does this in a variety of ways: notably

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* A longer account of the history of ICMI and of its connections with L'Enseignement Mathématique will appear in Part 1, vol. 15 (1984) of Educational Studies in Mathematics.