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## From the Editor, 1996

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## From the Editor

The last issue celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Exxon Education Foundation by reprinting Allyn Jackson's essay, which surveyed many of the programs that the Foundation supports. These programs have had a great impact on much of mathematical education, for which professors, teachers, and students are grateful.

This issue celebrates the tenth year of the Humanistic Mathematics Network Journal supported by the Exxon Education Foundation. The Network started in March of 1986 with a three day conference at Harvey Mudd College on the topic "Examining Mathematics as a Humanistic Discipline."

Thirty university and college mathematicians and philosophers participated in the discussions. As with many new or rediscovered areas of mathematics, there were ambiguities and unanswered questions. The experience, however, was positive enough to continue the discussions by means of a newsletter (now this journal).

Humanistic dimensions of mathematics discussed included:

- An appreciation for the role of intuition, not only in understanding, but in creating concepts that appear in their final version to be "merely technical."
- An appreciation of the human dimensions that motivate discovery - competition, cooperation, the urge for holistic pictures.
- An understanding of the value judgements implied in the growth of any discipline. Logic alone never completely accounts for *what* is investigated, *how* it is investigated, and *why* it is investigated.
- A recognition of the need for new teaching and learning formats that will help wean our students from a view of knowledge as certain, to-be-received.

Mathematicians and other academics are aware of these ideas at a deep or subconscious level. A few, such as H. Poincare, H. Weyl, and A. N. Whitehead, have articulated the ideas at length. In the tightly constrained situation of formal education the themes and dimensions of humanistic mathematics and other disciplines are sometimes buried or overlooked.

The newsletter that was originally sent to the thirty conferees is now the journal sent to over 1500 readers all over the world — North and South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, the Middle East, China, etc. Authors are as widespread as readers. Academic and public libraries receive and circulate the Journal. While some doubted that humanistic mathematics could be defined, others thought the meaning was obvious.

Although letters to the editor are not new, the journal is starting a new section of comments and letters. Harald Ness, who suggested a Comments section, will edit it. In this issue, two letters comment on an article of the previous issue — each with strong feeling, but on opposite sides.

Your essays, poems, puzzles, polemics, and random thoughts are invited in the spirit of humanistic mathematics.