

Letters to the Editor

THE IMS AND THE IMU

From Tom Carroll

At last December's committee meeting, it was suggested that I write a letter to the Bulletin on the matter of Ireland's membership of the International Mathematical Union (the IMU).

The International Mathematical Union (<https://www.mathunion.org>) encourages and supports international mathematical activities globally across all areas of pure mathematics, applied mathematics, and mathematics education. The International Congress of Mathematicians (the ICM) is organised under its auspices. Every four years, prestigious prizes including the Fields Medals are awarded at the Opening Ceremony of the ICM. The Secretariat of the IMU is currently based in Berlin and runs day-to-day business. The Executive Committee, which includes the President Hiraku Nakajima (Japan) and Secretary General Christoph Sorger (France), is drawn from the highest international echelons of mathematics.

The members of the IMU are countries, currently numbering 85 in total. The level of membership ranges from one to five and reflects the mathematical stature of the member country. Ireland has been a member, a Group II member, since the 1950s. The Group V members are the mathematical (and political) powerhouses internationally: Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Group n countries are entitled to n votes at the General Assembly (GA) held every four years around the time of the ICM. Derek Kitson (Secretary of the IMS) and I represented Ireland at the GA in Helsinki last June. The membership dues increase nonlinearly as a function of the group number: for Group II member countries, including Ireland, these are currently €2,920 p.a. while Group V members contribute €17,520.

Each member country is represented via an Adhering Organization (AO), which may be its principal academy, a mathematical society, its research council or some other institution or association of institutions, or an appropriate agency of its government. Up to late 2019/early 2020, Ireland's AO was the Royal Irish Academy (RIA). As I understand it, the main reason the RIA decided to no longer act as Ireland's AO was its inability, or unwillingness, to continue to pay Ireland's annual membership dues. The IMS took over this role in 2020 - see Pauline Mellon's President's Report in *IMS Bulletin 86* for the background to this decision. The feeling then, and now, is that Ireland's membership is essential if we are to consider ourselves as seriously engaged in the world of Mathematics. Letting our membership lapse, as would otherwise have been the case, was unthinkable. Here is a link to Ireland's page on the IMU website (<https://www.mathunion.org/imu-members/ireland>) where the IMS is listed as the AO.

Though a minuscule sum of money at a national scale, the annual IMU dues constitute a significant commitment for our Society. Ireland's 2020 membership was largely funded through the generosity of various research centres and departments (see the President's Report mentioned above). Membership dues since then have been paid directly from IMS funds, in part offset by the Society's reduced outlay during the covid period, in supporting conferences for example. Repeated efforts to elicit contributions from various arms of government and the backing of VPs for Research in our various institutions have been unsuccessful. The executive and the committee continue to explore new avenues

towards meeting the Society's commitment to paying the annual IMU membership dues so that this encumbrance does not limit its other activities and initiatives.

It's fair to say that taking on the role of AO to the IMU was not on the Society's radar prior to December 2019. Nevertheless, 'We are where we are, however we got here. What matters is where we go next.' I personally believe that our Society can play a positive and proactive role as AO, as does the LMS for the UK and the DMV for Germany, and raise the profile of Ireland within the IMU. The IMS and its members are, after all, those with the greatest stake in Ireland's international mathematical reputation.

Tom Carroll, IMS President 2020-2022, Committee Member 2023-2024

UCC

Received 31-5-2023

t.carroll@ucc.ie
