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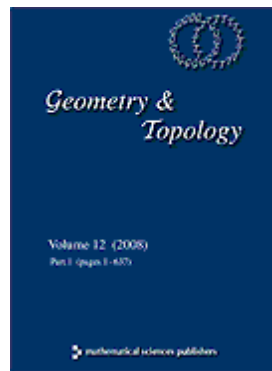- **About Science Watch**

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Journal Interviews : 2010 : Walter Neumann on the Success of Geometry & Topology

JOURNAL INTERVIEWS - 2010

May 2010

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Geometry & Topology
Featured Journal Interview

According to a recent analysis of Essential Science Indicators*SM data from Thomson Reuters, the journal* Geometry & Topology *is having a growing impact in the field of* Mathematics*. The journal's current record in the database includes 356 papers cited a total of 1,226 times from January 1, 1999 to December 31, 2009.*

Geometry & Topology *is published by Mathematical Sciences Publishing, and its Managing Editors are Professor Colin Rourke of the University of Warwick in the UK and Professor Walter Neumann of Columbia University in New York City.*

In the interview below, ScienceWatch.com *talks with Professor Neumann about the journal's history and citation achievements.*

SW: **Did you expect** *Geometry & Topology* **to become highly cited, or is this surprising to you?**

It does not surprise me. *Geometry & Topology* has always aimed to be the leading journal in its field.

SW: **How would you account for the high citation rate of** *Geometry & Topology***?**

To the extent that citation rates correlate with quality of research, I would say that the high citation rates mirror the quality of the research we publish. Whatever success we have had in maintaining consistently high standards lie in large part in our editorial policy: Although each paper is handled by a single editor, the final decision is made by consensus of the whole editorial board.

After a recommendation (either pro or con) has been made, there is a discussion period during which anyone can argue against the recommendation. Even if a paper has been recommended for publication, two additional editors must volunteer to have their names on the paper as seconders, otherwise the paper is rejected.

Other journals have since emulated our editorial procedure, but without including the names of all three endorsing editors in the published paper. I think this is a mistake.

SW: Would you give us a brief history of the journal?

The journal was founded in 1997, primarily by Colin Rourke (Warwick) and Rob Kirby (Berkeley), with the aim of eventually replacing the journal *Topology*, based in Oxford, which had long been the premier journal in the field. The pricing policy of *Topology* was perceived by many to be damaging both to the journal itself and therefore to the field it served, and the editorial board of *Topology* finally resigned in 2006 over this and has not been replaced.

Geometry & Topology was originally open access, but although it eventually outgrew volunteer labor and had to start charging for access, it still has a subscription rate which is among the lowest in the industry.

In the process of this change, a non-profit publishing company was founded in Berkeley, Mathematical Sciences Publishing, which now owns *Geometry & Topology* and several other new mathematics journals, and also provides publishing services to *Annals of Mathematics* and *Pacific Journal of Mathematics*, among others.

SW: What historical factors have contributed to the success of *Geometry & Topology*?

Geometry & Topology covers a broad and highly active part of mathematics, and there was a clear need for a fairly priced journal in the field. The strong editorial policy has certainly played a role, and it has been supported by the very strong editorial board (most of the original 24 editors are still with the journal although the board has grown by 50%).

SW: Have there been specific developments in the fields served by *Geometry & Topology* that may have contributed?

"Geometry & Topology has always aimed to be the leading journal in its field."

There have been several major developments in the field since the journal was founded, but they would not have lifted our journal more than others in the field without our ongoing attention to standards. The best-known development is of course the work of Perelman, solving the century old Poincare conjecture and going far beyond it.

Perelman's papers are on the arXiv as preprints and he will not allow them to be updated or reprinted. However, we have an issue devoted to this work which includes the well-known "Notes on Perelman's papers" by Kleiner and Lott, which link directly page by page to Perelman's arXiv preprints.

SW: What, in your view, is this journal's main significance or contribution in the field of Mathematics?

Providing a forum for dissemination of the best results in the field.

SW: How do you see your field(s) evolving in the next few years?

There is a lot of excitement on many fronts: symplectic geometry, low dimensional topology, geometric group theory...I could go on and on. The fields we cover have been constantly growing. Twenty years ago there was one clear leading journal in the field, *Topology*, publishing about 1,500 pages a year.

Geometry & Topology now publishes about 3,000 pages a year, while our sister journal *Algebraic and Geometric Topology*, which started publishing in 2001, publishes about 2,500 pages a year, and the also

excellent *Journal of Topology*, which started publishing in 2008 with the former editorial board of *Topology*, already published over 1,000 pages in 2009.

SW: **What role do you see for your journal?**

Providing an affordable high-quality journal covering the broad range of fields encompassed by its title.◾

Geometry & Topology

Walter Neumann and Colin Rourke, Managing Editors

Mathematical Sciences Publishing, publishers

Geometry & Topology's **current most-cited paper in** *Essential Science Indicators***, with 41 cites:**

Ozsvath P, Szabo Z, "Knot Floer homology and the four-ball genus," *Geom. Topol.* 7: 615-39, 2003. Source: *Essential Science Indicators* from Thomson Reuters.

KEYWORDS: GEOMETRY, TOPOLOGY, EDITORIAL POLICY, JOURNAL HISTORY, PRICING POLICY, PERELMAN, POINCARE CONJECTURE, SYMPLECTIC GEOMETRY, LOW-DIMENSIONAL TOPOLOGY, GEOMETRIC GROUP THEORY.

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