

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS

Year ending 31 December 2009

Honorary Secretary's Report

The end of 2009 sees the ATM standing at something of a watershed. During the past year, the Association has developed a clear vision for what it should seek to achieve over the next five years and has built on this vision to shape a Strategic Development Plan to cover that period. Underpinning this plan are ATM's aims and guiding principles, which focus on creating and developing a community of teachers who desire to improve their work by supporting one another and challenging what they consider not to be in the best interests of learners. At the same time, however, membership of the association is falling. The reasons for this are not clear but are, I suspect, related to the fact that many teachers do not currently see the relevance of membership of such a community. This is a consequence of the fact that, for a generation, teachers have been dictated to regarding how and what should be taught, to the extent that many now no longer see a need, nor have the appetite, to take personal responsibility for their own work in ways that membership of an association such as ATM can serve. For ATM, the challenge at the end of 2009 is therefore how it can make itself relevant to this generation.

Membership and Marketing

Membership continues to be a matter for concern, reflecting the changed perspective of teachers regarding taking responsibility for their own personal professional development. Whilst e-membership numbers held firm in 2009 compared with the previous year, personal membership numbers dropped by 22% and NQT numbers fell by 31%. Institutional membership fell by 4% (though UK institutional membership fell by 17% and overseas institutional membership rose by 14%) and student membership fell by 3%. Overall this represents a drop in membership of 15% from 2008 to 2009. The Membership and Marketing Business Group of the Association is working hard to promote ATM wherever possible, and during this year has been a significant presence at both BETT and the Education Show. Presentations at NCETM regional and national conferences have also promoted the benefits of belonging to a professional subject association. The Association has also continued to link with ITT providers who promote ATM membership to their students and are grateful for their continued dedicated efforts. As a further means of promoting membership, the Membership and Marketing Business Group has begun the daunting task of revising and simplifying membership categories in order for this not to be an obstacle to membership.

The Membership and Marketing group has continued to keep membership categories under review, in order to make sure that, in a changing technological world, membership of organisations, libraries etc. reflect both the needs of the association and members/potential members. ATM has been represented at a number of events, including BETT and the Education Show. Led by Meryl Hargreaves, ATM worked with the TES on a competition promoting the sharing of resources. This also gave ATM the opportunity to use TES links through their website and newsletters.

General Council

During the year there have been changes to personnel on the General Council. Thanks are due to Sue Johnston-Wilder, John Hibbs and Jill Mansergh who completed their terms of office and to Peter Hall and Alec McEachran, both of whom left General Council during the year. Council has been joined during this year by Jenni Back, Jayne Stansfield, Ruth Tanner and Liz Woodham.

General Council has met regularly through the year, as has the Executive. Central to its work this year, Council has focused on developing a Vision Statement, which it shared

with members who added to it, and on extending this to the framework for a Five Year Strategic Development Plan that will be finalised early in 2010 and made available on the website for members to comment on.

Council has re-structured the way it conducts its weekend meetings. Each meeting now spends one session focusing on a key issue, thus enabling Council members the opportunity to share their professional expertise and experience and to build up a joint understanding of approaches to major issues. Council also spends time working in Business Groups (Publications, Journal & Web, Membership & Marketing and CPD). Through these business groups, members of Council and invited members can focus close attention on specific matters. In return, this ensures that all members of Council are closely engaged in specific issues.

Working Groups

Working Groups of the Association have varied in the extent of their activity in 2009.

The Primary Group (a joint group with members of the MA) has continued to meet regularly. Much of the focus of this group this year has been on responding to a large number of government initiatives, draft reports and final documents. These have included the Williams and Rose interim and final reviews and the resulting QCDA rewriting of the primary mathematics curriculum. Sub-groups have worked with NAMA to write NCETM materials for primary mathematics subject leaders and to organise and present a successful primary conference at the London Institute of Education in November.

The Secondary Group has, however, not met in 2009 – largely because it has not been possible to find a leader/coordinator. This is to be regretted for two reasons. Firstly, it has meant that members of Council have not had a detailed steer from secondary colleagues when responding to a range of initiatives such as the reform of GCSE and A-level examinations. Secondly, it has meant that there has not been a forum for secondary teachers to come together to support one another and work on matters of common interest.

The ICT group has, similarly, had a quiet year, but plans are afoot to re-energise this group with a focus on how best to use software in the mathematics classroom.

Branches

Branch activity has been a relatively successful area of work this year. Existing branches (a number of whom are joint ATM/MA branches) have continued to flourish and new groups are in the process of being formed. Jayne Stansfield from General Council has taken on the mantle of Branches Champion and is providing support both to existing groups and to members interested in setting up local activities.

Publications

The Publications Business Group has been successful, once again, in producing new titles to add to the prestigious list of publications available from the Association. The Publications group is indebted to Jean Carnall, our publications officer, who comes to the end of her term of office early in 2010.

The Association is reliant on members to send in ideas for publications and, currently, the flow of proposals is underwhelming. The challenge is to find ways of encouraging innovative members to share their ideas and to encourage more group working and collaborative publications – that have been a strength of ATM's work in the past.

Conferences

ATM held its annual conference in Swansea. With a high number of members and friends attending, this proved to be an excellent event, with many members providing very positive feedback. This conference demonstrated the power of the ATM community

meeting together – to share ideas and experiences, to learn from one another and to build from our strong roots into an uncertain future.

Work has continued through the year toward the joint BCME event in Manchester in 2010 and good progress is being made on the next ATM Conference in 2011 – when ATM will be able to celebrate 50 years of annual Easter conferences!

Council has agreed, in principle, to establishing a programme of Regional Conferences, to run in different parts of the country at different times of the year. The idea here is to build on the vital strength of our annual conference, taking this energy and enthusiasm to those who may not get to the annual event, and to build on the burgeoning network of branches and local groups. A proposal to the Mathematical Association that these should be joint events has been accepted by MA. An organising group from the two associations has been established to take this idea forward.

The journal

Margaret Jones took over as editor of MT at the beginning of the year. With her editorial team, she has settled well into the task. A highlight of the year was the launch of the first edition of MTi – the on-line interactive version of the journal. Despite some nail-biting moments near to launch, MTi successfully arrived on line on time. The first edition raised significant interest among many members of the association, whilst others have yet to get fully to grips with this new format. It has been agreed that there will be two interactive editions of the journal in 2010, alongside 4 paper-based editions.

The website

The ATM website continues to develop and flourish. Marten Gallagher has, once again, worked enormously hard to maintain its vitality and currency. The website continues to be visited very often and is a hugely valuable source of information for both members and non-members. Steps are being taken to improve access to the site and to make it even more relevant to members. A challenge in the coming years will be to understand better the dynamic relationship between the web and the i-version of MT.

Links with other bodies

ATM has maintained strong links with a number of other bodies during the year:

- as a constituent member of the Joint Mathematics Council (JMC)
- through regular meetings at QCDA, focusing on primary, secondary and sixth form matters
- with GCSE awarding bodies.

In line with other members of JMC, ATM has withdrawn from individual association membership of The Council for Subject Associations, believing that it was not gaining sufficiently from the expensive membership fees being incurred. Instead, ATM and other bodies have sought membership of CfSA for JMC – to provide a single representation for mathematics. Currently the constitution of CfSA does not permit this (since JMC is not a member association!) and so there is currently no representation of the mathematics community at CfSA. Negotiations between CfSA and JMC continue and, during these negotiations, JMC has observer status at CfSA.

Meetings between ATM and MA, NAMA, AMET and NANAMIC have continued under the MMSA (Meeting of Mathematics Subject Associations) banner. These meetings have provided a forum for exploring how these associations can work more effectively to promote and enhance the quality of mathematics education in this country. They have become increasingly effective and considerable collaborative activity has resulted. Through MMSA, the five associations have maintained a lively dialogue with NCETM, out of which has come proposals for collaborative CPD work. A major advance has been in

the improving relationship between the associations and NCETM, with the latter now much more willing to seek ways of collaborating with the associations.

Following many years of hard work and negotiation, the launch of CMathTeach (the intended name for the Chartered Mathematics Teachers designation) took place this year. ATM is strongly represented in the first Regulation Authority that awards CMathTeach status to applicants that meet the requirements. The establishment of the CMathTeach designation is particularly significant for ATM because membership of a subject association is a prerequisite of such an award and applications need to be made through one of the constituent bodies of the CMathTeach Authority.

Behind the scenes

Keeping the association running smoothly on a day to day basis is vital to any success that it has and central to the success of ATM is the administrative team in Derby. Ably led by Su Strange, the team of Karen Moran, Karen Kirkley, Fay Titterton, Liam Smith and Nas Thanfrey do an enormous amount to promote the association and to provide the high quality service to which our members are entitled. Not only that, but they do so with humour, patience and a great degree of dedication and commitment. We are, as ever, indebted to them.

George Knights
Honorary Secretary