

Schweizerische Mathematische Gesellschaft

Société Mathématique Suisse

Protokoll der Geschäftssitzung
vom 26. März 2004, 14:15–16:30 Uhr
Universität Bern, Kuppelraum

Traktanden

1. Künftiger Verlag für Commentarii / Elemente
2. Reziprozitätsabkommen mit der Real Sociedad Matemática Española
3. Mitteilungen
4. Varia

1. Künftiger Verlag für Commentarii / Elemente

Die Unterlagen zu diesem Traktandum (Angebote des Birkhäuser Verlages und des EMS Publishing House sowie der Brief von Cambridge University Press) wurden vor der Sitzung auf Wunsch hin zugestellt und lagen in der Sitzung aus. Der Präsident Peter Buser berichtet ausführlich über den bisherigen Diskussionsstand bezüglich eines möglichen Verlagswechsels. Dabei dankt er insbesondere auch den federführenden Editoren H.P. Kraft und J. Kramer für die hervorragende Arbeit sowie dem Birkhäuser Verlag für die gute Zusammenarbeit. Frau D. Steinebrunner und Herr T. Hempfling stellen das Angebot des Birkhäuser Verlages, Herr T. Hintermann das Angebot des EMS Publishing House vor. Von Cambridge University Press liegt ein informelles Angebot in Briefform vor. Die Vor- bzw. Nachteile der verschiedenen Angebote werden ausführlich und sehr sachlich diskutiert.

Nach zweistündiger Diskussion entscheiden die anwesenden Mitglieder der SMG in einer Urnenabstimmung über den zukünftigen Verleger mit dem Ergebnis:

abgegebene Stimmen	30
ungültige Stimmen	0
Enthaltungen	0
Birkhäuser Verlag	11
EMS Publishing House	19
Cambridge University Press	0

Der Vorstand wird beauftragt, den Vertragsentwurf mit dem EMS Publishing House in eine endgültige Form zu bringen, insbesondere die in der Diskussion hervorgehobenen Mängel zu bereinigen, und den Vertrag dann mit dem Publishing House abzuschliessen.

2. Reziprozitätsabkommen mit der Real Sociedad Matemática Española

Das Reziprozitätsabkommen wird einstimmig genehmigt.

3. Mitteilungen keine

4. Varia keine

Zürich, 31.3.2004

Für das Protokoll

Viktor Schroeder

Report of the committee of the SMG

Our main discussion had been with regards to the *Commentarii*, but we believe that the considerations apply to the *Elemente* as well.

The main issues appear to us the following ones:

- Is the SMG willing to support the new founded publishing house of the EMS?
- What are the risks of a move, and what are the risks of a stay.
- Financial issues.

It is clear that at the moment, no clear-cut recommendation for or against a move can be given, and the only issue can be whether the SMG should start negotiations both with Birkhäuser and with the EMS. In fact, it would be counterproductive to decide on a move to EMS before negotiating the terms of a contract with them.

The basic question is if the SMG is willing to support with the EMS publishing house a non-commercial publisher which is under control of mathematicians. The lack of such a publishing house in Europe has been felt heavily in the past, and would probably be even more so in the future. It is also clear that without being able to publish a number of established journals, the survival of the EMS publishing house will be very difficult, in particular as it has become extremely difficult to start and establish new journals. We think it is in the interest of the mathematics community in Switzerland that there exists a non-commercial European publishing house, in particular one which is based in Switzerland and which has already obtained startup money from a Swiss foundation.

Risks of moving. We see three possible risks:

1. *A possible loss of technical quality of the journal.* We don't consider this being a problem. Most of the commercial publishing houses are outsourcing the technical production anyway, and the EMS publishing house can rely on the same technical resources.
2. *A possible loss of subscriptions.* This is the most serious problem. In case the SMG considers a move to the EMS publishing house, a point of crucial importance will be to obtain the complete list of subscribers from Birkhäuser, and the right to use it. We didn't arrive at a definite conclusion about the legal rights of the SMG to obtain and use the list. This issue is not mentioned in the present contract. We expect that Birkhäuser may ask for a financial compensation but would hope that this point could be settled at a fair price. As Birkhäuser is claiming to have had a modest loss on the journal in the past years, we believe that their position is weak. Birkhäuser will certainly also have no interest to infuriate the mathematics community.
3. *The risk that the publishing house of the EMS might not survive and prosper.* This can of course not be excluded but we think that the impact on the journal would still be small if some precautions are taken. In negotiations with the EMS publishing house the SMG should fix that it keeps the right on the subscription list. Also from this viewpoint, it would be advisable that the SMG negotiates with Birkhäuser about the list. Since publishing *Commentarii* is profitable, other publishing houses would certainly be interested in taking the journal. There is a tentative offer from the Cambridge University Press with about the same figures as those proposed by the EMS. Therefore, in case the latter does not prosper, the SMG could still move there.

Risk of staying. Springer (and hence Birkhäuser) has been bought by Cindem and Candover, a firm specialized in buyouts. Moreover, the chief executive of the science and medical division of Elsevier

is changing to Springer as by 2004. These facts should be weighted against the argument that the cooperation with Birkhäuser has been fairly satisfactory in the past. In case the SMG is considering the move, it is in its vital interest to get the subscription list of CMH (and the *Elemente*) *as soon as possible*.

Financial issues:

1. *Production costs.* We have had access to the calculations of Birkhäuser. They calculate technical productions cost of 176'267.75 CHF. In addition there are costs for reprints, electronic distribution, marketing, etc. and general overheads of roughly 52'000 CHF. This amounts without editorial expenses to roughly 280'000 CHF. In comparison with the calculation for instance of Springer for their mathematical journals owned by them, this is certainly quite modest. On the other hand, in comparison with the calculations of a non-commercial publisher like the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS), this is still quite high. The IMS calculated in 2000 the technical costs (including distribution, overheads, but without editorial expenses) for the *Annals of Probability* which has 2200 pages (in comparison with 863 pages of the *Commentarii*) by 116'700 US\$. It is therefore clear that there is still a considerable leeway. We therefore came to the conclusion that the figures given us by M. Hintermann from the EMS publishing house are realistic. He calculates production and distribution costs by roughly 75'000 CHF and general overheads by 40'000 CHF. Underestimating the editorial costs somewhat, he comes to 120'000 CHF. As the income from the journal is roughly 200'000, there might be a net profit of 80'000 CHF which he proposes to equally divide among SMG and the EMS. These calculation are corroborated by a tentative offer from Cambridge University Press which concludes that there would result a net profit of 40'000 £ of which 70 % would go to the SMG.
2. *Moving costs.* The purchase of back issues would cost at most CHF 30'000.– according to the current contract. The cost of acquiring the list of subscribers is to be negotiated. In a possible contract with the EMS publishing house, the SMG should perhaps fix its revenues, depending on certain parameters, or fix an upper bound on the overheads calculated.
If the SMG would finally prefer to stay with Birkhäuser, we think it should renegotiate the financial conditions.
3. *On the present subsidy.* In case of a move, the SMG should negotiate with the SANW about a use of the present subsidy for a limited amount of time to cover unforeseen costs connected with the move, and also about a possible permanent use of this money to support mathematics in Switzerland.

Conclusion: We recommend that the SMG negotiates both with the EMS publishing house and with Birkhäuser about a possible move, determines the cost of the move, and decides depending on the outcome on the issues discussed above.

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