

Re: Publication not so important in mathematics

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Michael J Hardy wrote:

> *I wrote:*

>

>> *I wonder if you misunderstand the purpose of publication.*

>>

>> *The purpose is NOT to use publication as a sort of assurance
>> of correctness, on the theory that published papers have been
>> checked for correctness. That's not even a small part of the
>> purpose.*

>>

>> *The main purpose is to acquaint readers with the material.
>> A secondary purpose is that math faculty members are judged
>> in part by their publication records.*

>

>

> *jstevh@msn.com answered:*

>

>

>> *Which basically is saying that math people believe that it's all
about*

>> *their needs and interests, and others are just outside of the
process.*

>

>

> *Huh? Maybe the part about the _secondary_ purpose says that.*

>

> *But I said the MAIN purpose is to acquaint readers with the material.*

>

> *You wrote something; it gets published; readers read it.*

> *Making your work available for others to read is the purpose.*

>

> *Is that wrong? -- Mike Hardy*

Well, like let's talk about Andrew Wiles. Newspapers around the world published that he proved Fermat's Last Theorem. Encyclopedias say he proved Fermat's Last Theorem.

sci.math: Re: Publication not so important in mathematics

Those people who believe he proved Fermat's Last Theorem, probably believe that the publication process has something to do with that belief.

Math people might disagree, claiming that all that scrutiny from around the world is really what it's about, as if he were wrong *someone* somewhere in the world would speak up and holler about the error.

I say they wouldn't necessarily, as the system is broken.

Now for those of you who are still wondering, the issue here is that math folks have basically been admitting that they don't necessarily count publication of a paper in math journal for much, with the poster I'm replying to claiming that the purpose of publication is not to show correctness, but to get people acquainted with the material, and to help academics build up their publications, basically for their careers.

My point is that for some of you that might be a surprise.

You may have erroneously believed that publication in a math journal was more respected by math people, but here you're hearing different, and part of the reason is that I got a paper published in an admittedly small electronic math journal, and sci.math'ers acted like it was nothing.

Notice how the bar keeps moving...some people tell you to ignore someone as a "crank" or "crackpot" and that person gets published—only to have the journal try to de-publish under Usenet pressure, and a few months later shut down—and now publication doesn't matter so much, now they say, but of course, they still want you to ignore that person—me.

I'm the guy who's been negatively labeled by these people, pointing out the inconsistencies.

>>*From what I've seen, they basically just say what suits them.*

James Harris