

Re: Out-of-print math books: An Update

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.math/2008-10/msg01128.html>

- *From:* Bill Dubuque <wgd@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 08 Oct 2008 16:14:44 -0400
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Bart Goddard <goddardbe@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

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I think most mathematicians are far more interested in the beauty of mathematical objects than they are in the beauty of the physical objects representing them

Which is why they're not in a mad rush to hunt down every vague thread remotely related to whatever they're working on. You can't enjoy the beauty of mathematics when it's whizzing by at 90 meg/sec. The beauty is in the enjoyment of learning and discovery. You're skipping that part. Yes, you can get to the top of the mountain and enjoy the view quickly and easily by gunning your Harley up the trail. But the view at the top is only a small part of the hike.

Why do you think that, and how is it related to this thread?

Yes, I know you don't get it. The Borg thinks everything is irrelevant except utility. I can say the same thing only so many times before I get bored. I'm essentially there.

Nowhere did I say anything like "everything is irrelevant except utility". Why don't you answer my question and clarify what you wrote above, instead of trying to put

words in my mouth.

But I did find it ironic that the guy touting utility falls back on the "beauty of mathematics" for one of his arguments.

There's nothing at all ironic about valuing the beauty of abstract mathematical objects more highly than that of their concrete physical representations. If you read sci.math more frequently you would know that – perhaps more than anyone here – I am a champion of mathematical beauty (esp. essence and simplicity). I have no qualms at all about sacrificing the physical beauty of books if that yields an enormous gain in the mathematical beauty that I can access and share. That this is possible should be evident from that advantages I listed earlier. Eliminating the static linear centralized straitjacket of physical books opens up endless possibilities that will lead to revolutionary changes in education and the rapidity of knowledge dissemination.

Cheerfully resisting change since 1959.

While you're cheerfully admiring the "beauty" of your "neat rows of books on the shelf", the rest of us will forge ahead and gladly exploit the many advantages of ebooks. While you're admiring the patterns on your bookshelf, we'll be admiring the patterns in highly complex mathematical objects that we couldn't dream of comprehending in a lifetime constrained by the inefficiencies and limitations of paper books.

—Bill Dubuque