EDITORIAL

The BMC2004 has attracted a lot of attention over the past months (certainly more attention by the editor than he would have liked!). It is the first joint meeting of the British Mathematical Colloquium in its 56 years of history with the Annual Meeting of the IMS, normally held in September, which celebrates its 17th anniversary in 2004. It is a unique opportunity for both Irish and British Mathematics to mix and to develop visions for the future.

But like many joint activities, it has not only benefits. Organising a joint conference also results in more work for the organisers, who are not necessarily doubled, or tripled, in numbers. There have been some joint meetings of the IMS with, e.g., the LMS and others, and most of them will be remembered as successful and worthwhile endeavours. There also exist plans for future joint meetings, possibly of even larger scale.

Working jointly towards a common goal has many positive aspects. Communicating difficulties that one faces together, and trying to develop solutions that suit everyone involved can be very rewarding. In many cases, the efficiency of work done in teams carries a multiplicative factor much higher than the number of team members. The successful outcome serves a wider community and may provide a basis for future joint ventures.

However, organising a conference, say, jointly cannot simply add the ideas and expectations of two or more groups together. Something entirely new has to be created. Many dearly loved features that would be part of individual meetings may not have a place in a joint event and may have to be sacrificed. Entirely new problems arise none of the 'individual organisers' may have any experience with.

In a way it is like writing a joint paper: There is no real need *to write a paper jointly. One can develop ideas and techniques independently and in parallel. One can choose completely by oneself which results will be included, the way arguments will be set out, which journal the paper is submitted to. One may be entirely happy by oneself with the result. Writing a joint paper is very different. There are different tastes. There are different opinions which results should go into. There may be work delayed because people work on different schedules. Even arguments may arise on various parts of the work.*

It is a possibility, not a necessity, to have joint meetings. But maybe an interesting one.

—MM