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## TO PUBLISH OR NOT TO PUBLISH?- THAT IS THE (EDITORIAL) QUESTION

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## **TO PUBLISH OR NOT TO PUBLISH- the Editorial conundrum**

*Bharath Sriraman, The University of Montana*

This editorial began in my mind (a mental blog if you will) as I was making my way from Tromsø (Norway) to Montana late in December. As 2009 slowly rolls in, I am reminded of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish bard Robert Burns' famous poem "Auld Lang Syne" for several reasons.

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind ?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And days o' lang syne ?*

This poem, typically sung on New Year's eve, has served as the backdrop for many important events all over the world. Most recently it was played when the Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf stepped down as the Army Chief, signaling a transition to an era of civilian government in Pakistan. The heinous terrorist incidents that followed in Mumbai (Bombay), which partly can be attributed to the turmoil caused by the artificial borders carved by the British Raj in the wake of their departure from the Indian subcontinent, served as a reminder to the tenuous nature of "change". Yet we are hopeful that things are changing in a positive direction in spite of the mess caused by post colonial geopolitics. After all politics and radicalism need not be the lowest common denominator for communication between sides that share thousands of years of common heritage, language and history (Yes we Can!).

What role, if any, does mathematics and mathematics education have in all this? If we claim to live in a world where any two people can theoretically meet within 24 hours, or communicate in real time thanks to the advances in information technology, then it only makes sense that education instill in future generations of students a sense of shared heritage despite superficial differences based on the Bismarckian notion of a nation-state.

The history of Central Asia, the Indian sub-continent, the Persian-Greco world and numerous other regions when analyzed from the viewpoint of trade and the exchange of mathematical ideas reveals an intricate shared heritage. The current day turmoil in the world based on ideology, religion and artificially drawn post-colonial borders can very well serve as a focal point to examine how culturally based studies of mathematics could serve as a vehicle for promoting peace and discourse instead of economies that flourish under the politics of division and the export of weapon's technology. I envision one of our goals should be to revisit fundamental notions of what constitutes a culturally appropriate math curriculum, in a globally linked world with shared problems and a collective future. For the last few decades many mathematics educators have emphasized the place of critical mathematics education in order to better understand problems plaguing society. The global fall out resulting from the unchecked greed of Wall Street and the corporate world/mentality in general in numerous parts of the world, serves

as an important context to promote the basic principles of mathematics and the necessity to revisit prevalent notions of consumerism and materialism in the West, which come at the expense of other regions of the world. However as well intentioned an analysis of local socio-economically and politically situated problems may be through the lens of critical mathematics education, it is equally important to better educate young minds in critical history and geography. That is, not boring details and facts such as how high a mountain is, or how long a river is (Dewey, 1927 as cited by Howlett, 2008, p.27), but a global awareness of peoples, cultures, habits, occupations, art and societies contributions to the development of human culture in general (Dewey 1939, as cited by Howlett, 2008, p.27) in addition to the contiguous contributions of all cultures to the development of mathematics and science.

Edward Said (1935-2003), the Palestinian American literary /critical/cultural theorist redefined the term *Orientalism* to describe a tradition, both academic and artistic, of hostile and deprecatory views of the East by the West. The curricula used in many parts of the world today is still shaped by the attitudes of the era of European imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries and conveys in a hidden way prejudiced interpretations of colonized cultures and peoples, particularly indigenous peoples. These biases become apparent in the popular media's simplistic and dichotomous view of problems in post colonial Asia (including the Middle East) where oversimplification is often done on religious, nationalistic and ethnic terms, such as Hindu versus Muslim, Arab versus Jew, Sunni versus Shia, Kurd versus Turk, Turk versus Greek, Irani versus Iraqi, etc. This perpetuates the patronizing and overtly patriarchal view of colonized peoples and indigenous cultures to justify external meddling in their political affairs.

What is the role of a math journal in all this? *The Montana Mathematics Enthusiast* aims to publish critically oriented articles relevant for mathematics education in addition to striving to represent under-heard voices in the larger debates characterizing mathematics education. The journal is thriving with submissions from all parts of the world and we are delivering on our promise to help non-English speaking authors from under-represented regions, to the extent we can to publish their work, by finding appropriate reviewers and other means of support. The present issue contains 22 articles with numerous authors from South America [Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay] in addition to contributions from authors in Central Europe (Hungary) and the Mediterranean (Cyprus, Greece, Turkey). Many of these articles are developed from papers presented at the International Conference on Teaching Statistics in Brazil (ICOTS-7). Other voices from Australia and New Zealand lend a nice representation to mathematics education developing in the Southern hemisphere. As usual there is a nice synthesis of articles focused on mathematics content, and those that focus on research of teaching, learning and thinking issues in mathematics education, as well as a Montana feature on Book X of Euclid's Elements.

In 2009, the journal will publish its normal 3 issues in addition to publishing special supplementary issues on inter-disciplinarity, mathematics talent development and at least three new monographs! This hopefully answers the rhetorical question, to publish or not to publish...

## References

Howlett, C. F. (2008). John Dewey and peace education. In M. Bajaj (Ed). *Encyclopedia of Peace Education* (pp. 25-32). Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC.