Recommendations on Information and Communication

The Math-Net Page

Call to All Mathematical Institutions to Install Math-Net Pages

Recommended by the Committee on Electronic Information and Communication (CEIC) of the IMU on February 17, 2002
(endorsed by the Executive Committee of the IMU on April 12, 2002)

Almost every mathematics department or research institute has a homepage that provides basic information about people and activities in the department. In order to be useful to those outside, the homepage should have an easily recognizable, clear, and intuitive structure. Unfortunately, while many of the current homepages are beautifully designed, they differ dramatically in both structure and content. The IMU wants to improve this situation and help users to find high-quality mathematical information.

The Math-Net Page for departments or research institutes provides a way to standardize the presentation of basic information about the department. The Math-Net Page is not meant to replace a nicely designed homepage, but rather to serve as a "secondary homepage" with a uniform and intuitive structure. The uniform structure allows users to find information easily and reliably.

Based on the recommendation of its Committee on Electronic Information and Communication, IMU asks every mathematics institution throughout the world to create a **Math-Net Page**, to install a prominent link to that page from its primary homepage, and to maintain its Math-Net Page in the future.

The Math-Net Page for mathematics departments and research institutes is the result of an intensive international effort. Further information can be found at Launching the Math-Net Page.

Detailed information about creating and installing a Math-Net Page can be found at www.math-net.org/Math-Net_Page_Help.html. For questions and comments, please send e-mail to math-net@zib.de.

Launching the Math-Net Page

IMU's Activities on Electronic Information and Communication

One major aim of the IMU in the field of information and communication is to improve the worldwide access to mathematical information for the mathematical community and, generally, for everybody interested in mathematics. For that reason, the IMU established its Committee on Electronic Information and Communication in 1998. The activities of CEIC comprise all aspects of electronic information and communication in mathematics. Math-Net Pages are an instrument to make the information of mathematical institutions electronically available in a well-structured way. Additional Math-Net Services facilitate search and access. The IMU invites all institutions to join the Math-Net activities and to install Math-Net Pages.

The History of the Math-Net Page

The concept of Math-Net Pages evolved in the framework of the Math-Net project in Germany that aimed at the creation of a distributed information and communication system for the German mathematical community. This project focussed on:

- the development of a human infrastructure (appointment of information coordinators at all participating institutions)
- recommendations for the institutions to structure their local Web sites (which resulted in the initial concept of the Math-Net Page)
- building up of services, such as
  MPRESS for preprints
  PERSONA MATHEMATICA for information about mathematicians
  NAVIGATOR for Math-Net Pages

The Math-Net Pages and the related Math-Net Services have found broad acceptance in Germany. Almost all German mathematical departments and research institutes have installed Math-Net Pages. Under the guidance of CEIC, these concepts have been extended and further developed to meet the needs of the international mathematical community. The current Math-Net page of the University of Cologne, Germany below shows an example of this new international Math-Net Page.

The Idea of the Math-Net Page

A problem with the existing (sometimes beautifully designed) homepages of mathematical institutions is that many of them differ significantly with respect to structure and contents. Beauty does not necessarily support user-friendly navigation and search. With the Math-Net Page, an attempt is made to standardize the presentation of departmental information so that a user, wherever he or she opens such a page, feels at home immediately. The Math-Net Page, intentionally simple in its design, supports various search mechanisms via the use of metadata. It is not intended to substitute an existing homepage. The Math-Net Page is meant as a useful

addition (a secondary homepage), addressing the user looking for simple and intuitive access to local information. The Math-Net Page has a standard version in English. The naming of the entries on the page can be customized, of course, in languages different from English.

An extensive analysis of the material offered by mathematical departments revealed that, in most cases, it can be subdivided into the following six groups: General, People, News, Research, Teaching, and Information Services. These groups and their subgroups, see the example above, form the backbone of the Math-Net Page. In addition, there are links to regional and international Math-Net Services and to local Web pages such as the primary homepage of the department or the homepage of its university.

Generating the Math-Net Page with the Math-Net Page Maker

[The Math-Net Page Maker (www.math-net.org/navigator)](www.math-net.org/navigator) is a form based tool for a quick and easy generation of Math-Net Pages. In addition, the Math-Net Page Maker allows the user to edit existing Math-Net Pages.

Disclaimer

The Math-Net Page Maker has been intensively tested. IMU, CEIC, and the developers of the tool, however, will not be liable for the proper functioning of the software. In case of difficulties, please contact math-net@zib.de.

Press Release: Math-Net Page Launched for Mathematics Institutions Worldwide

The IMU has just released Math-Net, a worldwide electronic information and communication system for mathematics, see www.math-net.org.

Why is Math-Net needed? Today, almost every mathematics department or research institute offers information on the World Wide Web. But the content, structure, and presentation of these pages vary widely, making it difficult for users to navigate and find information. Math-Net is an alternative way for academic departments and research institutes to present information about themselves and their programs consistently. Math-Net has been designed to facilitate access to high-quality mathematical information worldwide, both by human users and search engines.

A special feature of Math-Net is the Math-Net Page, a web portal for mathematics departments and institutes that presents information in a standardized, well-structured, and easy-to-use format.

The Math-Net Page is an additional entry point to institutional information, immediately accessible from the department's homepage, and not meant to replace it. Using this secondary homepage, mathematicians, scientists, students, and the news media can easily find relevant data, such as staff, student programs, colloquia, seminars, and publications.

The Math-Net Page is an enhanced version of a web page that originated in a project in Germany, targeted at establishing a nation-wide information and communication system for mathematics departments. A tool for generating Math-Net Pages as well as assistance is available at no charge at www.math-net.org/Math-Net_Page_Help.html. Mathematics departments around the world are currently setting up Math-Net Pages.

The Math-Net Pages are collected by the Math-Net Service NAVIGATOR, see www.math-net.org/navigator, that gathers the local information and makes it globally available. Other services of this type are MPRESS, see mathnet.preprints.org, collecting information about

mathematical preprints, and PERSONA MATHEMATICA, a search engine for mathematical researchers, see www.mi.uni-koeln.de/Math-Net/persona_mathematica.

Math-Net paves the way towards open and free exchange of information within and for the international mathematics community. In May 2000, the IMU adopted the Math-Net Charter, see www.math-net.org/Charter. The IMU Committee on Electronic Information and Communication has issued a recommendation that universities and institutes worldwide install a Math-Net Page.

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