

Preface

In the summer of 2001, the editors of this volume organized a contributed papers session at the MAA MathFest in Madison, Wisconsin. The topic was ways to use the history of mathematics in teaching. We received many wonderful abstracts. Due to time limitations, we had to make some cuts. Two or three of the abstracts dealt with more recent topics. The majority of the topics however, were more “traditional” in that they addressed ways to use the history of Greek mathematics or calculus for example. We decided to use talks which dealt with topics up to the development of the calculus. The abstracts that addressed more recent mathematics were very intriguing, and made us realize that even though using the history of mathematics in the classroom is becoming very popular, the topic of recent history may be overlooked.

We decided to organize a follow-up session the next year in Burlington. This session was entitled The Use of History in the Teaching of Mathematics, with a focus on roughly the last two hundred years. Again, we had many excellent abstracts. The talks covered a range of topics from Galois theory to using the history of women and minorities in teaching.

The interest at MathFest in the topic of recent mathematical history, and a noticeable lack of information for educators on how to incorporate that history into the classroom, was the motivation for this volume. Several of the papers are from that 2002 session, while others are new. The papers cover a range of topics, from logic and computer science to Galois theory to the evolution of statistical thought in education. There are a variety of levels of detail, from general course outlines to ideas for projects and units in specific courses. Some papers focus on the history, while others focus on teaching.

This volume is by no means an exhaustive survey, simply a first step toward building a body of knowledge and ideas for incorporating recent history into the classroom. Whether you teach lower or upper division courses, mathematics, computer science or statistics, there should be something of interest to you.

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