



Dear Sir or Madam, Will You Read My Paper?

Editorial

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Editor, Notes

Last December I wrote about spam graduate school applications, in which a student sends an email to random faculty members asking to work under their supervision. The letters always praise the recipient's research program to the skies—and betray complete ignorance of what research the recipient might be doing.

As an editor (not so much here, though it happens, but mainly as articles editor for *Crux Mathematicorum*) I see a lot of another flavor of spam: the paper submitted to a totally inappropriate journal. I do not speak here of a paper that might be appropriate if it was at a slightly higher level: that's a subjective matter, and any proud author might rate their paper a little more highly than the referee does. And I'm not even talking about the truly fractoceramic submissions, the ones purporting to square the circle (and prove the Riemann conjecture for dessert) via two pages of metaphysical baffle and a few crudely-typeset equations.

At *Crux*, there's also a string of first efforts from high school students. Many of these would be worthy of praise in a school science fair, but don't have sufficient novelty or depth for general publication. This is probably a specific quirk of *Crux*: it's the first mathematical periodical that many budding mathematicians learn about, and we're proud of that. Moreover, we do expect the articles we publish to be accessible to the brightest high school students—but that's not our only criterion! I don't imagine that the *CJM* or *Annals* have this problem often.

Today I'm thinking of the papers that quite possibly have a modest home waiting for them somewhere, but whose authors seem unaware that not all math journals are isomorphic. Just this week a submission to *Crux* arrived: I won't mention the title, or even the precise topic, to spare the author's blushes, but it was an applied math paper most unlikely to interest the typical *Crux* reader (whom we understand to be a devotee of math puzzles or contest problems.) While it was outside my area of expertise, it seemed to be quite possibly correct and possibly even of some value. Moreover, it had a list of references to articles in various journals. In short, it was clear that the author knew that the world contains numerous math journals. So how did they end up sending it to *Crux*?

I can only assume that the ease of submission, in this age of the Internet, is such that some authors figure that random submitting is easier than reading the Notes to Authors (or even a few articles) to find out what a journal normally publishes. Unfortunately, this is a bad idea. In a related development, in the last twenty years a truly horrifying number of predatory journals with standards best measured using imaginary numbers have sprung up; and the sort of scattergun stochastic submission that gets an applied-math paper sent to a problem-solving journal is not likely to find it a good home, or one that does any credit to its author.

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