Annual Conferences

THROUGH THE YEARS, THE annual conference has been considered a major activity and service to members.

Most meetings have been held in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and recently Lethbridge. There have been three exceptions. One was the 1992 conference held in Medicine Hat. Another was the 1974 conference at Jasper Park Lodge, with buses organized from Edmonton and Calgary. The other was the 1965 conference held in Vancouver, B.C.! In February 1965, the executive suggested holding the meeting in conjunction with the NCTM Summer Meeting in Vancouver but felt a survey of the members was needed. Thus a post-card was enclosed in the *Mathematics Council Newsletter* mailed to all members. One hundred and twenty-five members responded: 85 approved of holding the meeting in Vancouver but would not be attending; 30 approved and would be attending; 10 preferred another location. The executive decided to hold the meeting in Vancouver and made the necessary arrangements. Attendance at the annual general meeting was noted as 22 members plus the executive.

From 1961 to 1966, annual conferences were held in the summer, except in 1963. That year, a Mathematics Council-Science Council joint conference was held at the University of Alberta, Calgary Branch (as it was

MATHEMATICS COUNCIL, ATA
TWELFTH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
October 13(pm) & 14, 1972
CAPRI MOTOR HOTEL
RED DEER

then known), on the Thursday and Friday of Easter week. Beginning in 1967, annual conferences were held during the school year, in the early fall.

Until 1968, the executive essentially planned all conferences. In 1968, a planning committee was established, although the executive still made many decisions regarding fees, locations and so on.

For the last number of years, a conference chair from the designated site is chosen at least two years in advance. This person assumes primary responsibility for putting together the various committees required to put on a successful conference. The chair attends executive meetings to report on progress. Executive members are expected to take an active part in each conference as presenters or presiders. Naturally, the conference program committee has the major responsibility in putting together a program that will appeal to participants.

In 1966, 1973, 1979, 1986, 1990 and 1994, the annual conference took the form of NCTM Regional

conferences. These conferences are cosponsored by MCATA and NCTM. Historically, they have been popular with participants, who have attended in large numbers. These conferences have alternated between Edmonton and Calgary. The 1998 Regional conference will be held in Calgary.

Prior to 1985, the conferences opened on a Friday night with the keynote speaker and some sort of reception; sessions were held all day Saturday. In 1985, the conferences were lengthened by one day, and opened Thursday evening with sessions held all day Friday and Saturday, with a major social event scheduled on Friday night. However, because of the difficulty of teachers getting away from their schools on Thursday and Friday, a move is now being made to have future conferences run from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon.

A highlight of the most recent conferences has been the short sessions, which were initiated by Diane Congdon, chair of the Medicine Hat conference in 1992.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM]

CHANGING DIRECTIONS

Canadian Regional Conference
Edmonton, Alberta
October 20–22, 1994

An exploration of reasoning, problem solving, connections, technology, and communication in the teaching of mathematics.

For conference information, telephone (403) 159-4151 or (403) 153-0692.

Hosted by Mathematics Council, The Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA]

G. W. Leibniz perfects binary system of notation that eventually will be used by all computers.

Medicine Hat 1992: We Didn't Go Down in Flames

Diane Congdon

THE 1992 MCATA CONFERENCE IN MEDICINE HAT FEELS LONG past, yet people still comment on its success and unusual format. It might have been canny strategy, but, in truth, dumb luck played a larger part.

Few planning committee members had ever attended a MCATA conference. Ideas were bandied about without the guidance (or interference) of tradition. This proved lucky when we were faced with unusual problems.

Medicine Hat offered limited conference facilities and its out-of-the-way location presaged a poorly attended event. (Someone from Edmonton wondered why MCATA was holding its annual conference in Saskatchewan.) One thoughtful executive member suggested that "breaking even" was a laudable goal. Dreading a worst-case scenario, we kept costs low by calling in favors from friends and colleagues to provide free labor. Our only lavish expense was the clay goblets given to registrants, and even those were of greater value than cost.

The highlight-almost-disaster of the conference was the Math Fair. The idea of 25 simultaneous, open-area sessions made the best use of limited space, namely, one large ballroom. It was the fair that gave rise to the conference's medieval theme: "Math Fare." This theme continued through to the social events: Mead and Greet, Aftermath and Joust for Fun.

Two weeks before the conference, the Fair speaker list was seriously underfilled, and we were panicking. We used the list of early registrants to make hours of long-distance calls to plead for volunteers. Our rule for choosing who to contact was simple: registrants purchasing dinner theatre tickets are fun-loving people who will agree to present last-minute sessions. (And they responded well to pleading and bribery.) The Fair was a smashing success, and the format has been repeated at other MCATA conferences and a teachers' convention.

A medieval feast and theatrical performance also portended disaster. We expected some heat due to the earthy nature of the script but never predicted three fire alarms. As frustrated actors froze in place, embarrassed hotel employees apologized for mischievous children roaming the hallways. Only a roomful of educators would be so sympathetic. (Later rumors suggested a faulty alarm in the kitchen was the true culprit.)

With the conference over, contented registrants headed out along the barren Trans-Canada Highway. The planning committee, with its financial statement, basked in a rosy glow. We briefly considered serving a warm dish of crow to those sceptics who had foretold failure, but we were unwilling to take the first bite.

AD 1687

Isaac Newton publishes *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, his first presentation of calculus (principles developed in 1656).

Newton and Leibniz are coinventors of calculus.

AD 1694

Jacques Ozanam publishes *Récreations mathématiques et physiques*, the precursor of number-game books for the next 200 years.

Conference Schedule

1961	August 16–19	Edmonton
1962	July 11–13	Edmonton
1963	April 18–19	Calgary – joint Math/Science
1964	July 8	Red Deer
1965	August 27	Vancouver
1966*	August 25–27	Calgary
1967	September 15–16	Red Deer
1968	October 4–5	Red Deer
1969	September 26–27	Edmonton
1970	September 25–26	Calgary
1971	October 1–2	Calgary
1972	September 29–30	Red Deer
1973*	October 4–6	Edmonton
1974	October 25–26	Jasper Park Lodge
1975	October 3–4	Calgary
1976	October 1–2	Red Deer
1977	October 14–15	Red Deer
1978	October 13–14	Red Deer
1979*	October 11–13	Calgary
1980	November 7–8	Red Deer
1981	October 16–17	Lethbridge
1982	October 22–23	Edmonton
1983	October 28–29	Calgary
1984	October 26–27	Red Deer
1985	October 24–26	Lethbridge
1986*	October 16–18	Edmonton
1987	October 22–24	Calgary
1988	November 3–5	Edmonton
1989	November 2–4	Lethbridge
1990*	October 25–27	Calgary
1991	October 31–November 2	Edmonton
1992	November 5–7	Medicine Hat
1993	October 28–30	Calgary
1994*	October 20–22	Edmonton
1995	September 29–30	Lethbridge

*NCTM Meeting

AD 1748

Leonhard Euler publishes Introduction to Infinitesimal Analysis, called the foremost mathematical textbook of modern times.

AD 1794

The École Polytechnique is established, with great French mathematicians among its teachers.