

U.S. Delegation Report
IMU General Assembly, 2018

Submitted by Eric Friedlander, Delegation Chair

Delegation report: IMU (International Mathematical Union) General Assembly meeting in Sao Paolo, Brazil in the two days of July 29 – 30, 2018.

United States Delegation: Alice Chang, Eric Friedlander (Chair), Kristin Lauter, Ken Ono, Ken Ribet plus Kathie Bailey.

Every four years, the International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM) is held under the auspices of the International Mathematical Union (IMU). The 2018 meeting took place August 1 – 9, 2018 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Prior to the quadrennial ICM, the IMU General Assembly meets to oversee and approve actions of the IMU. The most recent IMU General Assembly meeting took place in Sao Paolo (Brazil) during July 29 – 30, 2018.

The newly elected President of the IMU is Professor Carlos Kenig of the University of Chicago.

A typical IMU General Assembly meeting takes place with little controversy, but the 2018 meeting addressed several important issues.

- 1.) The General Assembly approved to make permanent the IMU's office in Berlin. The United States did not seek to serve as the permanent home for the IMU.
- 2.) The General Assembly approved the site for the 2022 ICM. For the first time, there was serious competition to host a forthcoming ICM, with the General Assembly tasked to choose between bids from Paris (France) and St. Petersburg (Russia). The Russian bid was impressive in its financing and its governmental support, and was the clear winner in a secret ballot. The U.S. delegation did not vote as a block; each member of the delegation made her/his own choice.
- 3.) The General Assembly discussed the controversial decision by the Executive Committee to discontinue the Nevanlinna Prize (for outstanding contributions in Mathematical Aspects of Information Sciences). This decision was taken in part because of Rolf Nevanlinna's role in Finland during World War II, but also reflected an internal debate about the role of the computational sciences. The General Assembly over-ruled the IMU Executive Committee, demanding that this IMU Prize be continued to be offered every four years but with a new name and an established endowment. The IMU does not wish to release details of this arrangement until it is formalized.

The IMU is actively reviewing the structure and organization of future ICM's. These will still award Fields Medals (Mathematics' most prestigious awards) as well as the newly constituted

Nevanlinna Prize, but the heavy responsibility of organizing the program of each ICM will be shared among committees. One issue of consequence to many mathematicians is the number of invited lectures in each field of mathematics and the identification of new fields.

The 2018 ICM in Rio was remarkably successful despite the fact that the main pavilion of the ICM site had a serious fire on July 30 and was therefore unusable. The Brazilian hosts (led by Professor Marcelo Viana, a former Vice President of the IMU) were unflappable. Moreover, the cultural entertainment was much appreciated. Many of the lectures were excellent, and participants enjoyed short movie clips about the Fields Medalists.

The U.S. delegation hosted two events funded by the Simons Foundation. The first was a “first-timers breakfast” attended by most of the early career mathematicians given travel support as well as by a few more senior mathematicians. The second was a general reception for U.S. based participants and many of the first class international mathematicians. Both were well received.

Two matters of public interest might be mentioned. The presentation ceremony for the Fields Medalists was attended by more than one hundred select Brazilian high school students. At the presentation ceremony, one of the Fields Medals was stolen despite video surveillance at the time of the theft – this theft captured on camera was fodder for the international press.

Photo of the U.S. Delegation to the IMU General Assembly:



Photos from the Early Career Breakfast

