Euler Book Prize

The Euler Book Prize is awarded annually to an author or authors of an outstanding book about mathematics. The Prize is intended to recognize authors of exceptionally well written books with a positive impact on the public's view of mathematics and to encourage the writing of such books. Eligible books include mathematical monographs at the undergraduate level, histories, biographies, works of fiction, poetry; collections of essays, and works on mathematics as it is related to other areas of arts and sciences. To be considered for the Euler Prize a book must be published during the five years preceding the award and must be in English. The Euler book prize is $2,000.

The Euler Book Prize was established in 2005 and first given in 2007, the 300th anniversary of the birth of Leonhard Euler. This award also honors Virginia and Paul Halmos whose generosity made the award possible. The award is given every year at a national meeting of the Association.

Allison K. Henrich, Emille Davie Lawrence, Matthew A. Pons, David Taylor (editors)

Living Proof: Stories of Resilience Along the Mathematical Journey, 2019. A joint publication of the Mathematical Association of America and the American Mathematical Society.

If one were to ask a member of the general public what a mathematician looks like, the answers elicited would likely bear little resemblance to the mathematicians profiled in *Living Proof*. That is exactly why this book is such a vital contribution to public discourse about mathematics and to the humanization of those who call themselves mathematicians.

"There are dangerous myths in mathematics," writes Stephen Kennedy in the foreword. "One of them is that there exist 'math people,' people to whom it all comes easily and is obvious." In reality, "the people we label 'good at math' are simply those who have taken the time and trouble to engage the struggle more deeply than others."

Living Proof powerfully illustrates that while studying mathematics is far from a trivial endeavor, mathematicians "engage the struggle" in myriad different ways. It is a book that exposes the reality of the normal, very human challenges that come with making a career in mathematics. Moreover, it is a book that casts a compelling vision of a mathematical community that is far more diverse, inclusive, and accessible than history and popular perception might suggest.

In addition to its positive impact on the public's view of mathematics, *Living Proof* should be required reading for aspiring mathematicians who are wondering if there is a place for them in the mathematical community. As Alicia Prieto-Langarica writes, "impostor syndrome has wonderful ways of sneaking up on you when you least need it." This book provides both a potent antidote and a realistic hope that "we can create a mathematical world where demoralizing, punishing struggle is not necessary."

Response from Allison Henrich

In our community, we don't talk to each other enough about how things are really going for us. We talk about what we're studying, what mathematical problems we're working on, what we're teaching in our courses, and what puzzles we've been intrigued by. We don't share how we felt when we had no idea even how to start a homework problem that someone said was "easy." We don't tell our peers about what happened in an interaction with our advisor that left us in tears, especially if the interaction tapped into our deepest insecurities. We aren't eager to admit when we feel like we don't belong in a mathematical space. This is why my amazing *Living Proof* co-editors—Matthew, Emille, Dave—and I felt that it was important to provide an opportunity to be more honest with each other about the struggles we face. If we don't share our stories, we isolate ourselves. If we can't talk about problems with each other, we won't be able to find solutions together. But sharing our true stories can be difficult. It requires being vulnerable and letting people in. So, I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who shared a

piece of themselves in *Living Proof*, either in the book or in the *Living Proof* blog (which has recently found a new home in *MAA Math Values*). Without your contributions, this project would not be possible. This award is an acknowledgment of the impact of your stories. I also want to thank Steve Kennedy, our acquisitions editor at MAA, for believing so strongly in this project, especially as we faced rejection by other publishers. Steve, without your advocacy, I'm certain Living Proof would not have had the impact that it has had. Thank you all for making the Living Proof vision a reality.

Response from Emille Lawrence

I am grateful to the MAA for recognizing the narratives put forth in our book and the efforts that we, the editors, made in bringing those narratives to the fore. This project was such a necessary labor of love for me, and I learned so much from the experience. We all struggle. We all face hardships. Yet, we find satisfaction in pushing against these hurdles and continue to persist through. This book means so much to me, and I am beyond appreciative that the MAA and the mathematics community at large find it just as valuable as I do. Thank you for this award.

Response from Matthew Pons

The *Living Proof* project was motivated by listening to students discuss their struggles with mathematics and evolved into its final form by realizing that the struggle is not always about content. Our overarching goal was to help students see that no matter where they are on their journey, someone has been there before. Somewhat surprisingly, the project has inspired us (professional mathematicians and our community) just as much as it has encouraged our target audience. It continues to remind us that while we are all human, our experiences can be wildly different as we walk the mathematical journey. Yes, the content can be difficult, but the discipline should be accessible to anyone who is eager to join us in our quest for knowledge. We all need to acknowledge the barriers that keep people out and work to tear those barriers down. I think my co-editors—Allison, Emille, Dave—would agree that sharing our personal experiences with each other is one way we can do this. We also have to listen to each other. I would like to thank Steve Kennedy for listening to us and helping us see the full potential of the project. I would like to thank all of our contributors for their willingness to share their stories, which are deeply personal. Without these individuals, the *Living Proof* concept would just be a "good idea for a project" sitting on someone's desk. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge all those who have listened. Folks read the stories and responded. Many have integrated the collection into their classes and had their students think about times when they struggled. As a community, we are celebrating our diversity and embracing our differences more than ever before, and I'm deeply honored to be able to participate in this exciting time in the mathematical community.

Response from David Taylor

Imposter syndrome among aspiring and even accomplished mathematicians is real. A true sense of belonging to the discipline and professional is hard for many to find, whether it be due to not seeing someone "like them" or finding it nearly impossible to overcome some difficult content. In some cases, it's a lack of self-support at the root of the challenge, but in other cases, perhaps even most cases, it's a lack of external support, sometimes external discouragement, that leads to self-doubt and a feeling that the discipline may not be for the person. And, as humans, this is oftentimes hard to talk about. We don't talk about it with our friends and families. We don't talk about it with our classmates and professors. And sometimes we don't even think about it ourselves. When friend and co-editor Matthew Pons mentioned the idea for *Living Proof* to me, I knew that I had to be involved and I had no doubt it would be an important piece of work. If we're not able to talk about imposter syndrome issues with others or move beyond them ourselves, we needed to show everyone that, yes, there are people like you in mathematics and that, yes, you do be-

long and you can do this. I cannot express how much gratitude I have for Matthew Pons, other co-editors Allison Henrich and Emille Davie Lawrence, and all of the amazing people who contributed stories for our volume. The raw vulnerability in many of the stories is powerful, and the advice given by the many stories adds small nuggets of "help" to those reading *Living Proof* that are going through some version of imposter syndrome. And, I cannot thank Steve Kennedy, acquisitions editor for the MAA, enough for his belief in this project and for shepherding the volume through the MAA and AMS to offer it without cost. The stories continue via the *Living Proof* blog, and I hope that any *Living Proof* readers for whom a story helps them overcome challenges to succeed will write their own *Living Proof* story for the blog in the future.

Biographical Sketches

Allison Henrich is a professor at Seattle University, where she has been on the faculty since 2009. Allison is passionate about working with undergraduates on research related to knots and games, to support students' professional formation. She is a coauthor of the books *A Mathematician's Practical Guide to Mentoring Undergraduate Research* and *An Interactive Introduction to Knot Theory*. While Allison is a knot theory researcher by training, *Living Proof: Stories of Resilience Along the Mathematical Journey* has been the catalyst for her to shift some of her energy towards editorial projects. Allison co-edited the *Encyclopedia of Knot Theory*, she is one of the founding editors of the *Living Proof* blog, and she is the new editor of *MAA FOCUS*, the newsmagazine of the MAA.

Emille Davie Lawrence is a term associate professor and chair of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of San Francisco. She earned her BS in mathematics from Spelman College and her PhD in mathematics from the University of Georgia. She has also been a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Santa Barbara and an Assistant Professor at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Her research focuses on topological properties of spatial graphs. She has been recognized for her work in the mathematics community as the 2021 Association for Women in Mathematics Service Award winner and was also elected to the Board of Directors of the Mathematical Association of America as officer-at-large. She is also a recipient of the 2021 Karen EDGE Fellowship for mid-career mathematicians.

Emille enjoys speaking about mathematics to people of all ages and has been a lecturer at the National Math Festival (2017 and 2021) and has been featured on several math podcasts (My Favorite Theorem and Kids Math Talk) as well as many other outlets. She believes strongly that mathematics should be accessible to everyone, and her commitment to access is evidenced through her work with various national and local organizations, such as the EDGE Program, the National Girls Collaborative Project, the National Association for Mathematicians, and the Association for Women in Mathematics. Her non-professional life is filled with music and other performing arts and spending meaningful time with her husband and two children.

Matthew Pons is a professor of mathematics and chair of the Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science at North Central College, where he has been a faculty member since 2007. He earned his PhD from the University of Virginia in 2007 and his undergraduate degree in 2002 from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. His research lies in the intersection of operator theory and complex analysis, specifically composition operators in both continuous and discrete settings. He is the author of the text *Real Analysis for the Undergraduate* and is a founding editor of the *Living Proof* blog.

David Taylor is a professor of mathematics and associate dean at Roanoke College in southwest Virginia, where he has been since 2007. As an instructor, he is passionate about letting natural questions about the world motivate the development and study of various mathematical concepts. In terms of higher education

administration, he focuses on ways to enrich the undergraduate experience, including experiential learning opportunities and general education that focuses on essential skills necessary for not just a first job, but for a promotion or second job. David is the author of *Gambling, Games, and Probability: An Introduction to Mathematics*, now in its second edition, and is proud to have been a co-editor for *Living Proof: Stories of Resilience Along the Mathematical Journey*. He has served on multiple MAA committees and councils and is very active in the Maryland, DC, and Virginia Section of the MAA. In David's spare time, he enjoys cooperative board games with friends, reality television shows, and time with his close friends and amazing dog, Lilly.