

## Preface

The twenty fourth annual conference of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia (MERGA) was held at Sydney University, New South Wales, from 30 June to 4 July 2001. The Conference attracted papers from researchers in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and Taiwan. Contributions from a large number of established researchers—many with substantial international reputations—as well as a significant number of beginning researchers were included in the program.

The Proceedings of the Conference have been prepared after a refereeing process which conforms with current practices for ensuring that the quality of the papers is of a high standard and constitutes scholarly research which provides an addition to knowledge. The Proceedings are published by MERGA and are available for purchase from the MERGA Publications Office.

Research studies reported at the Conference encompassed a variety of mathematics education-related topics and made use of a wide range of research methodologies and theoretical perspectives. Published presentations are organised into Keynote Papers and Research Papers. In accepting research papers for the Conference, every effort was made to be as inclusive as possible of the research needs and interests of members of the mathematics education research community.

Refereeing processes for the Conference were overseen by an Editorial Committee consisting of Janette Bobis (University of Sydney, Chair), Bob Perry (University of Western Sydney, Reviews Coordinator), and Michael Mitchelmore (Macquarie University, Desktop Publisher). MERGA members were invited to act as referees, and the responsibilities of this role were made clear to those who accepted. Several experts outside the MERGA membership were also invited to referee papers submitted.

Authors who wished to have a paper considered as a research report were required to submit the full text of their paper to blind peer reviewing by two referees. As far as possible, the research interests of referees were taken into account when papers were allocated for review. Referees were asked to assess manuscripts in the light of MERGA's agreed guidelines for conference papers and the Conference *Style and Format Specifications*. They were then asked to recommend to accept or not accept the paper and to provide comments justifying their decision.

The Reviews Coordinator read all the referee's reports. Papers which were recommended for acceptance by two referees were accepted for presentation. If both referees recommended non-acceptance of the paper, the Reviews Coordinator—in consultation with the other members of the Editorial Committee—first determined whether the reviews were reasonable (i.e., had been written in accordance with the stipulated procedures). Where it was agreed that a review was not reasonable, a further review was solicited from an independent reviewer. Where one referee recommended acceptance and the other non-acceptance, the paper was sent to a third referee, who in effect had a casting vote. Papers with two reasonable reviews recommending non-acceptance were rejected, but authors were invited to re-submit their paper as a short communication. Where the Reviews Coordinator felt that an author may have been unkindly treated by this procedure, the paper and all referees' reports were read by the entire Editorial Committee before a decision was taken.

Some research reports were submitted as Early Bird papers. These were subject to the same review process as other research reports except that the author was given the opportunity to revise and resubmit the paper for a second review.

When authors were notified of the result of the reviewing process pertaining to their paper, they were also sent copies of the reviews for that paper.

Some research reports were submitted as entries for the Practical Implications Award. Refereeing of these papers was organised by the Vice-President (Research) of MERGA. Each paper was reviewed by four referees, following the same guidelines as other research reports.

Authors who wished to make a Short Communication at the Conference were required to submit an abstract only. These abstracts were reviewed by two members of the Editorial Committee to ensure their relevance to the Conference.

The purposes of adopting the methods indicated above were to facilitate high quality feedback to authors and to achieve the best possible assurance that the Conference Proceedings conformed to MERGA research guidelines. It was especially hoped that beginning researchers would benefit from the feedback received.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee, I wish to thank all those who generously agreed to act as referees for the research papers submitted. Their support has ensured that the quality of the Conference Proceedings is of a standard befitting the mathematics education research community.

Janette Bobis  
Chair, Editorial Committee  
Sydney, Australia  
June 2001