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Samuel Dickstein the Founder of *Wiadomości Matematyczne*

IN THIS SHORT NOTE¹ we wish to present Samuel Dickstein – a unique mathematician, historian, animator of scientific life, publisher and founder of scientific journals, inter alia, *Wiadomości Matematyczne*.

Dickstein was born on 12 May 1851 in Warszawa (Warsaw) at that time occupied by the Russian Empire². In 1866 he entered the Main School where he studied until 1869, the year in which the school was converted into the Imperial University of Warsaw. At this newly established university (where Russian was the language of instruction at the time), he continued his education until 1876 when he obtained Master's degree in mathematics. During all that period he spent at the university he was also teaching mathematics in a secondary school. In order to promote Polish education he directed in Warszawa in 1878–1888 his own private secondary school which was held in a very high esteem. In 1906 he became the president of Rada Naukowa Towarzystwa Kursów Naukowych (the Board of the Scientific Courses Society). In 1915, after the refoundation of the University of Warsaw, Dickstein was appointed professor and started to give lectures on algebra and the history of science. In 1921 he became a honorary professor of mathematics and taught at the university until 1937.

In 1888 Dickstein founded (together with Edward Natanson, Władysław Natanson, and Władysław Gosiewski) *Prace Matematyczno-Fizyczne* (*Math-*

¹ The article is based on a short biogram of Samuel Dickstein available at the website of *Wiadomości Matematyczne* (<http://wm.ptm.org.pl>).

² In the period 1795–1918 Poland did not exist as a sovereign state, being under occupation of three surrounding countries – the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria.

ematical and Physical Papers) – the first journal uniquely devoted to mathematics and physics set up in Poland.

Since 1894 Dickstein and Aleksander Czajewicz edited *Biblioteka Matematyczno-Fizyczna*³ (*Physical Sciences Library*), a series devoted to publishing academic handbooks. The Polish Mathematical Society referred to this idea in 1953 when a series of books called *Biblioteka Matematyczna* (*Mathematical Library*) was initiated.



Samuel Dickstein (1851–1939)

In 1897 the first issue of *Wiadomości Matematyczne* (*Mathematical Notices*) was released. This periodical was founded and financed independently by Dickstein. Not only did it present scientific articles but it also turned towards teaching and popularization of mathematics. During the period 1897–1939, forty-seven volumes came out. Since 1955 the Polish Mathe-

³ The series was founded by Marian Baraniecki (1848–1895) in 1882.

mathematical Society has carried on Dickstein's work by publishing *Wiadomości Matematyczne*, an annual of the Polish Mathematical Society.

In 1890 Dickstein became a member of Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk in Poznań (Poznań Friends of Scholarship) and from 1893 he was a corresponding member of Akademia Umiejętności (the Academy of Arts and Sciences) in Kraków. In 1905 he took part in the foundation of Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie (the Warsaw Scientific Society), where he was elected the first vice-chairman. The fact that in 1906 Dickstein founded, the first in Warszawa, Koło Matematyczno-Fizyczne (the Mathematical and Physical Society) that gathered teachers was of great importance.

Samuel Dickstein maintained far-reaching contacts with scientists from other countries. He was a member-correspondent of the Scientific Society in Liège, a member of the Scientific Society in Prague and an honorary member of both the Jednota Českých Matematiků a Fyziků and the International Committee for Teaching Mathematics. In recognition of Dickstein's historical research, he was appointed vice-chairman of the International Academy of the History of Science.

Dickstein did not confine himself to publishing and organizational activities only. He also conducted research into algebra and history and he was writing handbooks for secondary education. Dickstein's most important work, a monograph – *Hoene-Wroński. Jego życie i prace (Hoene-Wroński. Life and work)* – in which he analyzed this prominent nineteenth-century mathematician, was published in 1896.

Samuel Dickstein died on 28 September 1939 in Warszawa. To honour this great mathematician and ardent scientist the Polish Mathematical Society founded in 1978 the Samuel Dickstein reward for exceptional achievements in the areas of the history of mathematics, the philosophy of mathematics, teaching of mathematics, the popularization of mathematics and other outstanding achievements in the areas of education, publication and organization.

It is hard to overestimate Samuel Dickstein's contribution both into Polish mathematics and Polish science as a whole. Bronisław Knaster wrote (*Prace Matematyczne* 1 (1955), 4–12):

According to Stefan Mazurkiewicz's apt remark, Dickstein's systematic and many-sided efforts to create a "scientific atmosphere" which was absent in the then Poland, are particularly worth noticing. It was not only his editing and publishing activity, nor collecting priceless mathematical works to create a library

(towards the end of his life he had given it to the Warsaw Scientific Society but only part of it remained untouched after World War II and it now constitutes part of the Mathematics Institute Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences), nor his diligence both in improving our mathematical abilities and in bringing up new scientists by publishing valuable academic textbooks and translating foreign works, but also – in great measure – his support for original research and announcement of their results were the activities which helped in creating the “scientific atmosphere”.

Roman Duda – a former Editor-in-Chief of *Wiadomości Matematyczne* wrote about the journal and its founder (*Wiadomości Matematyczne* 33 (1997), 111–135):

Wiadomości Matematyczne was an extremely authorial periodical. On every page and in almost each line it could be felt that it was prepared under the auspices of one and the same person – its “editor and publisher”. Samuel Dickstein’s consistency as far as adapted form is concerned, his unstinting generosity and unusual diligence are virtues which made the periodical interesting and enticing for people.

Translated from Polish by Magdalena Libura. The photo of Samuel Dickstein by courtesy of the International Academy of the History of Science.

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