

Preface

In these days and age, when the sheer number of publications in numerical mathematics increases so rapidly, it is surely necessary to provide valid justification to a new publication. The reason for *Acta Numerica* is, paradoxically, to counteract the information explosion by presenting selected and important developments in numerical mathematics and scientific computation on an annual basis.

Each year, the Editorial Board of *Acta Numerica* poses itself the question ‘what are recent significant developments in our subject, developments that are important enough to merit interest by the numerical community as a whole’. Having selected a shortlist of topics, we ask named individuals to write survey papers. The purpose of the exercise being to disseminate knowledge outside restricted professional boundaries, the authors are expected to pitch their exposition so that it can be understood and appreciated by all practitioners of the numerical art, and not just by workers in a narrow sub-discipline. We are guided in our choice of authors both by their contribution to the underlying topic *and* by their track record as expositors.

Numerical analysts, like other professionals in a competitive world, are busy with their own research, academic and administrative duties. It is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to keep up with developments outside one’s narrow experience. This, we believe, is an unhealthy and undesirable situation, not only because of broader cultural considerations but also since developments in different parts of numerical mathematics frequently impinge upon each other. We hope that *Acta Numerica* will play a role in bridging gaps and presenting many new and exciting ideas – algorithms and mathematical analysis alike – to a wider audience.