to their families and friends. There are few mathematical books that get taken out of libraries, but I am willing to wager that this one will be, so recommend it to your librarian. It is not a good mathematics book, but it is an excellent book about mathematics, and brilliantly designed!

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The aim of Math matters is to present basic ideas in mathematics through real-life situations. It was primarily developed from the author's experience in teaching college students returning to study after some years in work, and focuses on trying to connect the mathematics to the students' own life experiences. The material is thus arranged in broad categories, such as Mathematics of the marketplace, Mathematics of description, Mathematics of optimization, Mathematics of space, and so on. Within these chapters we find a number of ‘situations’, for example, Understanding your bank card bill, Dancing on the ceiling, Do you guys really do this for a living?, Blue flash by a nose. Each situation is developed in such a way as to give the student the ability to think critically about the problem before resolving a mathematical solution.

As you can see from the above selection of headings, we need to look at the subheadings, three layers deep, to find out what precisely each section is about. At this level we do find a very wide range of topics which should be both interesting and stimulating to the target student audience. Does the cardinal prefer the cedar house? turns out to be a chapter on the chi-squared test. The level and content are approximately that of the first papers in pure and statistics at A level, or a university foundation course. There is virtually no mechanics, but there are a number of important contemporary uses of mathematics. We find a basic explanation of RSA public-key cryptography and modular arithmetic, game theory using matrices, propositional calculus and truth tables, and an introduction to formal computer languages.

As the book is aimed at the American market we obviously have all monetary questions in dollars and the US System of units used throughout. As there is precious little mechanics this is no great hindrance to using the questions in the book. There are practice exercises throughout and longer questions at the end of each chapter. There are answers to all the practice exercises but only a selected number of solutions to the end of chapter problems – this seems rather unhelpful if it is to be genuinely useful as a self-help book. There is an instructor's guide available to accompany the book which includes all the answers not in the main text.

On the whole, the text and layout are reader-friendly and unthreatening to students. In my experience, this is most appreciated by non-mathematics students who need to take a minimum of mathematics courses. Practice with a few appropriate chapters from Math matters should give them the confidence to move on to more standard course text books.

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I quote from the preface: ‘... our aim is to bring to the inquisitive reader without particular mathematical background an explanation of the multitudinous ways in