

Letters to the Editor

In every mathematician is the soul of a poet

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As a mathematician I was somewhat offended that your otherwise interesting article on the mathematician Richard Ellis' analysis of Emily Dickinson portrays mathematicians as narrow-minded specialists who might "think him weird" for his interest in the humanities.

In fact, the history of mathematics, ancient as well as contemporary, demonstrates the breadth and depth of mathematicians' interests in and contributions to art, music, philosophy, politics, literature, and many other areas in the arts, humanities and social sciences, in addition to their more stereotypical contributions to mathematics and the sciences.

Richard Ellis' noteworthy contributions may be atypical, but his unbridled interest in an area outside of mathematics proper is typical of mathematicians. Even contributions to literature are no surprise. As the famous Russian mathematician Sophia Kovalevskaja once said, "One cannot be a mathematician without being a poet in soul."

JULIAN F. FLERON
Assistant Professor
of Mathematics
Westfield State College

Westfield