we can easily get over this by wording the question differently: say, 'Consider the sequence . . . . : try to spot a simple rule by which the terms can be successively worked out, and use it (a) to calculate the next 2 terms, (b) to find and expression for the nth term, (c) . . . [and so on]'. My whole point is, quite simply, that the recognition of patterns is such an important aspect of practically all branches of mathematics that pupils should be made aware of this and encouraged to think on these lines at all levels. I am not alone in this view – see the final paragraph on p. 450 of the November *Gazette*.

Yours sincerely,

A. ROBERT PARGETER

10 Turnpike, Sampford Peverell, Tiverton EX16 7BN

DEAR EDITOR,

John Sharp [1] refers to the 5400 sequences in Sloane & Plouffe [2] and he goes on to tell us that Plouffe has developed an Intemet server called the Inverse Symbolic Calculator [3] which contains millions of constants (some 76 million by July 1998); [4] is an associated site. The encyclopedia itself has been made available on-line and is also being continually updated. As mentioned in [5] it was accessible initially via e-mail, but it has now been much improved and put on the Internet [6]. In July it contained about 40000 sequences with several being added daily. There are links to other interesting sites, in particular to the new electronic *Journal of Integer Sequences* [7]. The first paper in this journal is by Conway [8].

References

1. John Sharp, Have you seen this number?, *Math. Gaz.* **82** (July 1998) pp. 203-214.
2. N. J. A. Sloane and Simon Plouffe, *The encyclopedia of integer sequences*, Academic Press, San Diego CA (1995).
3. Simon Plouffe, Inverse symbolic calculator, http://www.cecm.sfu.ca/projects/ISC/ISCmain.html
4. Simon Plouffe, Plouffe's inverter, http://www.lacim.uqam.ca/pi/
5. E. Keith Lloyd, The standard deviation of 1, 2, ..., n – Pell's equation and rational triangles, *Math. Gaz.* **81** (July 1997) pp. 231-243.
6. N. J. A. Sloane, Sloane's on-line encyclopedia of integer sequences, http://www.research.att.com/~njas/sequences/
7. *Journal of Integer Sequences*, http://www.research.att.com/~njas/sequences/JIS/
8. J. H. Conway, On happy factorizations, *J. Integer Seq.* **1** (1998) article 98.1.1

Yours sincerely,

E. K. LLOYD

Faculty of Mathematical Studies, University of Southampton SO17 1BJ

e-mail: *ekl@soton.ac.uk*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025557200208267 Published online by Cambridge University Press