Hi,
You may find the following interesting. The subject is: F.L.T - Fermat's Last Theorem.

For the non-mathematicians among you, I'll start with a brief introduction on F.L.T. The others can skip right to the next paragraph. Well, Fermat was a French lawyer who practiced math, just for the fun, in his spare time. 356 years ago he began working on a subject in "number theory" and he wrote a book about that. In one of the pages he wrote a mathematical statement (which is very easy to explain and understand, but let's forget about that) and wrote in the margin a remark that inarguably became the most famous remark in math history. His remark read: "I have a truly marvelous demonstration of this proposition which this margin is too narrow to contain". To make a long story short - ever since that annoying remark, the greatest mathematicians have tried to prove this simple statement of his without any success. It is considered as the most famous problem in mathematics (though not important for its own) and one of the toughest.

Throughout the years, thousands of proofs were proposed - all of them turned out to be wrong. Many proofs were by cranks that sent them to math professors to check. Since those professors were not always in the mood to check an obvious nonsense, they used to answer by "I have a truly marvelous refutation of your attempted proof, but unfortunately, this page is not large enough to contain it". I learned from an article in NY-Times, that several years ago, someone wrote a graffiti in a subway station in 8th avenue in NY, saying: "I have discovered a truly remarkable proof, but I can't write it now because my train is coming..."

However, several months ago, a British mathematician from Cambridge announced "Eurika!!!" (for my non-Greek-speaking subscribers, that means "Yesh!". His proof spanned over 200 pages (!) and his colleagues began immediately to check it. The number of people in the world who can actually understand the whole thing is in the tens! Anyway - although the proof was not completely read throughout, the feeling is that "this is the right thing". Articles in many respectable papers and magazines were written about Andrew Weils - that British hero; here in UCLA, where there's a strong group that deals with this area of mathematics, there's a weekly seminar about "The proof of F.L.T"; Gap - the fashion company – offered Wiles a lot of money to pose in one of their sophisticated advertisements; and, the NY-times reports about a genuine concern among "Star Trek" fans! It seems that Captain Jean-Luc Picard has already been shown, centuries hence in the future, trying to solve the "unsolved" F.L.T.

And now - for the news I received from Amnon, my flat-mate, last evening when I was preparing my dinner. A message was broadcasted by Email from England yesterday: The proof is wrong!!! That proof was found to contain a big gap which needs to be filled. How big is it? Probably more like an abyss than a gap. Amnon (who said, with response to my question, that he has no idea what will become with their weekly seminar now) claims that the estimate is that "we are getting closer and closer, and that problem will be proved, eventually, but it'll take at least 5-6 years". I must admit that it was a shock even for me. That dinner was very sad and gloomy. Imagine - only last Thursday there was a (very crowded) lecture here at UCLA about that proof and there was supposed to be a sequel. At least the "Star Trek" fans must feel a great relief...

I do have one more astonishing scoop to tell you, but, unfortunately, I have to go to the restrooms.

Bye, Tamir