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This collection traces the career of Beno Eckmann, whose work ranges across a broad spectrum of mathematical concepts from topology and differential geometry through homological algebra to group theory. One of our most influential living mathematicians, Eckmann has been associated for nearly his entire professional life with the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH), as student, lecturer, professor, and professor emeritus.

The lectures offer a fascinating account of advances in pure mathematics from 1943 to 2004, as new topics and methods are introduced, and gradually become routine. The penultimate lecture is a personal-historical overview of algebraic topology, delivered in connection with the 40-year jubilee of the Institute for Mathematical Research (FIM), which Eckmann founded at ETH in 1964. In the final article, Eckmann looks beyond pure mathematics to consider the application in concrete fields of intellectual enterprise.