

World Congress in Probability and Statistics

Louis Chen chaired, and Anthony Kuk co-chaired, the Local Organizing Committee for the recent meeting in Singapore:

The joint Seventh World Congress of the Bernoulli Society and 71st Annual Meeting of the IMS took place at the National University of Singapore (NUS) in Singapore from July 14 to 19, 2008. It was jointly organized by the Department of Statistics and Applied Probability, Department of Mathematics, and Institute for Mathematical Sciences, of the National University of Singapore. The joint meeting was for the first time called the World Congress in Probability and Statistics, jointly sponsored by the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, a new name which will be used for all future such joint meetings of the two societies.

The World Congress is a major international event in probability and statistics and is held every four years. It features the latest scientific developments in the fields of probability and statistics and their applications, and is one of the most prestigious meetings in these fields.

Singapore is the first city in the Asia-Pacific region to have hosted the World Congress. The six previous World Congresses were held in Tashkent (Soviet Union, 1986), Uppsala (Sweden, 1990), Chapel Hill (North Carolina, USA, 1994), Vienna (Austria, 1996), Guanajuato (Mexico, 2000) and Barcelona (Spain, 2004). The fourth World Congress in Vienna was brought forward by two years to avoid a clash with the International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM), also held every four years, and also to allow the fifth World Congress to be held in the auspicious year of 2000.

The Chair of the Scientific Program Committee for the seventh World Congress was Ruth Williams. There were 13 keynote

speakers, 34 invited sessions, 82 contributed sessions and 3 poster sessions, covering a wide spectrum of topics and a myriad of applications. The keynote speakers were: Richard Durrett (IMS Wald Lectures) [see page 7], Jianqing Fan (Laplace Lecture), Alice Guionnet (Lévy Lecture), Peter McCullagh (IMS Neyman Lecture), Oded Schramm (BS-IMS Special Lecture), David Spiegelhalter (Bernoulli Lecture), Alain-Sol Sznitman (Kolmogorov Lecture), Elizabeth Thompson (Tukey Lecture), Wendelin Werner (BS-IMS Special Lecture), Martin Barlow (IMS Medallion Lecture), Zhi-Ming Ma (IMS Medallion Lecture), Mark Low (IMS Medallion Lecture), Douglas Nychka (Public Lecture). There were also two panel discussions on challenges and opportunities in probability and in statistics, and an 'In Memoriam' session commemorating the passing of David Kendall (1918–2007) and Chris Heyde (1939–2008), past Presidents of the Bernoulli Society, and of Samuel Karlin (1924–2007), past President of IMS.

More than 570 participants from 55 countries attended the Seventh World Congress, which opened on Monday, July 14 with speeches delivered by Louis Chen (Chair of the Local Organizing Committee), Ruth Williams (Chair of the Scientific Program Committee), Jean Jacod (President of the Bernoulli Society), Jianqing Fan (President of IMS) and guest of honor Choon Fong Shih (President of NUS) [see photo, right]. A Welcome Reception followed the IMS Presidential Address [see page 8] on Monday evening. There was also a Special Reception on Tuesday, July 15 to honor Wendelin Werner for being the first probabilist-trained mathematician to have been awarded the Fields Medal. Werner won the Fields Medal for his revolutionary work on stochastic Loewner evolution and the geometry of two-dimensional Brownian motion, part of

which was done in collaboration with Oded Schramm and Gregory Lawler. This reception was graced by the Provost of NUS, Eng Chye Tan, who spoke on how the 2006 ICM was a watershed for probability theory and probabilists [see his speech on page 12].

A half-day city tour was held on Thursday, July 19, followed by the Congress Banquet at The Pines, a town and country club. The banquet was attended by about 310 people, who were enthralled by a musical performance featuring tenor John Chen, academic-turned-politician-turned-entrepreneur, pianist Bernard Lanskey, Director of the NUS Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, and clarinetist Dai Le and cellist Zhou Mi, who were graduates of the Conservatory, with music by Bernard Tan, composer, physicist and former Dean of Science at NUS.

Apart from the Bernoulli Society and IMS, which were the sponsoring societies, other sponsors of the seventh World Congress were NUS, Singapore Tourism Board, Saw Swee Hock, Lee Foundation, World Scientific, Singapore Management University and Elsevier.

The Congress ended successfully on Saturday, July 19, 2008.

There are photos on the Congress website at <http://www.ims.nus.edu.sg/Programs/wc2008/gallery.htm>

The Opening Ceremony

