

Reminiscing over

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Just after almost simultaneous publications in 1979 of two books, “Lattice Path Combinatorics with Statistical Applications”, by T.V. Narayana and “Lattice Path Counting and Applications”, by me, I realized that there was a substantial growing interest in lattice path combinatorics and applications in the fields of applied probability, statistics and computer science. I also realized that the distribution of researchers was world wide. In order to increase the awareness of the subject, my intention to organize a conference to bring eminent and young researchers together and to promote interaction between the theory group and those involved in applications resulted in the first Conference on Lattice Path Combinatorics and Applications (in short, LP Conference) that was held at McMaster University, Canada in 1984. Incidentally, I have been at McMaster University since 1964 and the University was highly supportive of my initiative to organize the Conference. Its success prompted quite a few to voice an encore for it. In the mean time the publication of two books, “Combinatorial Enumeration” by I. Goulden and D. Jackson in 1983 and “Enumerative Combinatorics - Vol 1” by R. Stanley in 1986 encouraged me to move ahead in organizing another conference.

The Second Conference was held again at McMaster University in 1990, although some of the enthusiasts wished it to be held earlier. Due to the popularity of the first Conference it attracted more to participate. Also for the first time an organizing committee of which I was a member was formed to look after the arrangements. A special feature of the Conference was a session dedicated to the memory of T.V. Narayana who passed away in 1987.

Both Conferences had international participation and triggered so much interest that participants showed their willingness to organize LP Conferences elsewhere. Thus, subsequent Conferences were called International and were held at University of Delhi, India in 1994, University of Vienna, Austria in 1998, University of Athens, Greece in 2002 and East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, USA in 2007. The Seventh International LP Conference at Siena, Italy in 2010 is a continuation of the same trend. The main persons at local level were Kanwar Sen in India, Walter Böhm and Christian Krattentahler in Austria, Ch.A. Charalambides in Greece, Anant Godbole in U.S.A. and are Renzo Pinzani and

Simone Rinaldi in Italy for the Conference 2010. The true international nature is also reflected by past participation from Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Scotland, South Korea, South Africa, Sweden, Taiwan, UK and USA.

Throughout the years, the topics covered ranges over wide but related varieties like lattice path and other combinatorial problems, q -calculus, orthogonal polynomials, plane partitions, Sterling numbers, hypergeometric functions, partial orders, spanning surfaces, generating functions, recurrence relations, bijectivity, algebraic geometry, asymptotics, random walks, nonparametric inference, discrete distributions, urn models, queueing theory, quality control and other fields of applications such as probability, statistics, physics, psychology, management science and computer science. In Greece Conference, the title changed to Lattice Path Combinatorics and Discrete Distributions in order to emphasize the “Discrete Distributions” content. Because of diverse nature of topics, an International Scientific Committee was formed for guidance and reviewing process for the Third Conference and since then the practice has been continuing.

A new initiative started by dedicating the Fourth Conference to the memory of G. Kreweras (1918 - 1998) and T.V. Narayana (1930 - 1987), both of whom made a significant contribution to the field. In the same spirit, the Fifth Conference was organized in the memory of I. Vincze (1912 - 1999) and a special paper on his life and contribution was presented.

The number of participants is small and is remarkably steady to be 60 - 70. For that reason or otherwise, the format of the conference has been to allot same duration usually being 20-25 minutes to each paper without discrimination and without any specially invited speakers. However on occasions, instructional lectures of longer duration, reviewing topics of current interest have been programmed. In Delhi Conference, the speakers were X.G. Viennot and E. Csáki with the titles of their presentation being ‘Gessel-Viennot Methodology’ and ‘Some Aspects of Random Walk’ respectively. In the Sixth Conference at Johnson City, USA, there were four such lectures given by Gorge Andrews on ‘Partitions, Ferrers Graphs and q -Hypergeometric Functions’, Ira Gessel on ‘An Introduction to Lattice Path Enumeration’, Adrienne W. Kemp on ‘Discrete Distributions’, and by Walter Böhm on ‘Lattice Path Counting and the Theory of Queues’.

The Conferences are of two and a half day duration and the organizers have so far been able to arrange some entertainment programmes and sometimes after-dinner speakers.

The refereed papers among those presented at each Conference are published in a Special Issue of Journal of Statistical Planning and Inference. The past Issues are: Vol. 14 No. 1 (1986), Vol. 34 Nos. 1-2 (1993), Vol. 54 No. 1 (1996), Vol. 101 Nos. 1-2 (2002), Vol. 135 Issue 1 (2005). The latest Issue will come out this year.

Due to no response from Elsevier Publication after passing away of Professor N. Srivastava, the Special Issue is published by Fundamenta Informaticae for which we express our sincere gratitude to Prof. D. Niwinski. We also appreciate Prof. J. Makowsky who helped to connect us to Prof. D. Niwinski.

In the journey over so many years, quite a few have decided to walk with me all along by my side. They have provided the strength for me to move on. They are more than professional colleagues, they are indeed true friends. I owe my sincere gratitude to them and without it the story will remain incomplete. I also thank others who have decided to join with us supplying food and water to the walkers through their participation and professional and organizational help. The humble beginning, smallness of LP Conferences and their structure have provided a close affinity among those who have been participating. Essentially they have become members of what I call “Lattice Path” family. I wish a successful future journey and the wellbeing of the family.