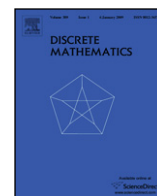




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## Discrete Mathematics

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## Preface

This special issue contains a selection of papers related to talks given during the international conference “Combinatorics 2008”, held in Costermano, a small village on the eastern shore of Lake Garda, from 22 to 28 June, 2008. This was the sixteenth of the “Combinatorics” events: the very first was organized in Rome in 1981; from 1982 until 1984, and every two years ever since, this cycle of international conferences, organized in Italy, has fulfilled its aim of presenting the most recent and significant results in pure and applied combinatorics, together with their links to geometry, algebra, graph theory and their applications in coding, cryptography and information theory.

In this event of 2008, there were 16 plenary lectures, delivered by several of the most avowed experts in the field: R. A. Bailey, M. Buratti, F. De Clerck, A. Gács, W.M. Kantor, J.D. Key, L. Lovász, S. Magliveras, U. Ott, O. Polverino, C. Preager, C. Rodger, A. Rosa, L. Storme, A. Street, and V. Voloshin. Many topics of great interest were presented in a variety of formats, ranging from wide surveys to new original developments: open problems and interesting applications were also introduced to a wide and interested audience. Preliminary summaries of these lectures were made available to all participants in a small booklet, handed out at the beginning of the conference. This booklet also contained abstracts for each of the 116 contributed talks. Three long talks (of 30 minutes each) were also delivered, in a special session dedicated to Prof. Giovanni Ferrero, to celebrate his seventy-second birthday.

Attendance was very good: more than 210 scientists convened, together with approximately 50 accompanying people. Several countries, and all continents, were represented: from the USA, Canada and Mexico to South Africa, India, Japan and Australia. Many people came from Europe: Russia, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Austria, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Czech Republic, Serbia and Italy (74). This provided an excellent opportunity for researchers to meet, talk and, hopefully, foster future collaborations.

During the conference, the Kirkman Medal, a prestigious award presented yearly by the *Institute of Combinatorics and its Applications* to promising young researchers who have obtained remarkable results in combinatorics, was presented to J. Bamberg and G. Marino.

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Very special thanks go to all the members of the organizing committee whose commitment, dedication and hard work made this conference possible.

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