

Evangelos Kranakis  
Gonzalo Navarro  
Edgar Chávez (Eds.)

# LATIN 2016: Theoretical Informatics

12th Latin American Symposium  
Ensenada, Mexico, April 11–15, 2016  
Proceedings



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## Preface

This volume contains the papers presented at the 12th Latin American Theoretical Informatics Symposium (LATIN 2016) held during April 11–15, 2016, in Ensenada, Mexico. Previous editions of LATIN took place in São Paulo, Brazil (1992), Valparaíso, Chile (1995), Campinas, Brazil (1998), Punta del Este, Uruguay (2000), Cancún, Mexico (2002), Buenos Aires, Argentina (2004), Valdivia, Chile (2006), Buzios, Brazil (2008), Oaxaca, Mexico (2010), Arequipa, Peru (2012), and Montevideo, Uruguay (2014).

The conference received 131 submissions from around the world. Each submission was reviewed by at least three Program Committee members, and carefully evaluated on quality, originality, and relevance to the conference. Committee members wrote the reviews with the help of additional external referees. Based on an extensive electronic discussion, the committee selected 52 papers. In addition to the accepted contributions, the symposium featured distinguished lectures by Jin Akiyama (Tokyo University of Science), Allan Borodin (University of Toronto), José Correa (University of Chile), Alan Frieze (Carnegie Mellon University), and Héctor García-Molina (Stanford University).

The Imre Simon Test-of-Time Award started in 2012 and is given to the authors of the LATIN paper deemed to be most influential among all those published at least ten years prior to the current edition of the conference. Papers published in the LATIN proceedings up to and including 2006 were eligible for the 2016 award. This year the winner was Alistair Sinclair for his paper “Improved Bounds for Mixing Rates of Marked Chains and Multicommodity Flow,” which appeared in LATIN 1992. This year the award was partially supported by Springer.

Many people helped to make LATIN 2016 possible. First, we would like to recognize the outstanding work of the members of the Program Committee. Their commitment contributed to a very detailed discussion on each of the submitted papers. The LATIN Steering Committee offered valuable advice and feedback; the conference benefitted immensely from their knowledge and experience.

The main organizer of the conference was the Centro de Investigación Científica y de Educación Superior de Ensenada (CICESE), located in northern Mexico. The conference was financially supported by CONACyT, CICESE, and the Mexican Mathematical Society. We are grateful for the facilities provided by EasyChair for paper evaluation and the preparation of the volume.

April 2016

Evangelos Kranakis  
Gonzalo Navarro  
Edgar Chávez

## The Imre Simon Test-of-Time Award

For many fundamental sampling problems, the best and often the only known approach to solving them is to take a long enough random walk on a certain Markov chain and then return to the current state of the chain. Techniques to prove how long “long enough” is, i.e., the number of steps in the chain one needs to take in order to be sufficiently close to its stationary distribution, are crucial in obtaining estimates of running times of such sampling algorithms.

The mixing time of a Markov chain is quite tightly captured by the “spectral gap” of its underlying transition matrix. The spectral gap is closely related to a geometric parameter called “conductance,” which is a measure of the edge-expansion of the Markov chain. Conductance also captures the mixing time up to square factors. Lower bounds on conductance, which give upper bounds on the mixing time, are typically obtained by a technique called “canonical paths” where the idea is to find a set of paths, one between every unequal source-destination pair, such that no edge is very heavily congested.

The method of canonical paths for bounding mixing time was introduced by Sinclair and Jerrum (1989), and then further developed by Diaconis and Stroock (1991). However, the canonical paths approach cannot always show rapid mixing of a rapidly mixing chain. In his LATIN 1992 paper, Sinclair establishes that this “drawback” disappears if one allows flow between a pair of states to be spread along multiple paths. Moreover, solutions to this multi-commodity flow problem are shown to capture the mixing rate closely. Thus, under fairly general conditions, we now know that a Markov chain is rapidly mixing if and only if it supports multicommodity flows of low cost.

In considering Sinclair’s paper for the award, the selection committee was especially impressed by the elegance of the proposed technique, the quality of presentation, its general applicability, and its widespread recognition throughout the literature. This LATIN 1992 paper and its journal version (in the first volume of *Combinatorics, Probability and Computing*) has over 415 citations in Google Scholar. The areas that this paper has influenced include Markov chain Monte Carlo algorithms, random graphs, flows on graphs, approximation algorithms, statistical physics, and communication complexity, among others.

For all these reasons the committee selects “Improved Bounds for Mixing Rates of Markov Chains and Multicommodity Flow” by Alistair Sinclair (LATIN 1992, LNCS 583, 474–487) as the LATIN 2016 winner of the Imre Simon Test-of-Time Paper Award.

Michael Bender  
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