IMS Public Lecture

The Search for Randomness

Speaker:	**Professor Persi Diaconis**
	Stanford University
Date:	**Tuesday, 19 August 2003**
Time:	**6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**
Venue:	**LT 31(Faculty of Science Auditorium)**
	Blk S16, Level 3, 3 Science Drive 2
	National University of Singapore
	Singapore 117543

Abstract

The speaker will discuss some of our most primitive examples of random phenomena: tossing a coin, rolling dice and shuffling cards. While common practice can produce randomness, usually a close look shows that it just isn't so.

About the Speaker

Persi Diaconis, a legendary figure in mathematics, studied violin at Juilliard and magic with Dai Vernon, who has been called the greatest magician in the US. For 10 years from the age of 14, he pursued a successful and colorful career as a magician until his destiny was changed after a friend recommended him a book on probability which he could not understand. It led to his enrollment into mathematics programs in the City College of New York and Harvard University. The rest, as they say, is history.
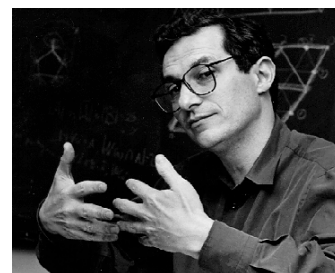
He is currently the Mary Sunseri Professor of Statistics and Professor of Mathematics at Stanford University. Honored for his fundamental work in statistics and probability (including the mathematics of card shuffling), he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1989 and the National Academy of Sciences USA in 1995. He was President of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, a Gibbs Lecturer of the American Mathematical Society and a plenary speaker at the International Congress of Mathematicians.

His diverse interests have led him to write on parapsychology, and to introduce mathematical magic shows. As he says, "Inventing a magic trick and inventing a theorem are very, very similar activities."

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