

2010 Niven Lecture

THE SEARCH FOR RANDOMNESS

Persi Diaconis (Stanford)

4:00 PM, MAY 31, 2010 - MATH ANNEX 1100, UBC

ABSTRACT

I will examine some of our most primitive images of random phenomenon: tossing coins, spinning a roulette wheel and shuffling cards. In each case, practical experiments, combined with a bit of mathematics shows that while randomness is possible, usually we are lazy and things are quite far from random. Connections to problems with large scale modelling are developed.

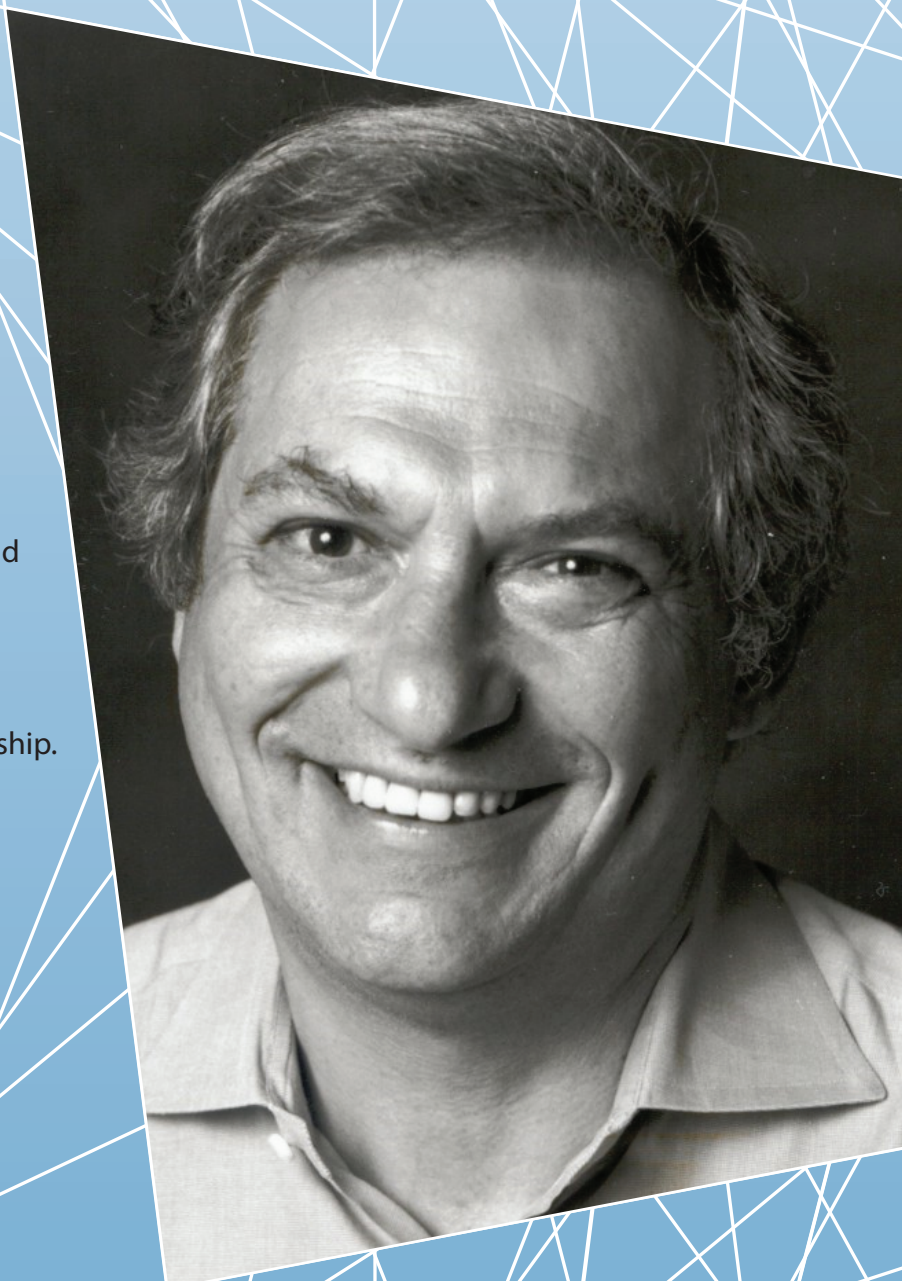
SPEAKER'S BIOGRAPHY

Persi Warren Diaconis is the Mary V. Sunseri Professor of Statistics and Mathematics at Stanford University. He is also a former professional magician.

He is particularly known for remarkable discoveries in problems involving randomness and randomization, such as coin flipping and shuffling playing cards. His many honours include a MacArthur Fellowship.

ABOUT THE NIVEN LECTURES

Ivan Niven was a famous number theorist and expositor; his textbooks won numerous awards, have been translated into many languages and are widely used to this day. Niven was born in Vancouver in 1915, earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at UBC in 1934 and 1936 and his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1938. He was a faculty member at the University of Oregon since 1947 until his retirement in 1982. The annual Niven lecture series, held at UBC since 2005, is funded in part through a generous bequest from Ivan and Betty Niven to the UBC Mathematics Department.



Pacific Institute *for the*
Mathematical Sciences