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Introduction [Loops '99 Conference]

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INTRODUCTION

This issue consists of papers that are connected to the international conference Loops'99, which was held on the campus of the Czech Agricultural University in Prague during the period 27 July – 1 August 1999. Some 58 mathematicians from 17 countries were involved in the meeting, as well as about 25 family members and partners. While several international conferences devoted solely to loops and quasigroups were held in the past, this conference seems to have been unmatched both in the international attention it received, and in the scope of subjects it concerned.

The longer lectures were evenly distributed between algebraic and geometric topics. The opening address of Jonathan D. H. Smith discussed recent trends and future prospects based upon the author's broad vision of the field, while the subsequent lecture of Hala Orlik Pflugfelder painted a colorful picture of its history. Lectures of Lev Sabinin, Karl Strambach and the joint lecture of Maks Akivis and Vladislav Goldberg witnessed the authors' lifelong dedication to geometrical aspects of the theory of loops. Finally, A.D. Keedwell surveyed left neofields.

The other talks at the conference reported, in most cases, the recent research of the authors, and many of them are now presented in this issue (a few of the authors chose to write about a topic different from what they spoke about at the conference). The proceedings demonstrate the richness and diversity not only of the interests of loop theoreticians, but also of the connections of the field to other parts of mathematics.

The limited size of the issue led to a scrupulous editorial process and so some papers had to be rejected. Several authors who were unable to attend the conference, for various reasons, nevertheless submitted papers. While the original idea was to print these papers within the proceedings, the lack of space forced their postponement to issue 4 of the present volume of this journal. To affiliate them to the conference, the names of the authors and the titles of their papers follow:

François Lemieux, Cristopher Moore and Denis Thérien: *Polyabelian Loops and Boolean Completeness*; A. Nourou Issa: *On Quasigroups With The Left Loop Property*; and Markku Niemenmaa: *On Abelian Inner Mapping Groups of Finite Loops*.

We warmly thank the editorial board of *Commentationes Mathematicae Universitatis Carolinae* for making it possible to publish the proceedings of the conference in their journal.

The idea to organize the conference was conceived by the algebraists at the mathematical department of Charles University and some of the key organizers came from there. Professor Václav Slavík, who is the Head of the mathematical department at the Technical Faculty of Czech Agricultural University, lent his

support to the conference so that the premises of the University could have been used. Štěpán Holub prepared an excellent program for the family and friends of conference participants. Mrs. Eva Ramešová prepared tea and coffee everyday. Most notably, she baked some of the cakes that were greatly enjoyed by many participants. She also was a member of the team for the banquet's preparation, which was headed by Tomáš Kepka (and, at a later stage, infiltrated by some of the participants). Petr Němec was responsible for arranging and supervising the on-site accommodations and, starting from the beginning of July, he was the contact person for conference participants. He also helped the participants from the former Soviet Union gain entry into the country and, together with Tomáš Kepka, he attended to the financial arrangements for the conference. Marián Kechlibar helped with electronic communication before and after the conference and with various on-site tasks at the spot. The book of abstracts was composed, from participants' materials, by Vít Špinka, and the pictures on the cover were drawn by Kateřina Houdková.

Most of the communication with the participants took place in the first half of 1999, and that was the job of Aleš Drápal, who also coordinated the preparation of this volume. While the impression that most of the decisions and concepts came from him is not completely false, it should be stressed that he consulted frequently with the foreign members of the Organizing and Program Committee (Hala Orlik Pflugfelder, Orin Chein, Michael Kinyon and J.D. Phillips). Also, the burden of processing the papers for these proceedings was shared with Orin Chein and Michael Kinyon, who invested a lot of time in order to bring the proceedings to the present state. Since the proceedings appear as a regular issue of the journal, they will be cited in a standard way. However, were they cited as proceedings, the editorial credit should go to O. Chein, A. Drápal and M. Kinyon.

At the final stage, the importance of the technical staff became very clear, and many authors were pleasantly surprised by the quick and precise reactions and replies of Mrs. Anna Najmanová, whose job was (as usual) to prepare the final TeX version of the journal's issue.

The network pages of the conference are still accessible at
<http://www.karlin.mff.cuni.cz/~loops99>

and one can find there a complete list of participants, the schedule of the conference, and a list of problems presented to the conference.

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