MAY 12–15
2015

Brown University
250th Anniversary Symposium: The Next 250 Years

We acknowledge with tremendous gratitude former President Ruth Simmons’ many valuable contributions to the organization of the previous two Symposia in this series, hosted by the Computer Science Department and organized together with the Office of the President. The Symposium “John von Neumann Days at Brown University” (http://www.brown.edu/Research/Istrail_Lab/symp_2010.php) was organized by the von Neumann professor cluster in 2010, and “The Genome and the Computational Sciences: The Next Paradigms’’ symposium (http://www.brown.edu/Research/Istrail_Lab/symp_2006.php) in 2006. In particular, with funding from the Office of the President, room 368 of the CIT has just been renovated into a modern 21st-century classroom. We are delighted to have former President Simmons cut the ribbon to the new classroom on the occasion of this Symposium, which continues a tradition co-founded with her office and now enthusiastically supported by President Christina Paxson. These symposia were designed as an “academic cathedral,” unified by von Neumann’s vision of “computation as a scientific lens.” We want to express our admiration and thanks to both Presidents Simmons and Paxson for their inspiring leadership and most generous support.

Organized by the von Neumann professors’ “cluster” together with the Office of the President Cristina Paxson. Hosted by the Department of Computer Science. Supported in part by the National Science Foundation.

We acknowledge with gratitude the financial support for our symposium from:
Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Office of the Vice President of Research, Department of Computer Science, Department of Economics, Department of Neuroscience, Department of Physics, Center for Computational Molecular Biology, and Department of Biostatistics.

Hosted by the Department of Computer Science
Supported in part by the National Science Foundation

History of the Sweatbox Concept
Funded by the National Science Foundation as a workshop called “Q&A Boot Camp at Brown University: Asking Tough Scientific Questions,” the “Sweatbox” session as a didactic concept was inspired by the famous 8-week “Summer Course/Boot Camp on Embryology” at the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hall, MA and the director of the course for 15 years, Professor Eric Davidson of the Division of Biology at California Institute of Technology. The story goes that invited speakers at this course would talk in the laboratory’s Warm Room and would be subjected there to tough scientific questions about their scientific findings and their claims. Professor Davidson, professor-in-chief of developmental gene regulatory network biology and a beacon of critical discourse, has mentored about 300 PhDs, postdocs and faculty in his laboratory. Basing his work on causality-focused and genomics-based systems, and with insights from experimental biology, biochemistry, physics and engineering, he has been bringing together all us biologists, physists, biochemists, engineers, mathematicians, statisticians and computer scientists in a renaissance research quest for the functional meaning of DNA. The resulting symposium of insights is von Neumann-esque in spirit and fits well with von Neumann’s unfinished research towards a new logical and computational model for the biological cell by unifying continuous and discrete mathematics via a concept of thermodynamic error. Our “Sweatbox” is so named to honor Professor Davidson’s academic legacy.

John Von Neumann Distinguished Lecture Series
Organized by
Leon Cooper
Stanford, a Natural Professor of Science and Director, Institute for Brook and Health Systems (Department of Physics)
Stuart Geman
Dame-Harding Professor of Applied Mathematics (Division of Applied Mathematics)
Sorin Istrail
John Neumann Professor of Computational and Mathematical Sciences and Professor of Computer Science (Department of Computer Science)
Roberto Serrano
Harvard & Brown University (Professor of Economics, Brown University (Department of Economics))

*John von Neumann lectured at Brown University the week before April 17, 1934, exactly 80 years ago. The information is from his letter to Rudolf Ortvay on April 17, 1934. "We are well, although I am a bit pumped dry, for I held three lectures last week at Yale, Harvard and Brown Universities. "From John von Neumann, Science, 1934.

401-863-6196), Suzanne Alden (Symposium Coordinator, Suzanne_Alden@brown.edu, 401-863-6511).
Brown University and the Department of Computer Science

Imagine Brown’s future in the 21st century and beyond.

The semiquincentenary celebration gives us the opportunity to celebrate Brown’s many triumphs in education, research, and service; reflect on the issues that Brown has confronted over time; consider Brown of today; and imagine Brown’s future in the 21st century and beyond.

About Brown’s 250Th

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