Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of Leonhard Euler's Birth

The University of Hong Kong

Public Lecture

Co-organized by the Faculty of Science & Department of Mathematics, HKU

Euler and His Path

from the 18th Century to the 21st Century

Date: November 23, 2007 (Friday)
Time: 5.30pm (Light refreshment from 5pm)
Venue: Theatre T1, LG 1/F,
Meng Wah Complex Building,
The University of Hong Kong
Medium: English
Admission: Free

Professor M K Siu

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Department of Mathematics
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About the Speaker

Professor M K Siu obtained his BSc in a double major in mathematics and physics at the University of Hong Kong. He then acquired his PhD in mathematics at Columbia University. Like the description "And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach" of the Oxford cleric in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Professor Siu had been devoting his efforts in research and teaching for more than three decades until he retired in 2005, and he is still enjoying himself in doing that after retirement. Professor Siu is currently an Honorary Professor of HKU.

Abstract of the lecture and more information about the speaker can be found at www.hku.hk/science/euler/

Abstract

The eighteenth century in Europe can be justly hailed as 'the Age of Euler', as approximately one third of the research in mathematics, mathematical physics and engineering mechanics published in the last three-quarters of that century came from the pen of the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler (1707-1783). Indeed, according to some scholars, "to study the work of Euler is to survey all the scientific life, and much of the intellectual life generally, of the central half of the eighteenth century."

Euler left his homeland at the age of twenty and spent the next fifty-six incredibly productive years in the Russian Academy in St. Petersburg and the Prussian Academy in Berlin. He is well known for his prolific output of an order of magnitude unparalleled in history, both in quality and quantity.

As an author and teacher Euler is noted for his clarity in exposition, but more than that he was eager to share with his readers his ideas that led to those discoveries. His primary interest was in the wonder of discovery and its explication, but cared little whether he or somebody else made the discovery. The French mathematician, Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827), said of him, "Read Euler, read Euler. He is the master of us all."

It would be appropriate to take a look at the contributions of this great mathematician on the occasion of his 300th anniversary. While it is an impossible task to even chart his path in the world of science and mathematics in a public lecture of one hour, perhaps we can take a brief look at his path in general and discuss in more detail a path (the so-called closed Eulerian walk in graph theory) in particular that has ramifications going beyond his time and into our century.

For enquiries, please contact Miss Lee of Faculty of Science at 2241 5861.