

Foreword to Special Issue on the occasion of Jack van Lint's sixtieth birthday

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Foreword

Professor Jack van Lint was born on September 1st, 1932, in Bandoeng, Indonesia (at that time Dutch East Indies). Due to World War II, the names and places of the schools that he attended changed frequently: Batavia (Indonesia), Jackson, MS (USA), Chicago, IL (USA), Bundaberg, Qld. (Australia), Arnhem (the Netherlands) and Zwolle (the Netherlands).

In 1950 he started to study mathematics at the State University of Utrecht (the Netherlands), where his teachers included H. Freudenthal, F. van der Blij, J. Popken and H.B.A. Bockwinkel. During the preparation of his Ph.D. Thesis 'Hecke operators and Euler Products' he spent two periods abroad: from Sept. 1956 to March 1957 at the University of Göttingen (with C.L. Siegel, E. Artin and M. Deuring) and the months April, May and June 1957 at the University of Münster. On October 10, 1957, he received the Ph.D. degree cum laude at Utrecht from his promotor F. van der Blij.

After a two year assignment in Utrecht on number theory, J.J. Seidel invited Van Lint in June 1959 to become Full Professor at the newly founded Eindhoven University of Technology. Although Van Lint stayed there during his whole career, he has spent many sabbaticals abroad.

The first one turned out to have an everlasting influence, namely the visit during the first eight months of 1966 at Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, NJ. The pioneering work in discrete mathematics and in particular in coding theory at Bell (with scientists as Berlekamp, Gilbert, Graham, McWilliams, Pollak, Slepian, Sloane, Wyner) showed Van Lint a completely new area of applied mathematics.

Back in Eindhoven Van Lint turned his new experience into dramatic innovations in the curriculum of the students in mathematical engineering. New courses in coding theory and in discrete mathematics were the result. Subsequent visits to the California Institute of Technology (Sept. 1970–March 1971) with M. Hall Jr, H. Ryser, R.J. McEliece (at JPL) and again Bell Laboratories (April–Aug. 1971) strengthened him in his beliefs in the importance of these new fields.

The Mathematical Center in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) recognized the potential of discrete mathematics for both research and applications and attracted him in April 1972 as an advisor. Among the young researchers that he influenced in this way, we mention A.E. Brouwer, P. van Emde Boas, H.W. Lenstra and A. Schrijver. In 1972, The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences invited him, at the age of 39, to join their prestigious ranks. Phillips Research Laboratories Eindhoven attracted him as Scientific Advisor in 1985.

At his own Eindhoven University of Technology, Van Lint created a center in coding theory and, more generally, in discrete mathematics, that made it a focus point in Europe, attracting a constant flow of visitors from around the world. Meanwhile, Van Lint became an ambassador of the field at many places in the world. He was a frequently invited speaker, both because of the ever present interesting new results and because of the stimulating style of presenting them.

Not surprisingly, many book series and journals have attracted him on their editorial boards: *Annals of Discrete Mathematics*, *Designs, Codes and Cryptography*, *Discrete Mathematics*, *Geometriae Dedicata*, *IEEE Transactions on Information Theory*, *Journal of Combinatorial Theory A*, *Nieuw Archief voor Wiskunde*, *SIAM J. Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science*. All the activities mentioned above demonstrate the enormous significance of Van Lint for the development of Discrete Mathematics during the last thirty years.

Van Lint's reputation as a speaker (his lectures always were of the same, uniformly high standard) and as a writer (his textbooks were very successful) made it clear to the whole mathematical community that he was a very gifted teacher too. For this reason his educational insights on how and what to teach were widely valued. This is best demonstrated by his editorship of the *Int. Journal of Math. Education* or his membership on the *Int. Committee on Math. Instruction*. His own specific fields combined with his broad mathematical scope led to positions on the European Science Foundation, European Math. Council and the *Int. Council of Scientific Unions/CTS*.

Last year, Van Lint became the Rector Magnificus of the Eindhoven University of Technology. In many cases, that would signify the end of the scientific career. Publications of new books, continuing research results and lectures at many places prove that he has no intention at all to leave our community.

The subsequent collection of contributions appears simultaneously in the series *Topics in Discrete Mathematics* and as a special double volume of *Discrete Mathematics* (Volumes 106/107). It is offered to Van Lint on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. It is the hope of the editors that their selection of authors represents the many interesting areas that together constitute the discipline Discrete Mathematics. We are fortunate that so many experts in the field have been willing to contribute to this volume and, in doing so, have made this homage a success.

The editors:
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