

MSRI PRESS RELEASE

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Math institute marks 100th anniversary of co-founder Shiing-Shen Chern's birth with international scientific conference opening in Berkeley on Sunday, Oct. 30th

Commemorative event unveils statue of S.-S. Chern and premieres biographical film

The two-part Chern Centennial Conference bridges two worlds in celebrating the career of the eminent Chinese-born mathematician, Shiing-Shen Chern, at the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI) in Berkeley. The weeklong, international scientific conference at MSRI opens on Sunday, October 30 and runs through Friday, November 4, which follows, in tandem, the first week of the conference that was held at the Chern Institute of Mathematics (CIM) in Tianjin, China. Revered as one of the 20th century's greatest geometers, Chern was the co-founder of MSRI and a professor of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley.

At the conference's opening on Sunday, a new statue of S.-S. Chern will be unveiled that captures the eminent mathematician's gravitas as it stands before MSRI's building. The sculpture, commissioned with the support of the Simons Foundation, was created by the leading Chinese-American sculptor Wei Li (Willy) Wang, who will be present at the statue's dedication. Slightly larger than life-size, the bronze figure is the centerpiece of a new entryway designed by Bay Area architect William Glass of Glass Associates, which features an elegantly contemplative plaza siting a granite water fountain, concrete benches, and canopy of trees. Wang's oeuvre reflects both naturalism and realism and his work appears in China's Fine Arts Museum and numerous private collections, in addition to publicly displayed artworks that have been commissioned throughout the United States.

Taking the Long View: The Life of Shiing-Shen Chern, a 54-minute biographical film directed and produced by George Paul Csicsery, also debuts as part of the conference's opening ceremonies. The documentary film has incorporated an abundance of stills, archival footage, and stories told by friends, family, and many prominent colleagues who paint a vivid portrait of S.-S. Chern through their insights and anecdotes. The film was made possible by a grant from the Simons Foundation.

Born in Tianjin, China, in 1911, S.-S. Chern earned his doctorate in Hamburg in 1936 and came to the United States in 1943 to work at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, after which he took an appointment at the University of Chicago. In 1960, he joined the faculty at UC Berkeley and created a center for geometry and, in 1981, co-founded MSRI and served as its first director. Chern spearheaded a renewal of research mathematics in China during the 1980s and arranged for talented Chinese scholars to study in the United States and Europe, as well as bringing mathematicians from the West to present their work in China. In 1999, he moved from Berkeley back to China permanently, where he lived until his death in 2004.

The MSRI conference (see www.msri.org/chernconference) will host renowned experts from around the world who will give lectures on recent developments in the fields of mathematics that are Chern's legacy and have continued to inspire new generations of mathematicians. Robert Bryant, Director of MSRI, remarked, "S.-S. Chern is a towering figure, whose stature in China led him to earn the respect of his homeland's leaders—from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin—and even school children knew his name. His role in founding both CIM and MSRI demonstrates his passion for ensuring that both the East and West benefit from the highest level of mathematical research."

The **Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI, <http://www.msri.org>)**, in Berkeley, California, is one of the world's preeminent centers for research in the mathematical sciences and has been advancing mathematical research through workshops and conferences since its founding as an independent institute in 1982. Approximately 2,000 mathematicians visit the MSRI each year, and the Institute hosts about 85 leading researchers at any given time for stays of up to one academic year. The Institute has been funded primarily by the National Science Foundation with additional support from other government agencies, private foundations, corporations, individual donors, and more than 85 academic institutions. The MSRI is involved in K-12 math education through its annual Critical Issues in Mathematics Education conferences for educators, math circles, Julia Robinson Math Festivals, the National Association for Math Circles and its website (NAMC, www.mathcircles.org), and Olympiad math competitions; in undergraduate education through its MSRI-UP program; and in public education through its "Conversations" series of public events.

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