

StringMasters II
12–16 May 2008
McMaster University

How long is piece of string?

— Aussie rhetorical question

In July 2007 a remarkably unstructured, almost spontaneous, four-day meeting of string algorithms researchers was held at McMaster University. This was StringMasters I (no disrespect intended to StringMistresses who were also in attendance and who are, furthermore, in general particularly welcome). It attracted 17 participants from institutions in six countries whose discussions, at last count, inspired four new research papers — perhaps others that have gone unreported. But, putting such bean-counting aside, the participants at StringMasters I agreed that the meeting was instructive, conducive to new flights of stringological fancy, highly collegial, and thoroughly enjoyable.

And so several of them have proposed holding it again.

StringMasters II will once more be held at McMaster University, this time in the week 12–16 May. It is my hope that StringMasters will become a permanent annual event, held however at universities around the world — a reflection of the friendship, cohesion and cooperation among several hundred researchers working in a fascinating, increasingly recognized area.

As in 2007, StringMasters II will be hosted by McMaster’s Department of Computing & Software (C&S) and its Algorithms Research Group. The objective is to bring together researchers and their students to work on string processing problems of current interest, perhaps especially those that relate to applications in data compression, data mining, computational biology, and musicology.

The headquarters of StringMasters II will be the Information Technology Building (ITB) that houses C&S. Depending on numbers, 2–4 classrooms in ITB will be made available for morning and afternoon meetings throughout the week. There will be no presentations — except perhaps for *ad hoc* problem-related ones —, just working sessions interspersed with generous recesses for coffee and meals.

I'm not *stringing you along*: the mood is relaxed, the pace leisurely, but still the intent is serious: to spend time among colleagues and friends exploring the fundamental problems of our research discipline. For example:

- * the efficient construction and use of compressed/succinct data structures for string processing;
- * methods for computing repetitions in strings that avoid the use of suffix arrays/trees;
- * discovery of a sharp upper bound on the maximum number of maximal periodicities that a string of length n can contain (current lower bound $0.927n$, current upper bound $1.077n$);
- * the design of new algorithms on strings that are in some sense “indeterminate” or that may contain “gaps”;
- * more space- and time-efficient Lempel-Ziv factorization of strings.

Proposals for other areas of study are solicited!

Participants

Whoever fronts up. String neophytes particularly welcome. The fundamentals of string processing are not so abstruse and convoluted that the novice will find himself unable to participate. For the student or computer scientist interested in finding out what stringology is all about, StringMasters II could be an opportunity to exchange a fiddle for a Stradivarius! At week's end we will surely all be playing among the *First Violins*.

Registration

None. But *PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU ARE ATTENDING!*

Schedule

Beginning Monday 12 May we meet daily at 9:30 a.m in ITB-101 (on the ground floor by the main entrance) to sort out the day's programme.

Publication?

If, as one expects, new results emerge out of our meetings, the possibility exists of having them published in a special issue of an international journal. This is a matter that we can discuss further at StringMasters II itself.

Accommodation

For information about accommodation on the McMaster campus:

<http://housing.mcmaster.ca/confs/SUMGUESTRATES.htm>

The Visitors Inn is a good local hotel situated less than a mile from the university:

<http://www.visitorsinn.com/>, reservations@visitorsinn.com

Their special McMaster rates are CDN\$89 per night for single occupancy, \$99 for double.

Somewhat more posh, somewhat more expensive (CDN\$109 McMaster rate), and about twice as far from McMaster is Staybridge Suites — for information google “Staybridge Suites” \cap Hamilton-Downtown.

Eating & Drinking

There are numerous good restaurants, widely differing in menu, atmosphere and price, within a few minutes’ walk of our headquarters — by virtue of their proximity to a Centre of Learning, they have all become skilled at providing the gastronomical equivalent of the intellectual fodder required for inspiration, enlightenment, and advancement in research.

A bulletin: there is reason to hope that StringMistress Marianne Walters may once more consent to host the End-of-String Celebration¹, tentatively scheduled for Thursday 15 May, at her Dundas mansion just five minutes’s walk from charming, ought-to-be-world-famous Webster’s Falls.

Getting Here

You can fly to Toronto (Pearson International) airport from anywhere in the world — McMaster is about an hour and a CDN\$100 taxi ride away. But Hamilton airport has recently gone international, and it is less than half the distance and half the cost from McMaster. From Europe to Hamilton airport there are now many budget flights available.

For details consult <http://www.mcmaster.ca/welcome/findus.cfm>

I will be happy to provide a letter of invitation to any prospective participant who requires one.

¹When we will find out how long it is.

Excursions

McMaster is not far from a great many waterfalls, of which Niagara is the most famous but not necessarily the most attractive (see above). There are many other sights to see: the Royal Botanical Gardens (adjacent to McMaster, spectacularly floral and hopefully only a little muddy in the spring), vineyards (yes, Canadian wine is sometimes drinkable!), picturesque Niagara-on-the-Lake with its annual George Bernard Shaw festival, the Big City (Toronto, or T.O. as we call it), arguably the most cosmopolitan city in the world. As with all other activities at StringMasters, participants are encouraged to do their own thing.

IMPORTANT!

Please pass this announcement on to anyone you think may be interested.

Best regards.

Bill Smyth

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