

Book Review: *Statphys 16*

Statphys 16. Boston, 1986.

Statphys 16 is a record of 52 invited papers presented at the 16th International Conference on Thermodynamics and Statistical Mechanics held at Boston University, August 11–15, 1986. The organizers of the Conference set about their task with great energy and enthusiasm, and first undertook a historical investigation to determine how the figure 16 was arrived at for the Conference. The results are worthy of permanent record. Previous Conferences were as follows: 1. Florence '49, 2. Paris '52, 3. Brussels '56, 4. Varenna '57, 5. Utrecht '60, 6. Providence '62, 7. Aachen '64, 8. Copenhagen '66, 9. Kyoto '68, 10. Chicago '71, 11. Amsterdam '73, 12. Budapest '75, 13. Haifa '77, 14. Edmonton '80, 15. Edinburgh '83.

More than 1000 participants from 43 countries attended the Conference. This is well over twice the number of participants at any previous Statphys Conference, and probably reflects the widening interest in statistical mechanics and its techniques. However, in contrast to previous Conferences, no major themes or topics dominated the sessions. Old favorites, such as critical phenomena, Ising model, renormalization group, and rigorous statistical mechanics, brushed shoulders with new areas of interest, such as aggregation and growth, polymer gels, fractons, porous media, membranes, and neural networks. There were even papers on the application of statistical mechanics to computer science and to biogenesis and evolution. The Boltzmann Medal was awarded to D. Ruelle and Y. G. Sinai, and their paper, "From Dynamical Systems to Statistical Mechanics and Back," is the first paper in the proceedings.

The organizers are to be congratulated on the speed with which the publication proceedings were made available in print ($3\frac{1}{2}$ months after the conference) and the modest cost (\$9 prepublication, \$12 thereafter). Conferences are of major importance to research workers to keep them up to date in current developments, and the benefits are dissipated unless an accurate record is available quickly. Statphys 17, scheduled for 1989, will be exploring new ground by moving to Brazil.

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