

About this CD-ROM

Bernd Wegner
(Editor-in-Chief of Zentralblatt)

Berlin, August 1998

Paul Erdős has been an outstanding personality in mathematics, well-known to the mathematical community as well as to non-mathematicians for dedicating most of his life to mathematical research and its propagation in a way which hardly could be described in one sentence and which will be associated with his name in an indistinguishable manner. Some of the articles on this CD-ROM will describe this phenomenon in a more detailed and more suitable way than it can be done here.

Zentralblatt für Mathematik as a documentation was a companion of Erdős for the whole period of his research activities, and it also reported on a lot of mathematical work which had been developed under the influence of his achievements. Hence it is a quite natural idea to celebrate Paul Erdős at the occasion of the ICM 98 in Berlin by collecting on a CD-ROM all the reviews of his papers and, as far as easily manageable using the database of Zentralblatt, the reviews of those publications which are obviously related to his work. The fact that a diskette will not be sufficient for this, already indicates the vast amount of publications involved.

This idea came up shortly before the ICM 98. Hence no perfectionism can be expected from the current CD and this also may not be reachable by a more ambitious project because of the widely spread impact of Erdős ideas to other research. Nevertheless, the resulting collection is quite impressive and may serve as a good basis for references. But without presenting some additional descriptions how Erdős has been recognized by his colleagues and friends, our collection would be rather unsatisfactory. Hence we invited in a rather quick and therefore unsystematic manner some of them to put a small article on the CD-ROM describing these aspects.

In the short time available for this we succeeded in getting some very interesting contributions, on one side being of quite personal character and on the other side

reproducing more systematic biographic studies related to Erdős. I am very grateful to the authors of these contributions for reacting so spontaneously and providing us with a lot of valuable reminiscences to him. Some of these articles had been published already elsewhere and hence my thanks are directed to the editors of Geombinatorics, the publishing house A.K. Peters, the AMS and to Springer-Verlag for allowing us to reproduce these articles here. Last but not least the efforts of the staff of Zentralblatt MATH should be acknowledged at this place because they enabled the publication of this CD-ROM within a rather short period. All participants in this project collaborated with us on a voluntary basis. Thus we are able to distribute the CD at the ICM as a non-profit product where just the physical production costs will have to be covered. We hope that many participants will enjoy this offer.