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Distinguished Lecturer Series

Supported by Jeffrey & Holly Ullman



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Impugning Alleged Randomness

Abstract: According to a 1985 issue of New York Times, "The New Jersey Supreme Court today caught up with the Essex County Clerk and a Democrat who has conducted drawings for decades that have given Democrats the top ballot line in the country 40 times out of 41 times." But the clerk wasn't punished. Here's another case of that sort, from Israel. In the 1980s the Israeli tax authorities encouraged the public to request invoices from plumbers, painters, etc. and send the invoices in; big prices were ruffled off. It turned out that the winner was none other than the Director of Customs and VAT at the time. The operation collapsed but the director wasn't punished.

You may be convinced that such lotteries are rigged, but how would you argue that in the court of law? Yes, the probability of the suspicious outcome is negligible. However the probability of any particular outcome is negligible. What can you say? We attempt to furnish you with an argument.

Yuri Gurevich is a Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research in Redmond, WA. He is also Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan, a fellow of ACM, Guggenheim and EATCS, a member of Academia Europaea, and Dr. Honoris Causa of a Belgian and a Russian universities.

14:00 – 15:00 on Wednesday January 14, 2015—Room 202, Alon Bldg (37/202)
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