

James Propp (b. 1961)

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Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Propp

Homepage: <https://faculty.uml.edu/jpropp/>

Essay by Daniel Rogers

James Propp is currently a professor of mathematics at University of Massachusetts Lowell and has held professorship at seven different universities. He earned his AB in mathematics at Harvard University in 1982, a Certificate of Advanced Study at Cambridge University in 1983, and his PhD at University of California Berkeley in 1987. Propp wrote his dissertation *Coding From the Past* with the help of his advisor Jacob Feldman. Propp's research interests include combinatorics, probability, and dynamical systems. His most cited article, "Exact sampling with coupled Markov chains and applications to statistical mechanics," invented a method for sampling from the stationary distribution of a Markov chain; this method is called "coupling from the past." His work overlaps with Ramanujan's, as Ramanujan greatly influenced the field of combinatorics, one of Propp's predominant research interests. In his free time, Propp enjoys creating puzzles, writing rounds, and parallel parking. His personal best as a parallel parker consisted of a 2-inch clearance at the front bumper and a 3-inch clearance at the rear bumper (pictured below.)

