

Random Media at Saint-Flour

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Preface for Saint Flour collections

The *École d'Été de Saint-Flour*, founded in 1971, is organised every year by the *Laboratoire de Mathématiques* of the *Université Blaise Pascal* (Clermont-Ferrand II) and the *CNRS*. It is intended for PhD students, teachers and researchers who are interested in probability theory, statistics, and in applications of stochastic techniques. The summer school has been so successful in its 40 years of existence that it has long since become one of the institutions of probability as a field of scholarship.

The school has always had three main simultaneous goals:

1. to provide, in three high-level courses, a comprehensive study of 3 fields of probability theory or statistics;
2. to facilitate exchange and interaction between junior and senior participants;
3. to enable the participants to explain their own work in lectures.

The lecturers and topics of each year are chosen by the Scientific Board of the school. Further information may be found at <http://math.univ-bpclermont.fr/stflour/>

The published courses of Saint-Flour have, since the school's beginnings, been published in the *Lecture Notes in Mathematics* series, originally and for many years in a single annual volume, collecting 3 courses. More recently, as lecturers chose to write up their courses at greater length, they were published as individual, single-author volumes. See www.springer.com/series/7098. These books have become standard references in many subjects and are cited frequently in the literature.

As probability and statistics evolve over time, and as generations of mathematicians succeed each other, some important subtopics have been revisited more than once at Saint-Flour, at intervals of 10 years or so.

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the *École d'Été de Saint-Flour*, a small ad hoc committee was formed to create selections of some courses on related topics from different decades of the school's existence that would seem interesting viewed and read together. As a result Springer is releasing a number of such theme volumes under the collective name "Probability at Saint-Flour".

Jean Bertoin, Erwin Bolthausen and K. David Elworthy

Jean Picard, Pierre Bernard, Paul-Louis Hennequin
(current and past Directors of the *École d'Été de Saint-Flour*)

September 2012