

Professor Stefan Banach

Stefan Banach - patron of the Prize – a genuine mathematical genius, world-famous mathematician. He started out as self-taught, and in a short time he became the originator of functional analysis, a new field in mathematics. He was born in 1892 in Cracow, where he spent his youth. A breakthrough moment in his brilliant career was a meeting in Planty Park, Cracow in 1916 with a professor of mathematics, Hugo Steinhaus, who - later considering Banach to be his greatest scientific discovery - helped him in being appointed assistant professor of the Chair of Mathematics, Faculty of Mechanics, at Lvov Technical University. In 1920, before completing his mathematical studies, Stefan Banach received a doctor's degree at John Casimir University in Lvov, where, after four years, he became professor. In 1935 he was invited to give a plenary lecture at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Oslo. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II Stefan Banach was elected the president of the Polish Mathematical Society. He died in the summer of 1945 in Lvov.

Stefan Banach's main scientific interests centred around functional analysis, an extensive field of mathematics still important today – he consolidated its fundamentals, formulated fundamental definitions (among others the Banach spaces) and introduced terminology accepted by mathematicians worldwide. The methods developed by Banach and the discoveries of his closest colleagues turned out to be a breakthrough, essentially influencing almost every branch of contemporary mathematics, natural sciences and physics.

Stefan Banach authored several dozens of publications (58 works within 18 years of his scientific career), including his most important work - „Teorie des operations lineaires” published in 1932.

He was the co-founder of the Lvov School of Mathematics, an important scientific centre dealing mainly with functional analysis. The main representatives of the LSM, apart from Stefan Banach, were the following distinguished mathematicians: Hugo Steinhaus, Stanisław Mazur, Władysław Orlicz, Juliusz Paweł Schauder, Stanisław Ulam (who later became famous as a co-originator of the American thermonuclear bomb), Marek Kac, Herman Auerbach, Antoni Łomnicki, Stanisław Ruziewicz, Włodzimierz Stożek, Stefan Kaczmarz, and Stanisław Saks.

Stefan Banach was known for his unconventional way of doing mathematics. Banach's individuality expressed itself in peculiar methods of creative search and friendly cooperation. He liked to cooperate with a group of friends-mathematicians in a cafe, with the buzz of music and conversations. He spent hours in the famous Scottish Cafe, writing the proofs of theorems on the table top,

and then in the huge notebook available for all mathematicians at the cafe (the famous „Scottish Book” that still exists). An incentive for solving some problems were often peculiar prizes, e.g. a live goose.

Banach became one of the most famous mathematicians in the world. The path of his scientific career can act as an example for the young generation. Despite the difficult beginnings of his scientific career, thanks to his exceptional characteristics of mind and personality, his talent, determination and diligence, he achieved success on a worldwide scale. By enriching mathematical sciences with permanent works, he set the standards with his results and became one of the most distinguished scientists of the 20th century.