

Preface

The history of quasisymmetric functions begins in 1972 with the thesis of Richard Stanley, followed by the formal definition of the Hopf algebra of quasisymmetric functions in 1984 by Ira Gessel. From this definition a whole research area grew and a more detailed, although not exhaustive, history can be found in the introduction.

The history of quasisymmetric Schur functions is far more contemporary. They were discovered in 2007 during the semester on “Recent Advances in Combinatorics” at the Centre de Recherches Mathématiques, and further progress was made at a variety of workshops at the Banff International Research Station and during an Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellowship awarded to Steph. The idea for writing this book came from encouragement by Adriano Garsia who suggested we recast quasisymmetric Schur functions using tableaux analogous to Young tableaux. We followed his words of wisdom.

The aim of this monograph is twofold. The first goal is to provide a reference text for the basic theory of Hopf algebras, in particular the Hopf algebras of symmetric, quasisymmetric and noncommutative symmetric functions and connections between them. The second goal is to give a survey of results with respect to an exciting new basis of the Hopf algebra of quasisymmetric functions, whose combinatorics is analogous to that of the renowned Schur functions.

In particular, after introducing the topic in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 we review pertinent combinatorial concepts such as partially ordered sets, Young and reverse tableaux, and Schensted insertion. In Chapter 3 we give the basic theory of Hopf algebras, illustrating it with the Hopf algebras of symmetric, quasisymmetric and noncommutative symmetric functions, ending with a brief introduction to combinatorial Hopf algebras. The exposition is based on Stefan’s thesis, useful personal notes made by Kurt, and a talk Steph gave entitled “Everything you wanted to know about Sym, QSym and NSym but were afraid to ask”. Chapter 4 generalizes concepts from Chapter 2 such as Young tableaux and reverse tableaux indexed by partitions, to Young composition tableaux and reverse composition tableaux indexed by compositions. The final chapter then introduces two natural refinements for the Schur functions from Chapter 3: quasisymmetric Schur functions reliant on

reverse composition tableaux and Young quasisymmetric Schur functions reliant on Young composition tableaux. This chapter concludes by discussing a number of results for these Schur function refinements and their dual bases. These results are analogous to those found in the theory of Schur functions such as the computation of Kostka numbers, and Pieri and Littlewood–Richardson rules. Throughout parallel construction is used so that analogies may easily be spotted even when browsing.

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Vancouver, BC, Canada
 Toronto, ON, Canada
 Vancouver, BC, Canada

Kurt Luoto
 Stefan Mykytiuk
 Stephanie van Willigenburg

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Hopf Algebras, Quasisymmetric Functions, and Young
Composition Tableaux

Luoto, K.; Mykytiuk, S.; van Willigenburg, S.

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