

September 2007

ENCRYPTION PIONEER WINS MARCONI PRIZE

"Lasting contributions to human progress" cited by Marconi Society

NEW YORK, NY. August 1, 2007 - MIT Professor Ronald Linn Rivest, who collaborated with two other scientists to create the world's most widely used public-key cryptography system, has been named the 2007 Marconi Fellow and prize-winner, for his pioneering work in the field of cryptography, computer and network security.

The Marconi Society, established in 1975 by Gioia Marconi Braga, annually recognizes a living scientist who, like her father Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of radio, shares the determination that advances in communications and information technology be directed to the social, economic and cultural improvement of all humanity.

Rivest, the Andrew and Erna Viterbi Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science in [MIT's Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science](#), will receive the award and accompanying \$100,000 prize at the annual Marconi Society Award Dinner on September 28, 2007 at the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton, California.

"Ron Rivest's achievements have led to the ability of individuals across the planet in large cities and in remote villages - to conduct and benefit from secure transactions on the Internet," said Robert Lucky, chairman of the non-profit Marconi Society. "Public key cryptography has flattened the planet by enabling secure communication via email, web browsers, secure shells, virtual private networks, mobile phones, and other applications requiring the secure exchange of information. The technology has enabled entrepreneurial activity on an unprecedented level, and facilitated major advances in political and social interactions. This achievement is exemplary of Marconi's desire that technological advances have benefits applicable to all people, not just a small group."

Rivest, 60, joins many other Marconi Fellows with strong ties to MIT, including science visionary Arthur C. Clarke, the first to specify in detail both the great potential and the technical requirements for using geostationary satellites for global communications; G. David Forney, the inventor of the first reliable high speed modem; Robert G. Gallager, a major contributor to information theory and the theory of communications networks; James Killian, a former president of MIT who led its movement into the field of digital computers and information-processing; and Seymour Papert, a pioneer in the development of Artificial Intelligence. But like several of these men and many other Marconi Fellows, he also is linked to **Stanford University**, where he obtained his Ph.D. in Computer Science.

A native of Niskayuna, **New York**, a suburb of **Schenectady**, Rivest's father was an engineer at GE's research laboratory. Rivest attended **Yale University**, where he earned a B.S. in Mathematics in 1969, the same year he married his wife Gail. They subsequently set out for **Palo Alto** and **Stanford University's** fledgling Computer Science Department, where Rivest would pursue graduate studies. At Stanford, he briefly worked in the area of Artificial Intelligence, but he soon realized that his real passion was for mathematics and theoretical computer science the field that would lead to his breakthrough achievement in encryption.

Having completed his Ph.D. studies at Stanford, in the fall of 1973 Rivest accepted a "once-in-a-lifetime" post-doctoral position at INRIA (then called IRIA) in **Rocquencourt, France** (north of **Versailles**) where he worked with Jean Vuillemin and Gilles Kahn on various algorithms, and lived in **Paris** with his wife. He returned to the **U.S.** in the fall of 1974 to join the MIT Electrical Engineering and Computer Science faculty.