

REPORT ON CIAA 2026

**30th Conference on Implementation and Application of Automata
Kingston, ON, Canada, August 5–8, 2026**

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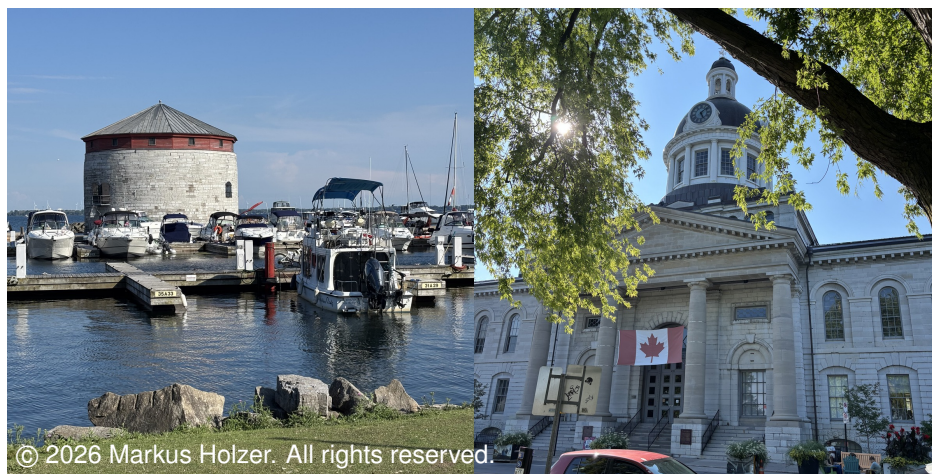
The 30th International Conference on Implementation and Application of Automata (CIAA) was held at Queen’s University on 5–8 August 2026, back to back with the 27th International Conference on Descriptive Complexity of Formal Systems (DCFS), held at the same venue immediately afterwards. CIAA drew 32 participants from 15 countries.



CIAA 2026 was organized by Queen’s University’s School of Computing under the direction of Taylor J. Smith and Salimur Choudhury. Of the submissions received, 14 were accepted, and the scientific programme was rounded out by three invited talks: Anthony Bonato on *Burning, Cooling, and Liminal Burning Graphs*, Nataša Jonoska on *Traversing Crystals by Automata*, and Ian Mertz on *Computing with a Full Hard Drive*. The proceedings appeared as volume 16695 of Lecture Notes in Computer Science (LNCS) from Springer-Verlag, and a special issue of selected contributions is planned for Theoretical Computer Science (TCS). The invitation to contribute has already been sent out. The best paper

award went to *Bandwidth of nondeterministic finite automata* by Da-Jung Cho, Szilárd Zsolt Fazekas, Daihei Ise, Shinnosuke Seki, Wataru Tamehira, and Max Wiedenhöft—congratulations to the authors.

Fittingly for a conference celebrating its 30th edition, this year’s CIAA also gave participants a taste of its host city’s much longer history. Queen’s University itself, founded in 1841 by royal charter of Queen Victoria, is one of Canada’s oldest universities and predates the country by 26 years; its campus sits on the shore of Lake Ontario, right at the point where the lake narrows into the St. Lawrence River. Kingston is older still: settled by United Empire Loyalists in the 1780s on the site of the former French trading post Fort Frontenac, it briefly served as the first capital of the Province of Canada (1841–1844) before the seat of government moved on, and it later became home to the Royal Military College of Canada and to Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, who practised law in the city. Its downtown core of nineteenth-century limestone buildings has earned Kingston the nickname the “Limestone City,” and the city today serves as the gateway to the Thousand Islands, the archipelago of roughly 1,800 islands scattered along the St. Lawrence between Lake Ontario and Brockville.



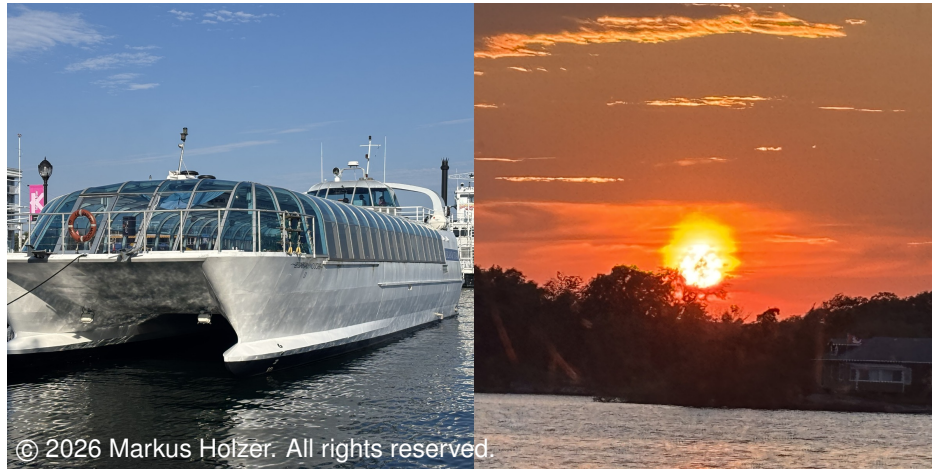
That sense of history was matched by a rather informal atmosphere inside the conference room itself. Rather than the usual lecture-hall layout of rows facing a single screen, the contributed talks were held in a room set up with round tables seating six to eight participants each, with the slides projected simultaneously onto four screens around the walls so that every table had a clear line of sight to one of them. Sitting face to face rather than in rows made it easy to lean over and discuss a point with one’s neighbours during and between talks, and the arrangement noticeably encouraged interaction throughout the scientific programme, not just during the breaks. Complimentary coffee breaks and lunches kept everyone together and free to focus on the science rather than on finding a place to eat,

the weather cooperated throughout, and the overall atmosphere was warm and friendly.

One of the highlights of the week was a special session held in honour of Kai Salomaa, celebrating his career and his many contributions to automata theory and formal language theory over the years—not least his long service to the CIAA community itself. Colleagues, collaborators, and former students gathered to mark the occasion, and a Festschrift, *From Possibility to Reality* (LNCS volume 16865), was presented to him during the session. The warmth and genuine affection in the room made clear just how deeply Kai's generosity, mentorship, and scientific insight have shaped both the field and the people in it.



The conference dinner offered a fitting close to the programme: a Thousand Islands dinner cruise departing from downtown Kingston, just a short walk from the conference venue. As the boat pulled away from the harbour, the Kingston skyline receded behind it and the St. Lawrence widened out into the maze of granite islets and summer cottages that gives the Thousand Islands their name. Participants sailed past the small cottage islands of the Admiralty Group as well as some of the grander turn-of-the-century summer estates further along the river, while dinner was served over multiple courses at tables around the deck—a relaxed setting to continue the day's conversations, far removed from a conventional banquet hall. As the meal went on, the sun set over the water, turning the channels between the islands orange and then pink before the boat turned back toward Kingston in the dark: a scenic and memorable close to the conference.



We thank everyone who made CIAA 2026 such a success. The conference was sponsored by Queen's University's School of Computing, Queen's University, and Springer-Verlag. During the business meeting it was announced that next year's CIAA will take place in Stellenbosch, South Africa, from September 20 to 23, 2027.