

Benford's Law

David Groce

Lyncean Group

March 23, 2005

What do these have in common?

- SAIC's 2004 Annual Report
- Bill Clinton's 1977 to 1992 Tax Returns
- Monte Carlo results from Bill Scott
- Compound Interest
- Fibonacci Numbers
- NIST (old NBS) Table of Physical Constants
- Populations of California & Colorado Counties

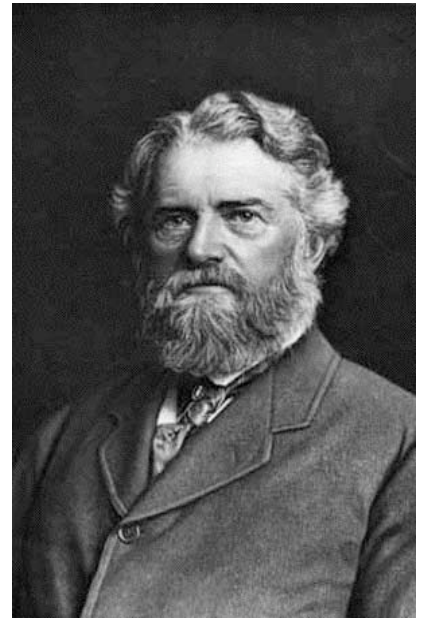
ALL OBEY Benford's Law!!!

What is Benford's Law?

Let's go back to 1881

1881 Simon Newcomb

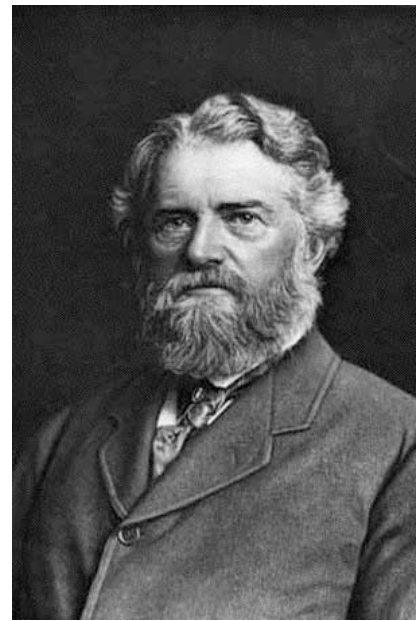
1835—1909



- “... had risen from rags to intellectual riches.”
- Computer in National Almanac Office
- Studied Phrenology
- Director, National Almanac Office
- Professor Math & Astronomy, Johns Hopkins
- Most famous American astronomer of the times
- Measured speed of light with Michaelson
- Economist
 - Developed Quantity Theory of Money $MV = PT$
- President of most of the Scientific Societies
- First Bruce Medalist (1898)

Simon Newcomb

- 1) Noticed first pages of log tables dirtier than last pages
- 2) Concluded that numbers beginning with 1, 2 & 3s were looked up more often than those beginning with 7, 8 & 9s
- 3) Conjectured: probability of initial digits in a number followed
 $P(d) = \log_{10}(1 + 1/d)$; where: $d = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9$
 and $\sum P(d) = 1$
- 4) Published: Amer J Math 4, 1881 (pp 39-40)



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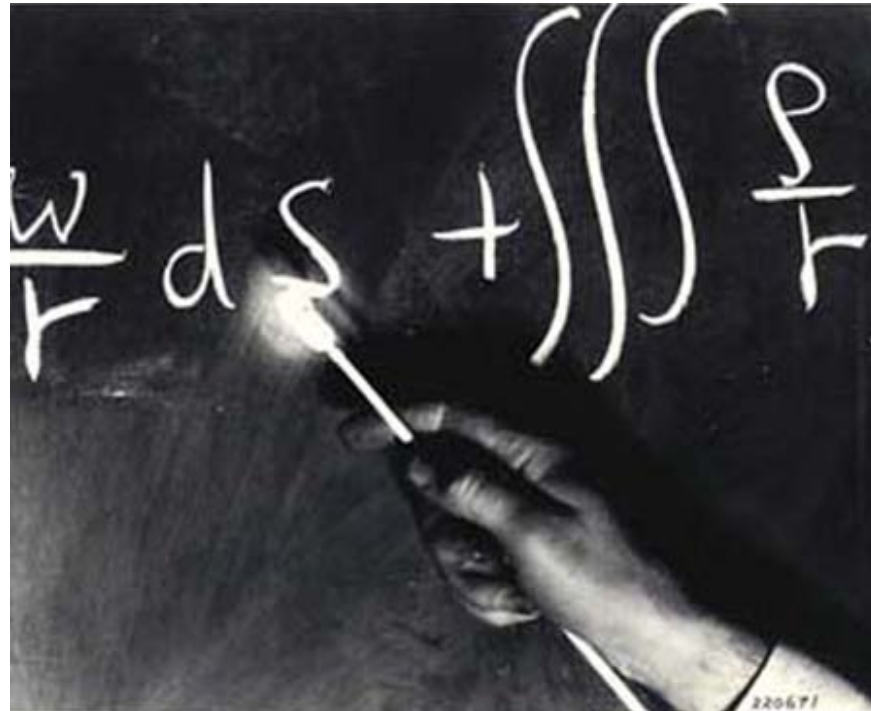
Num. 100 — 104. Log 000 — 021.

0° 1'	0° 16'	Num.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
40"	40"	1000	0434	0869	1303	1737	2171	2605	3039	3473	3907
	41	1001	0441	0875	1310	1744	2178	2612	3053	3489	3924
	42	1002	0448	0881	1317	1751	2185	2619	3060	3496	3931
	43	1003	0455	0888	1324	1758	2192	2626	3067	3503	3938
	44	1004	0462	0895	1331	1765	2199	2633	3074	3510	3945
	45	1005	0469	0902	1338	1772	2206	2640	3081	3517	3952
	46	1006	0476	0909	1345	1779	2213	2647	3088	3524	3959
	47	1007	0483	0916	1352	1786	2220	2654	3095	3531	3966
	48	1008	0490	0923	1359	1793	2227	2661	3102	3538	3973
	49	1009	0497	0930	1366	1800	2234	2668	3109	3545	3980
41"	50"	1010	0504	0937	1373	1807	2241	2675	3116	3552	3987
	51	1011	0511	0944	1380	1814	2248	2682	3123	3559	3994
	52	1012	0518	0951	1387	1821	2255	2689	3130	3566	4001
	53	1013	0525	0958	1394	1828	2262	2696	3137	3573	4008
	54	1014	0532	0965	1401	1835	2269	2703	3144	3580	4015
	55	1015	0539	0972	1408	1842	2276	2710	3151	3587	4022
	56	1016	0546	0979	1415	1849	2283	2717	3158	3594	4029
	57	1017	0553	0986	1422	1856	2290	2724	3165	3601	4036
	58	1018	0560	0993	1429	1863	2297	2731	3172	3608	4043
	59	1019	0567	1000	1436	1870	2304	2738	3179	3615	4050
42"	17'	1020	0574	1007	1443	1877	2311	2745	3186	3622	4057
	1	1021	0581	1014	1450	1884	2318	2752	3193	3629	4064
	2	1022	0588	1021	1457	1891	2325	2759	3200	3636	4071
	3	1023	0595	1028	1464	1898	2332	2766	3207	3643	4078
	4	1024	0602	1035	1471	1905	2339	2773	3214	3650	4085
	5	1025	0609	1042	1478	1912	2346	2780	3221	3657	4092
	6	1026	0616	1049	1485	1919	2353	2787	3228	3664	4099
	7	1027	0623	1056	1492	1926	2360	2794	3235	3671	4106
	8	1028	0630	1063	1499	1933	2367	2801	3242	3678	4113
	9	1029	0637	1070	1506	1940	2374	2808	3249	3685	4120
		1030	0644	1077	1513	1947	2381	2815	3256	3692	4127
		1031	0651	1084	1520	1954	2388	2822	3263	3699	4134
		1032	0658	1091	1527	1961	2395	2829	3270	3706	4141
		1033	0665	1098	1534	1968	2402	2836	3277	3713	4148
		1034	0672	1105	1541	1975	2409	2843	3284	3720	4155
		1035	0679	1112	1548	1982	2416	2850	3291	3727	4162
		1036	0686	1119	1555	1989	2423	2857	3298	3734	4169
		1037	0693	1126	1562	1996	2430	2864	3305	3741	4176
		1038	0700	1133	1569	2003	2437	2871	3312	3748	4183
		1039	0707	1140	1576	2010	2444	2878	3319	3755	4190
		1040	0714	1147	1583	2017	2451	2885	3326	3762	4197
		1041	0721	1154	1590	2024	2458	2892	3333	3769	4204
		1042	0728	1161	1597	2031	2465	2899	3340	3776	4211
		1043	0735	1168	1604	2038	2472	2906	3347	3783	4218
		1044	0742	1175	1611	2045	2479	2913	3354	3790	4225
		1045	0749	1182	1618	2052	2486	2920	3361	3797	4232
		1046	0756	1189	1625	2059	2493	2927	3368	3804	4239
		1047	0763	1196	1632	2066	2500	2934	3375	3811	4246
		1048	0770	1203	1639	2073	2507	2941	3382	3818	4253
		1049	0777	1210	1646	2080	2514	2948	3389	3825	4260
		1050	0784	1217	1653	2087	2521	2955	3396	3832	4267
		1051	0791	1224	1660	2094	2528	2962	3403	3839	4274
		1052	0798	1231	1667	2101	2535	2969	3410	3846	4281
		1053	0805	1238	1674	2108	2542	2976	3417	3853	4288
		1054	0812	1245	1681	2115	2549	2983	3424	3860	4295
		1055	0819	1252	1688	2122	2556	2990	3431	3867	4302
		1056	0826	1259	1695	2129	2563	2997	3438	3874	4309
		1057	0833	1266	1702	2136	2570	3004	3445	3881	4316
		1058	0840	1273	1709	2143	2577	3011	3452	3888	4323
		1059	0847	1280	1716	2150	2584	3018	3459	3895	4330
		1060	0854	1287	1723	2157	2591	3025	3466	3902	4337
		1061	0861	1294	1730	2164	2598	3032	3473	3909	4344
		1062	0868	1301	1737	2171	2605	3039	3480	3916	4351
		1063	0875	1308	1744	2178	2612	3046	3487	3923	4358
		1064	0882	1315	1751	2185	2619	3053	3494	3930	4365
		1065	0889	1322	1758	2192	2626	3060	3501	3937	4372
		1066	0896	1329	1765	2199	2633	3067	3508	3944	4379
		1067	0903	1336	1772	2206	2640	3074	3515	3951	4386
		1068	0910	1343	1779	2213	2647	3081	3522	3958	4393
		1069	0917	1350	1786	2220	2654	3088	3529	3965	4400
		1070	0924	1357	1793	2227	2661	3095	3536	3972	4407
		1071	0931	1364	1800	2234	2668	3102	3543	3979	4414
		1072	0938	1371	1807	2241	2675	3109	3550	3986	4421
		1073	0945	1378	1814	2248	2682	3116	3557	3993	4428
		1074	0952	1385	1821	2255	2689	3123	3564	4000	4435
		1075	0959	1392	1828	2262	2696	3130	3571	4007	4442
		1076	0966	1399	1835	2269	2703	3137	3578	4014	4449
		1077	0973	1406	1842	2276	2710	3144	3585	4021	4456
		1078	0980	1413	1849	2283	2717	3151	3592	4028	4463
		1079	0987	1420	1856	2290	2724	3158	3599	4035	4470
		1080	0994	1427	1863	2297	2731	3165	3606	4042	4477
		1081	1001	1434	1870	2304	2738	3172	3613	4049	4484
		1082	1008	1441	1877	2311	2745	3179	3620	4056	4491
		1083	1015	1448	1884	2318	2752	3186	3627	4063	4498
		1084	1022	1455	1891	2325	2759	3193	3634	4070	4505
		1085	1029	1462	1898	2332	2766	3200	3641	4077	4512
		1086	1036	1469	1905	2339	2773	3207	3648	4084	4519
		1087	1043	1476	1912	2346	2780	3214	3655	4091	4526
		1088	1050	1483	1919	2353	2787	3221	3662	4098	4533
		1089	1057	1490	1926	2360	2794	3228	3669	4105	4540
		1090	1064	1497	1933	2367	2801	3235	3676	4112	4547
		1091	1071	1504	1940	2374	2808	3242	3683	4119	4554
		1092	1078	1511	1947	2381	2815	3249	3690	4126	4561
		1093	1085	1518	1954	2388	2822	3256	3697	4133	4568
		1094	1092	1525	1961	2395	2829	3263	3704	4140	4575
		1095	1099	1532	1968	2402	2836	3270	3711	4147	4582
		1096	1106	1539	1975	2409	2843	3277	3718	4154	4589
		1097	1113	1546	1982	2416	2850	3284	3725	4161	4596
		1098	1120	1553	1989	2423	2857	3291	3732	4168	4603
		1099	1127	1560	1996	2430	2864	3298	3739	4175	4610
		1100	1134	1567	2003	2437	2871	3305	3746	4182	4617
		1101	1141	1574	2010	2444	2878	3312	3753	4189	4624
		1102	1148	1581	2017	2451	2885	3319	3760	4196	4631
		1103	1155	1588	2024	2458	2892	3326	3767	4203	4638
		1104	1162	1595	2031	2465	2899	3333	3774	4210	4645
		1105	1169	1602	2038	2472	2906	3340	3781	4217	4652
		1106	1176	1609	2045	2479	2913	3347	3788	4224	4659
		1107	1183	1616	2052	2486	2920	3354	3795	4231	4666
		1108	1190	1623	2059	2493	2927	3361	3802	4238	4673
		1109	1197	1630	2066	2500	2934	3368	3809	4245	4680
		1110	1204	1637	2073	2507	2941	3375	3816	4252	4687
		1111									

1938 Frank Benford

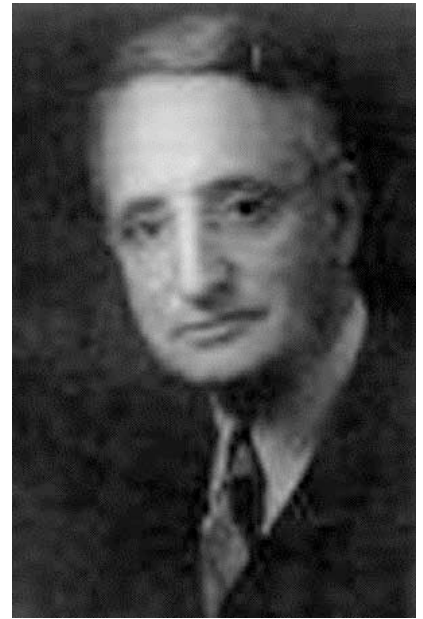
1883—1948

- Physicist at GE, Schenectady, NY
- Optics expert; high interest in math
- WWI: theory & design of searchlights
- Many patents



1938 Frank Benford

- 1) Noticed first pages of log tables dirtier than last pages
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- 3) Had not seen Newcomb's 1881 paper in Amer J of Math
- 4) Conjectured: probability of initial digits in a number followed
$$P(d) = \log_{10}(1 + 1/d); \quad \text{where: } d = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9$$
and $\sum P(d) = 1$
- 5) **But, he investigated** 20 different sets of natural numbers involving over 20,000 samples (1929 to 1934 when GE on 1/2 time)

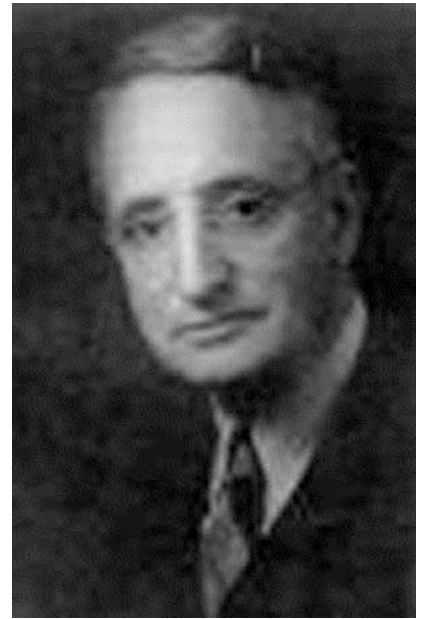


		First Digit									
Col.	Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Samples
A	Rivers, Area	31.0	16.4	10.7	11.3	7.2	8.6	5.5	4.2	5.1	335
B	Population	33.9	20.4	14.2	8.1	7.2	6.2	4.1	3.7	2.2	3259
C	Constants	41.3	14.4	4.8	8.6	10.6	5.8	1.0	2.9	10.6	104
D	Newspapers	30.0	18.0	12.0	10.0	8.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	100
E	Specific Heat	24.0	18.4	16.2	14.6	10.6	4.1	3.2	4.8	4.1	1389
F	Pressure	29.6	18.3	12.8	9.8	8.3	6.4	5.7	4.4	4.7	703
G	H.P. Lost	30.0	18.4	11.9	10.8	8.1	7.0	5.1	5.1	3.6	690
H	Mol. Wgt.	26.7	25.2	15.4	10.8	6.7	5.1	4.1	2.8	3.2	1800
I	Drainage	27.1	23.9	13.8	12.6	8.2	5.0	5.0	2.5	1.9	159
J	Atomic Wgt.	47.2	18.7	5.5	4.4	6.6	4.4	3.3	4.4	5.5	91
K	$n^{-1}, \sqrt{n}$	25.7	20.3	9.7	6.8	6.6	6.8	7.2	8.0	8.9	5000
L	Design	26.8	14.8	14.3	7.5	8.3	8.4	7.0	7.3	5.6	560
M	<i>Reader's Digest</i>	33.4	18.5	12.4	7.5	7.1	6.5	5.5	4.9	4.2	308
N	Cost Data	32.4	18.8	10.1	10.1	9.8	5.5	4.7	5.5	3.1	741
O	X-Ray Volts	27.9	17.5	14.4	9.0	8.1	7.4	5.1	5.8	4.8	707
P	Am. League	32.7	17.6	12.6	9.8	7.4	6.4	4.9	5.6	3.0	1458
Q	Blackbody	31.0	17.3	14.1	8.7	6.6	7.0	5.2	4.7	5.4	1165
R	Addresses	28.9	19.2	12.6	8.8	8.5	6.4	5.6	5.0	5.0	342
S	$n^1, n^2 \dots n!$	25.3	16.0	12.0	10.0	8.5	8.8	6.8	7.1	5.5	900
T	Death Rate	27.0	18.6	15.7	9.4	6.7	6.5	7.2	4.8	4.1	418
	Average	30.6	18.5	12.4	9.4	8.0	6.4	5.1	4.9	4.7	1011
	Probable Error	$\pm$ 0.8	$\pm$ 0.4	$\pm$ 0.4	$\pm$ 0.3	$\pm$ 0.2	$\pm$ 0.2	$\pm$ 0.2	$\pm$ 0.3		

Benford's Samples

Details not known

1938 Frank Benford



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$$P(d) = \log_{10}(1 + 1/d); \quad \text{where: } d = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9$$
and $\sum P(d) = 1$
- 5) **But, he** investigated 20 different sets of natural numbers involving over 20,000 samples (1929 to 1934 when GE on 1/2 time)
- 6) Published: Proc of the Amer Philosophical Soc, 78 no. 4, March, 1938, (pp. 551-571).
- 7) Paper was noticed (located just after the **seminal paper on electron scattering** by Bethe and Rose).
- 8) Lo, it was a beautiful "law" that was called **Benford's Law**.

Issue: What kind of numbers?

California

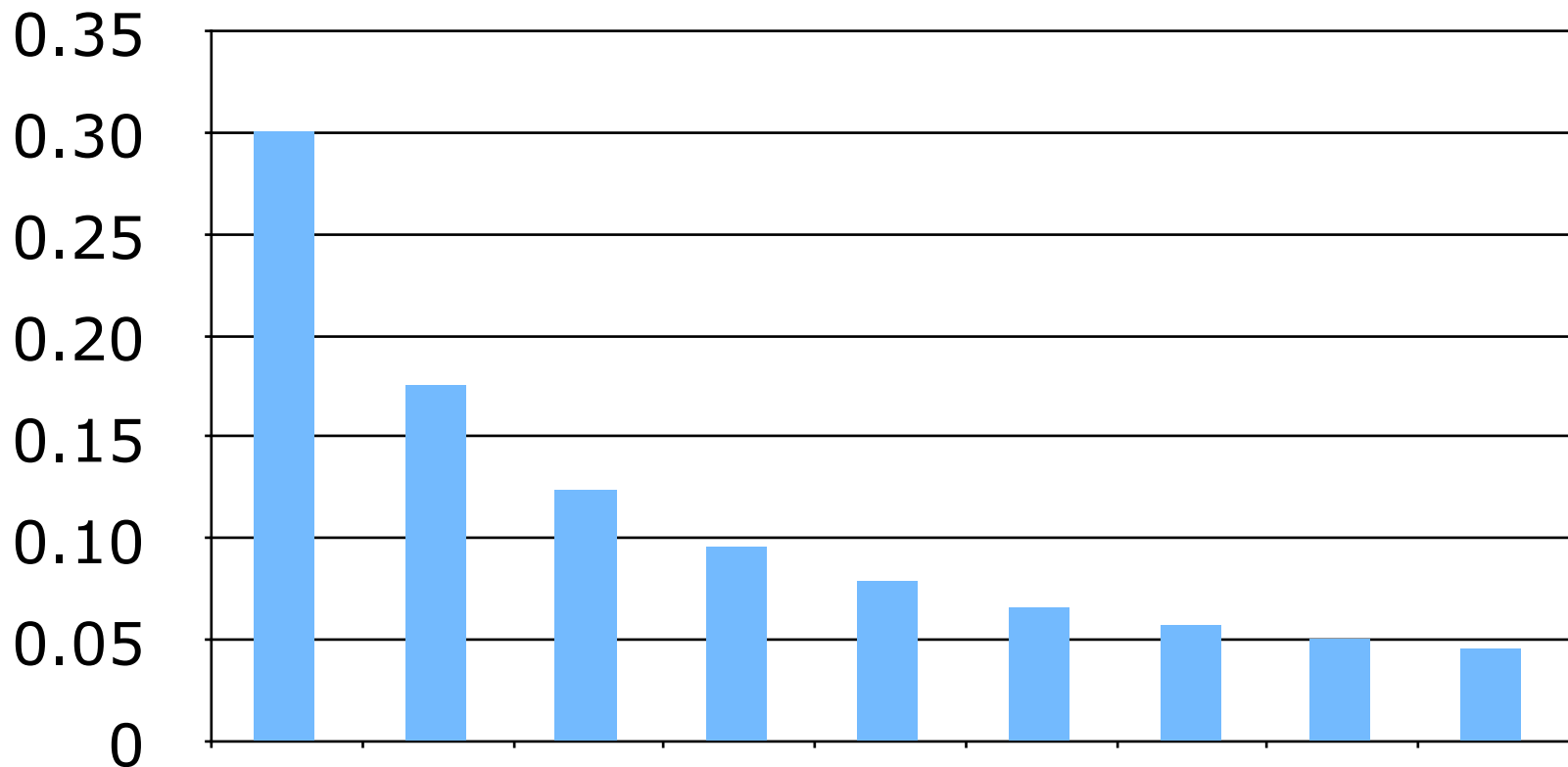
(58 counties, 155,959 sq. mi. land; pop. 34,501,130)

County	County seat or courthouse	2001 Pop.	2000 Pop.	Land area sq.mi.
Alameda	Oakland	1,458,420	1,443,741	738
Alpine	Markleeville	1,192	1,208	739
Amador	Jackson	36,269	35,100	593
Butte	Oroville	205,973	203,171	1,639
Calaveras	San Andreas	42,005	40,554	1,020
Colusa	Colusa	19,277	18,804	1,151
Contra Costa	Martinez	975,532	948,816	720
Del Norte	Crescent City	27,554	27,507	1,008
El Dorado	Placerville	162,586	156,299	1,711
Fresno	Fresno	815,734	799,407	5,963
Glenn	Willows	26,558	26,453	1,315
Humboldt	Eureka	126,468	126,518	3,572
Imperial	El Centro	145,744	142,361	4,175
Inyo	Independence	17,944	17,945	10,203
Kern	Bakersfield	676,367	661,645	8,141
Kings	Hanford	132,119	129,461	1,391

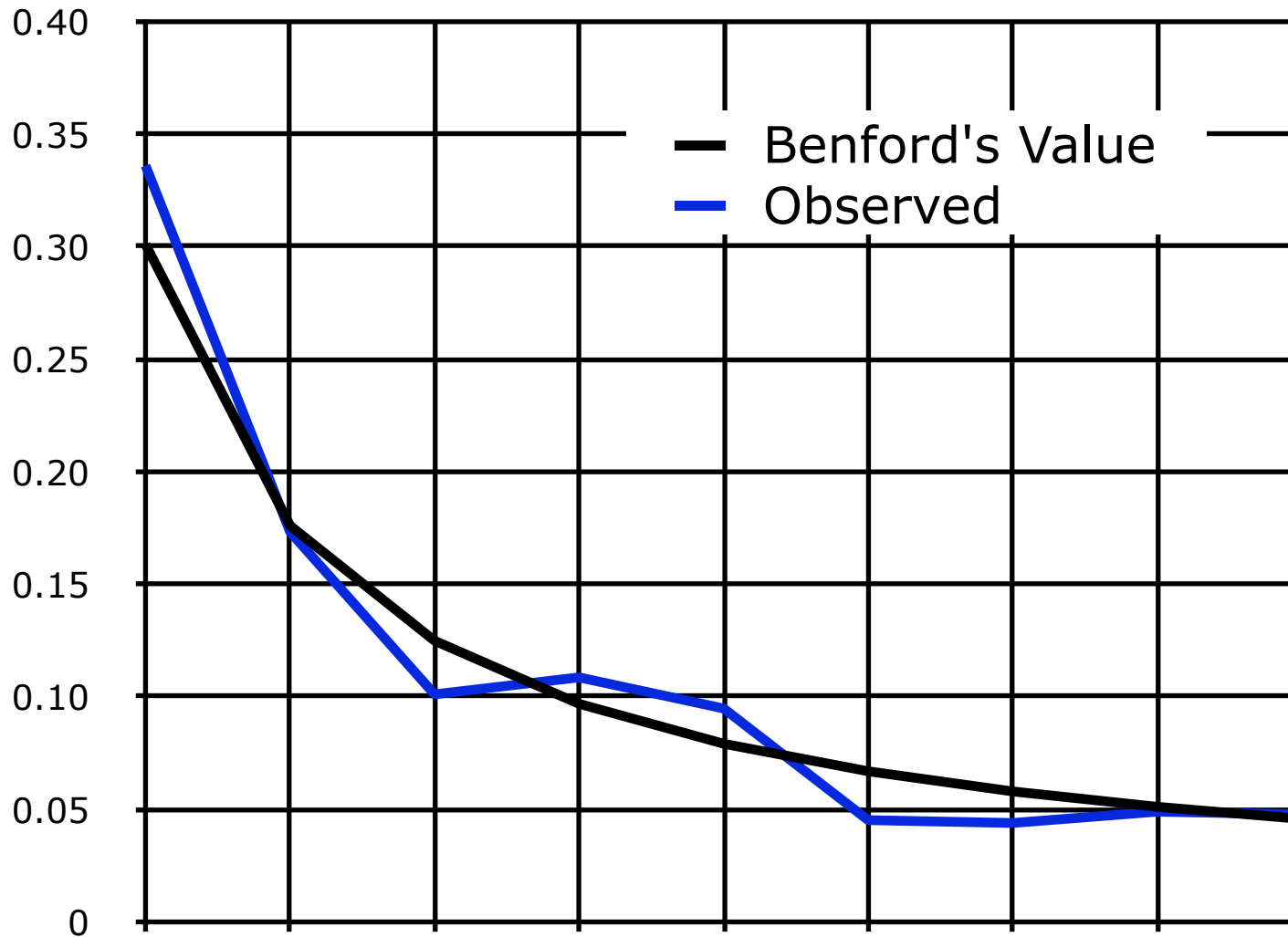
Issue: What kind of Law?

A law is a mathematical statement which always holds true. Whereas "laws" in physics are generally experimental observations backed up by theoretical underpinning, laws in mathematics are generally theorems which can formally be proven true under the stated conditions. However, the term is also sometimes used in the sense of an empirical observation, e.g., Benford's law.

Wolfram MathWorld



Example: SAIC 2004 Report



Issue:
How
good is
the fit?

A Quick Review of Statistics 1

Poisson Distribution (for enumeration, digits ≥ 0)
with large numbers approaches normal distr.

for a mean of m , $P(d) = m^d e^{-m} / d!$
standard deviation = $\sqrt{m}$

A Quick Review of Statistics 2

The statistic, Chi Squared χ^2 , is summed over i by:

$$\chi^2 = \sum (F_i - f_i)^2 / F_i$$

where: F_i are the theoretical values

f_i are the observed values

i are the observation categories

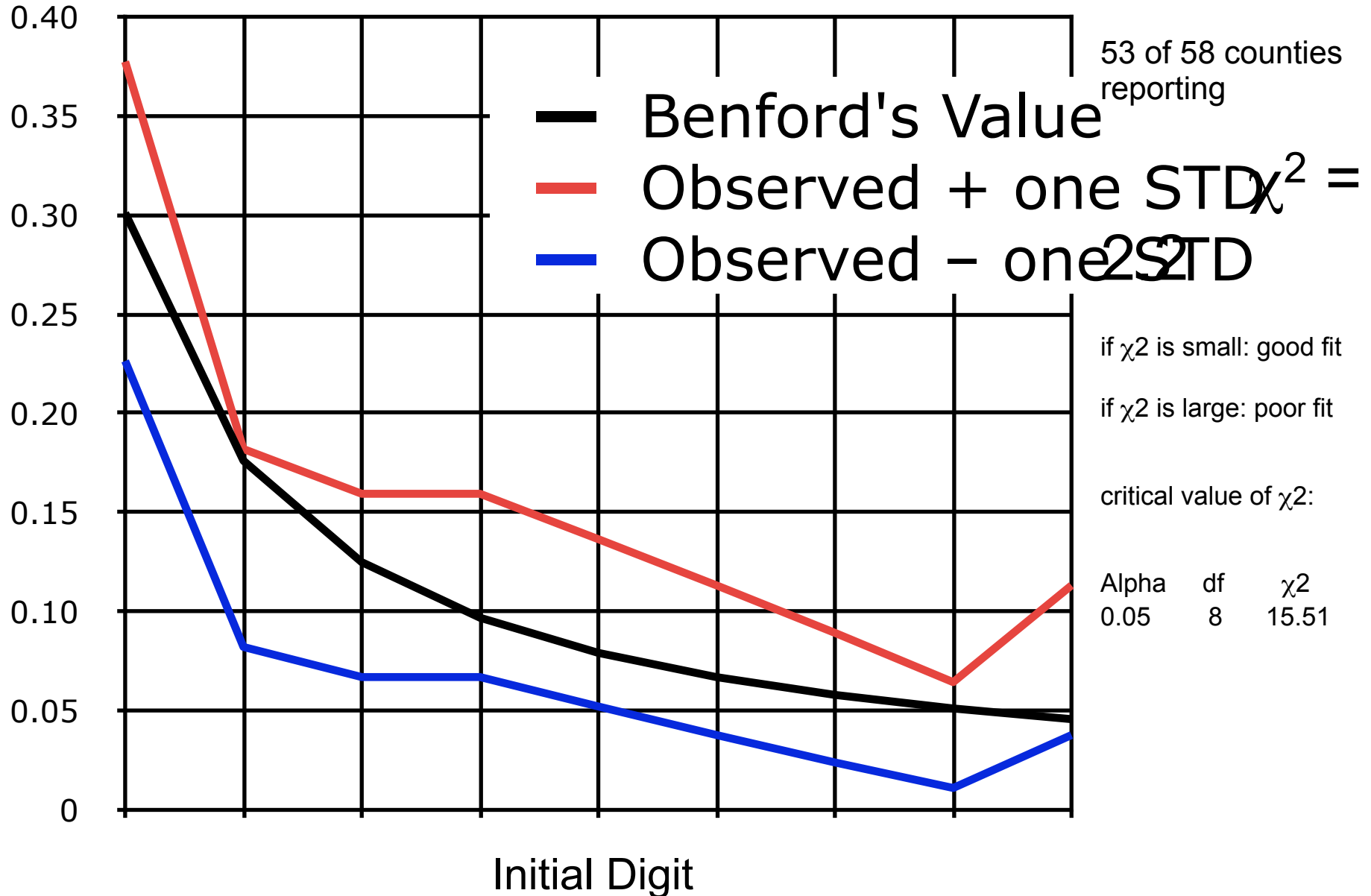
if χ^2 is small, fit (hypothesis) is good

if χ^2 is large, fit (hypothesis) is poor

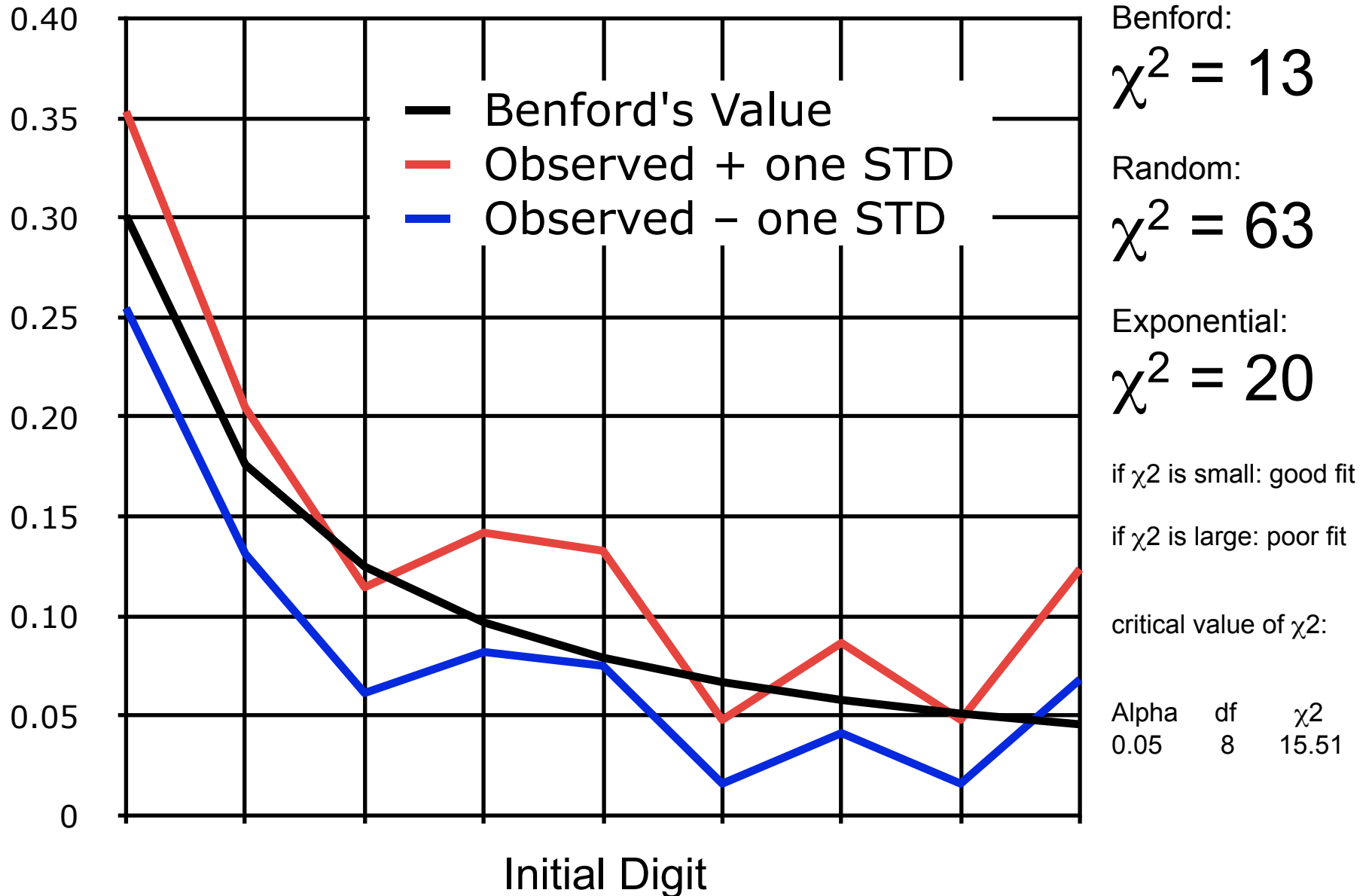
critical value of χ^2 :

	significance	df	χ^2
“statistically significant”	0.05	8	15.51

Davis Recall Signatures



2000 Population CA&CO counties



Fibonacci Numbers



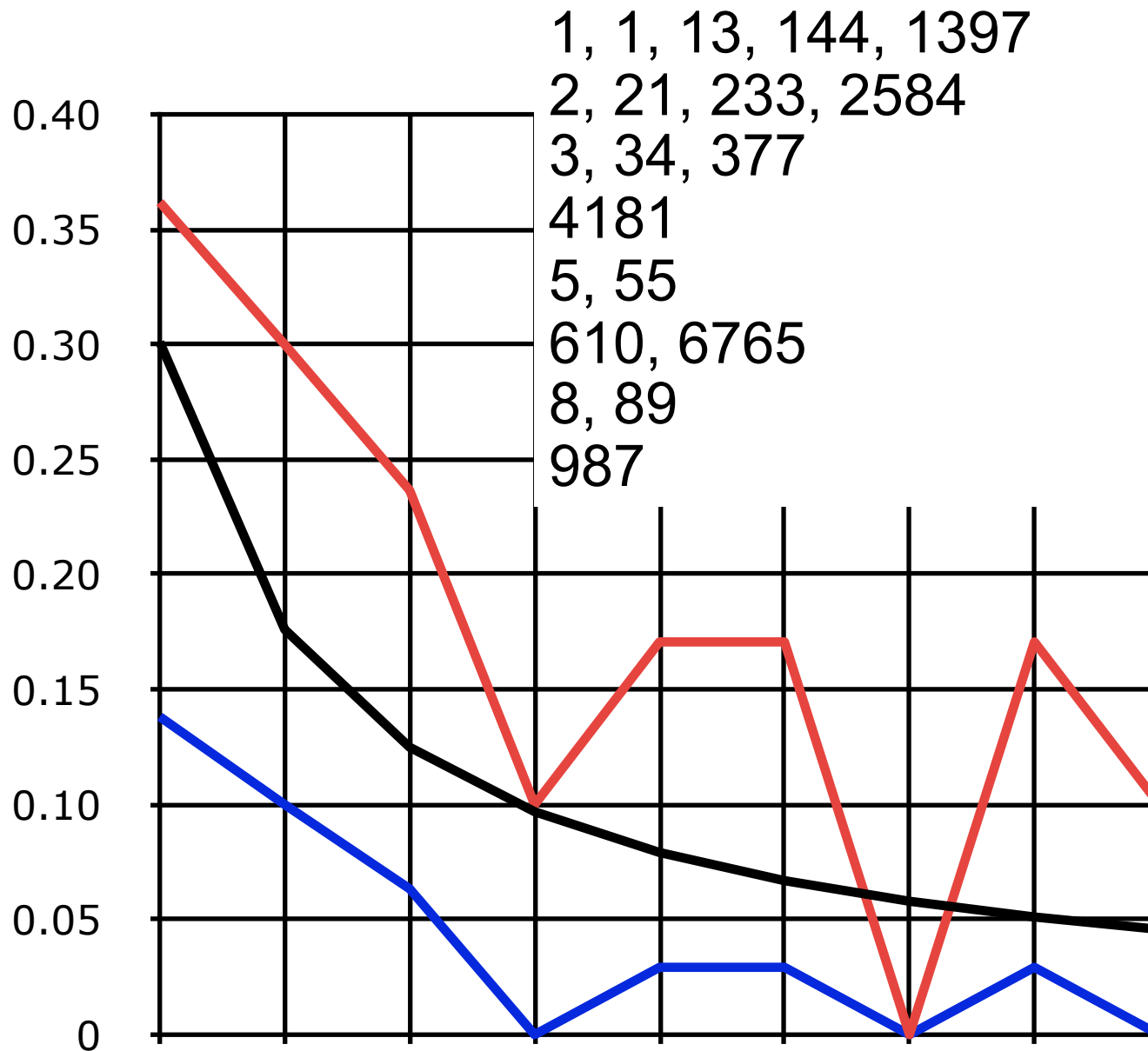
$$F_n = F_{n-2} + F_{n-1}$$

(1, 1 start): 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, ...

(2, 1 start)*: 2, 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 18, 29, 47, ...

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Limit } F_n / F_{n-1} &= \text{Phi} = (1 + \sqrt{5})/2 \\ &= 1.61803 \text{ (Golden Ratio)}\end{aligned}$$

First 20 Fibonacci Numbers



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 3.3$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 8.8$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = --$$

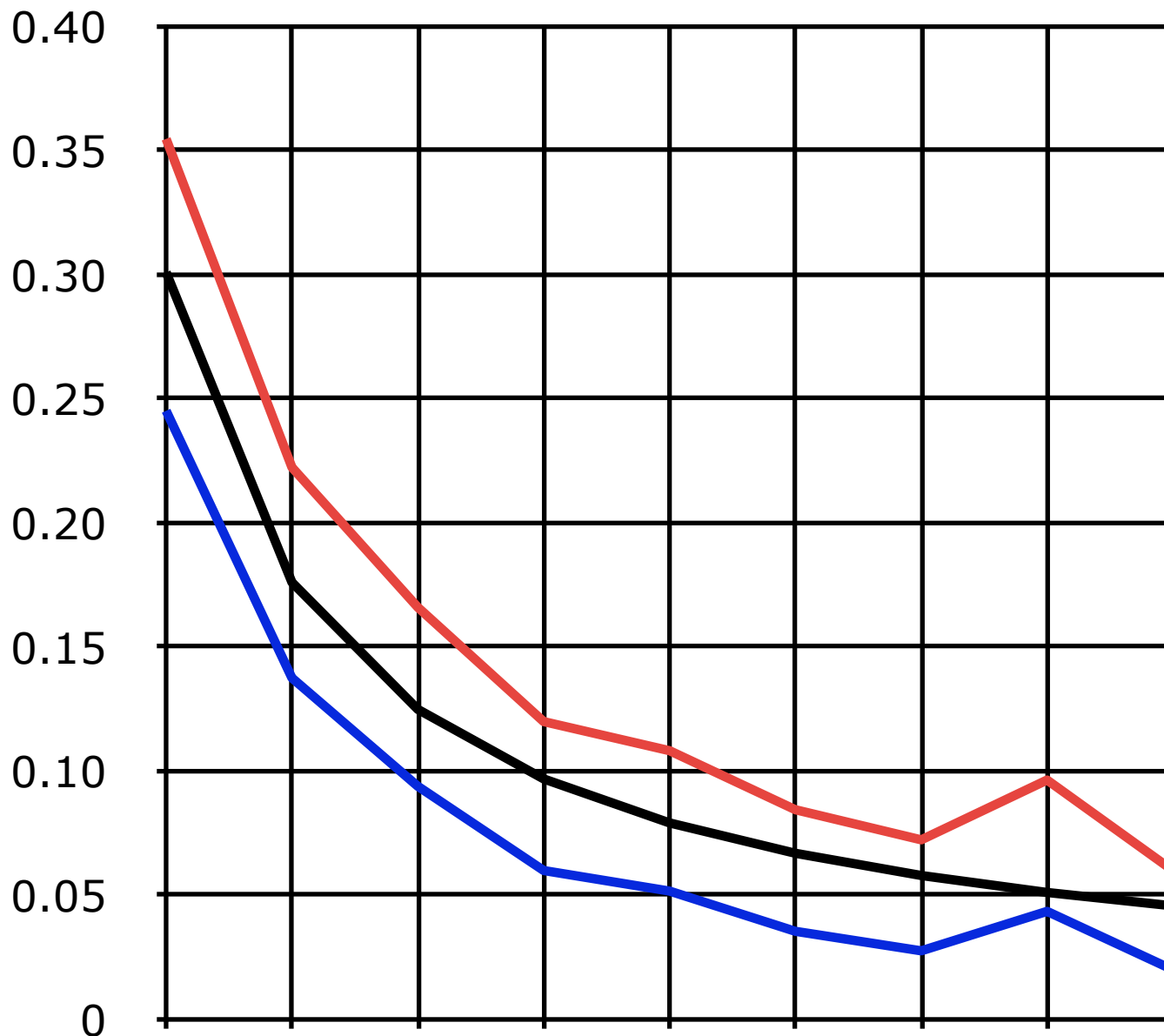
if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

First 100 Fibonacci Numbers



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 1.0$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 50$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 4.8$$

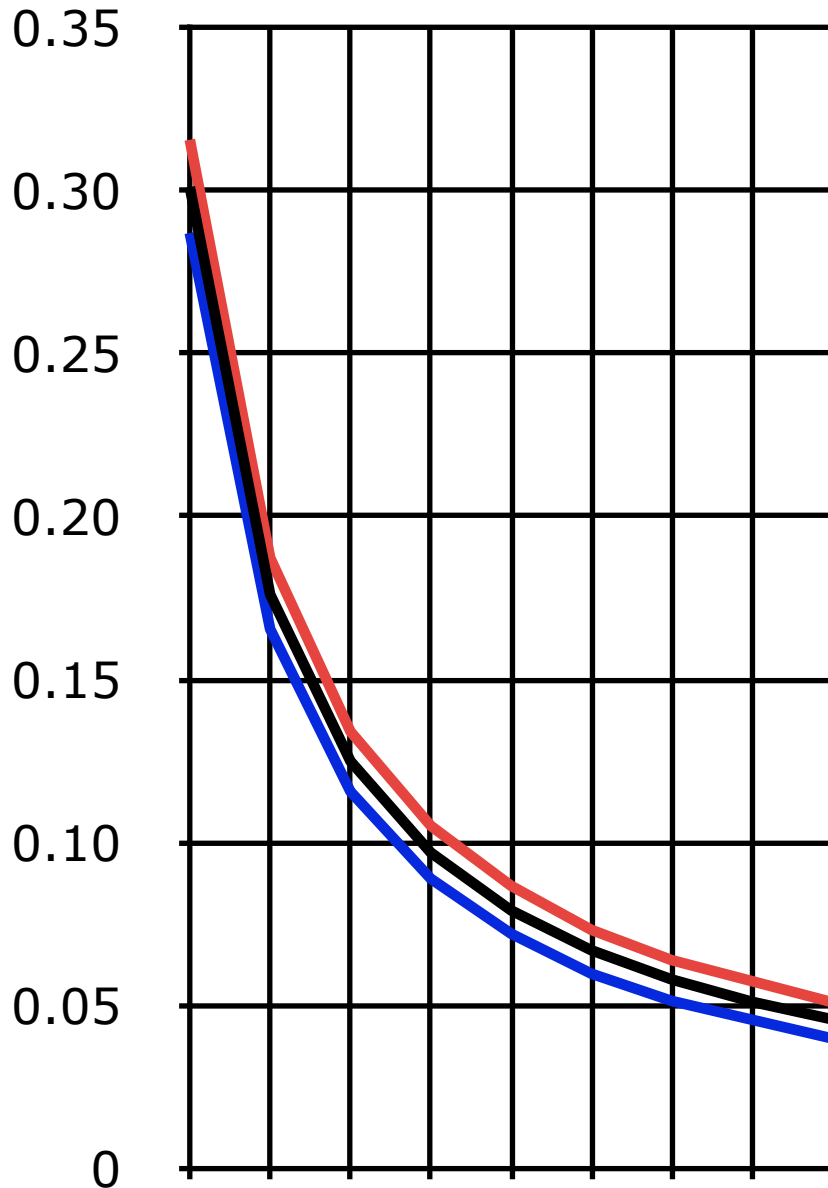
if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

First 1,474* Fibonacci Numbers



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = .02$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 723$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 53$$

2,000,000 #s:

$$\chi^2 = 2 \times 10^{-4}$$

Lucas (2,1):

$$\chi^2 = .06$$

"Groce #s" (random):

$$\chi^2 = .05$$

Divide each by π :

$$\chi^2 = .04$$

Multiply each by e:

$$\chi^2 = .06$$

Multiply by random #s:

$$\chi^2 = 5.2$$

Multiply twice by rand #s:

$$\chi^2 = 3.9$$

Each term (739) squared:

$$\chi^2 = .10$$

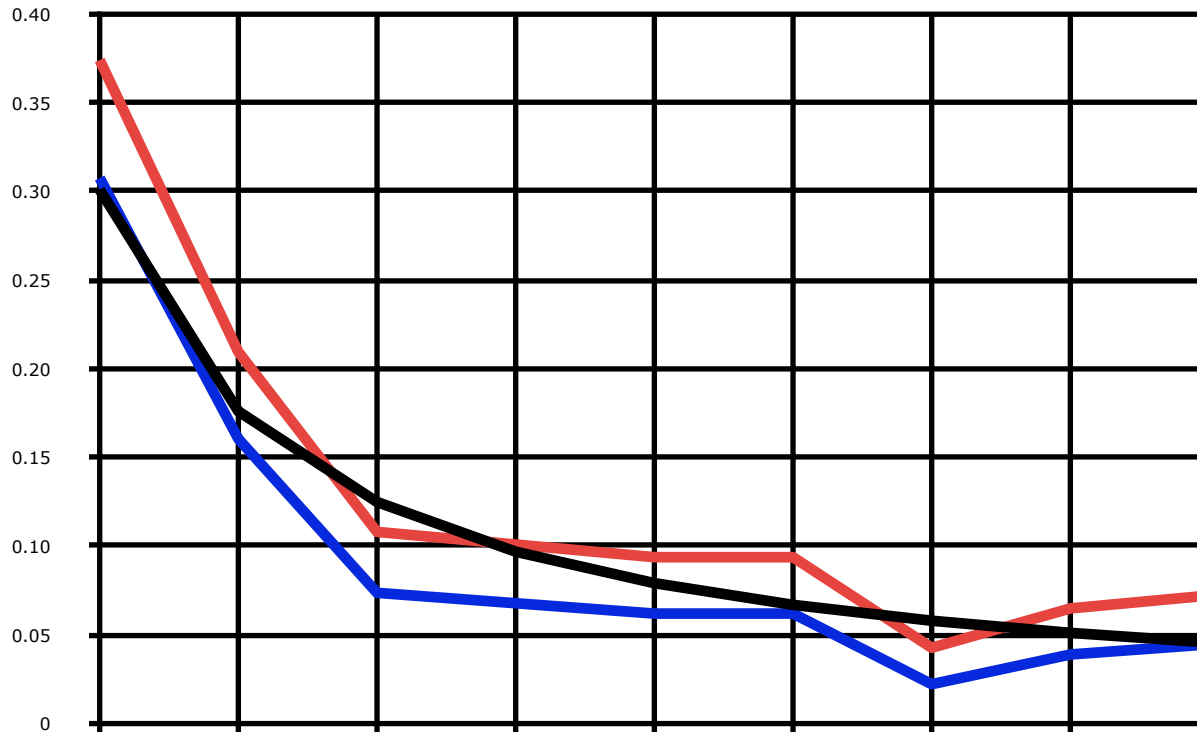
Observations

Any Benford distribution when **multiplied (or divided) by any real number** gives another Benford distribution.

A Benford distribution with dimensions (units) is **scale invariant** (miles to km, US\$ to any currency, etc.).

A Benford distribution is **numerical base invariant** (decimal to octal, hexadecimal, etc., but not binary).

309 NIST Physical Constants



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 10$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 205$$

Exponential:

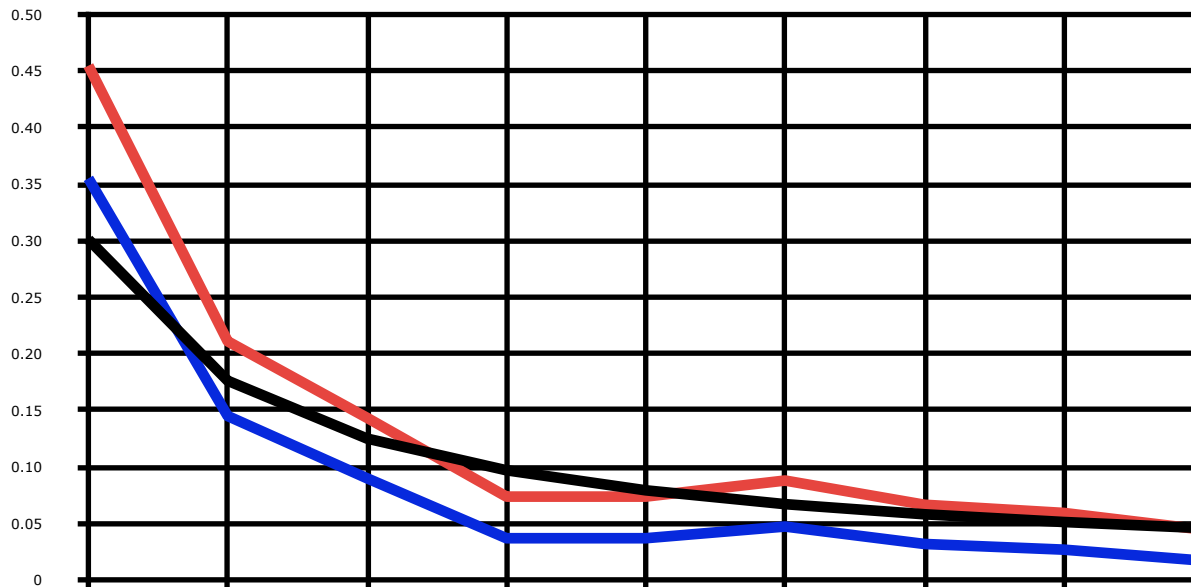
$$\chi^2 = 35$$

Reciprocals:

$$\chi^2 = 8.2$$

speed of light in vacuum	299792458	m s ⁻¹
magn. constant	12.566 370 614e-7	N A ⁻²
electric constant	8.854187817e-12	F m ⁻¹
characteristic impedance of vacuum	376.730313461	ohm
Newtonian constant of gravitation	6.6742e-11	m ³ kg ⁻¹ s ⁻²
Newtonian constant of gravitation over h-bar c	6.7087e-39	(GeV/c ²) ⁻²
Planck constant	6.626 0693e-34	J s
Planck constant in eV s	4.13566743	eV s
Planck constant over 2 pi times c in MeV fm	197.326 968	MeV fm

164 Mathematical Constants



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 11$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 167$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 22$$

Base 8:

$$\chi^2 = 9.1$$

2.302566137

1.29621066

0.847213085

0.258819404

0.355028054

0.463647609

0.147583618

0.373955814

1.456074949

0.280169499

0.697774658

a Flajolet constant

A Salem number of degree 38

A.G.M. of $(1, \sqrt{2}/2)$

$-\text{Ai}'(0)$ or $3^{**}(-1/3)/\Gamma(1/3)$

$\text{Ai}(0)$ or $3^{**}(-2/3)/\Gamma(2/3)$

$\arctan(1/2)$

$\arctan(1/2)/\pi$

Artin constant

Backhouse constant

Bernstein constant

$\text{Bessel}(1,2)/\text{Bessel}(0,2)$

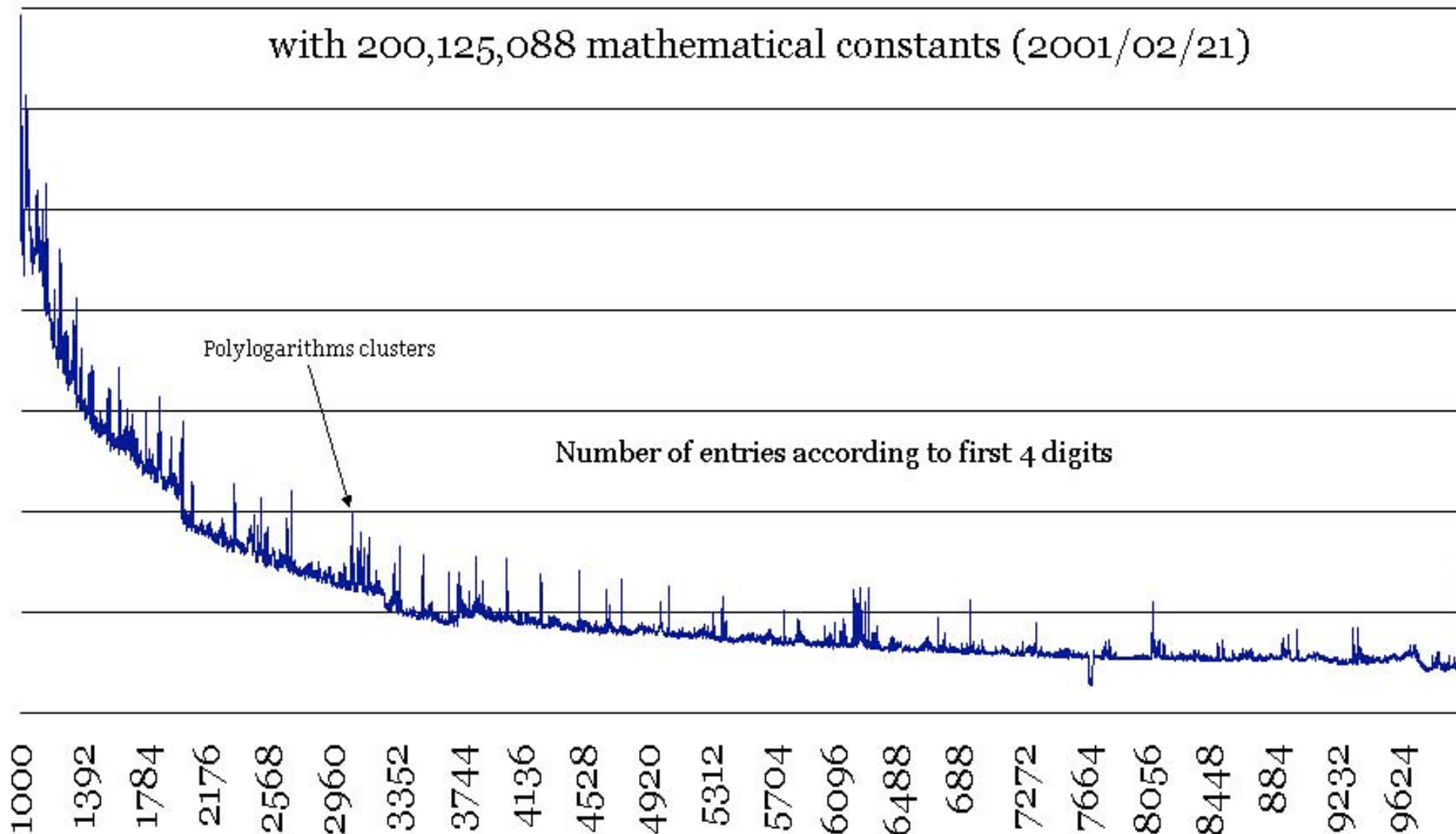
Entries in Plouffe's Inverter

Distribution of entries in Plouffe's inverter

with 200,125,088 mathematical constants (2001/02/21)

Polylogarithms clusters

Number of entries according to first 4 digits



Why does the Benford Distribution work?

Let's go back to 1961

1961 Roger Pinkham

Stevens Institute of Technology

- Statistics and Probability
- Numerical Methods
- Vision Research



Prior papers dismissed Bedford's Law

Pinkham proposed that if there is such a law, it must be scale invariant.

He proved Benford's Law is **scale invariant under multiplication**.

And the Benford Distribution is the **only invariant** distribution.

Good (1965) suggestion re: English random number generation

Multi-Digit Benford's Law

Newcomb & Benford both proposed initial multi-digit probabilities:

$$P(d_1d_2) = \log_{10}(1 + 1/[d_1d_2])$$

$d_1d_2 = 10 \text{ thru } 99$

$$\sum P(d_1d_2) = 1.00$$

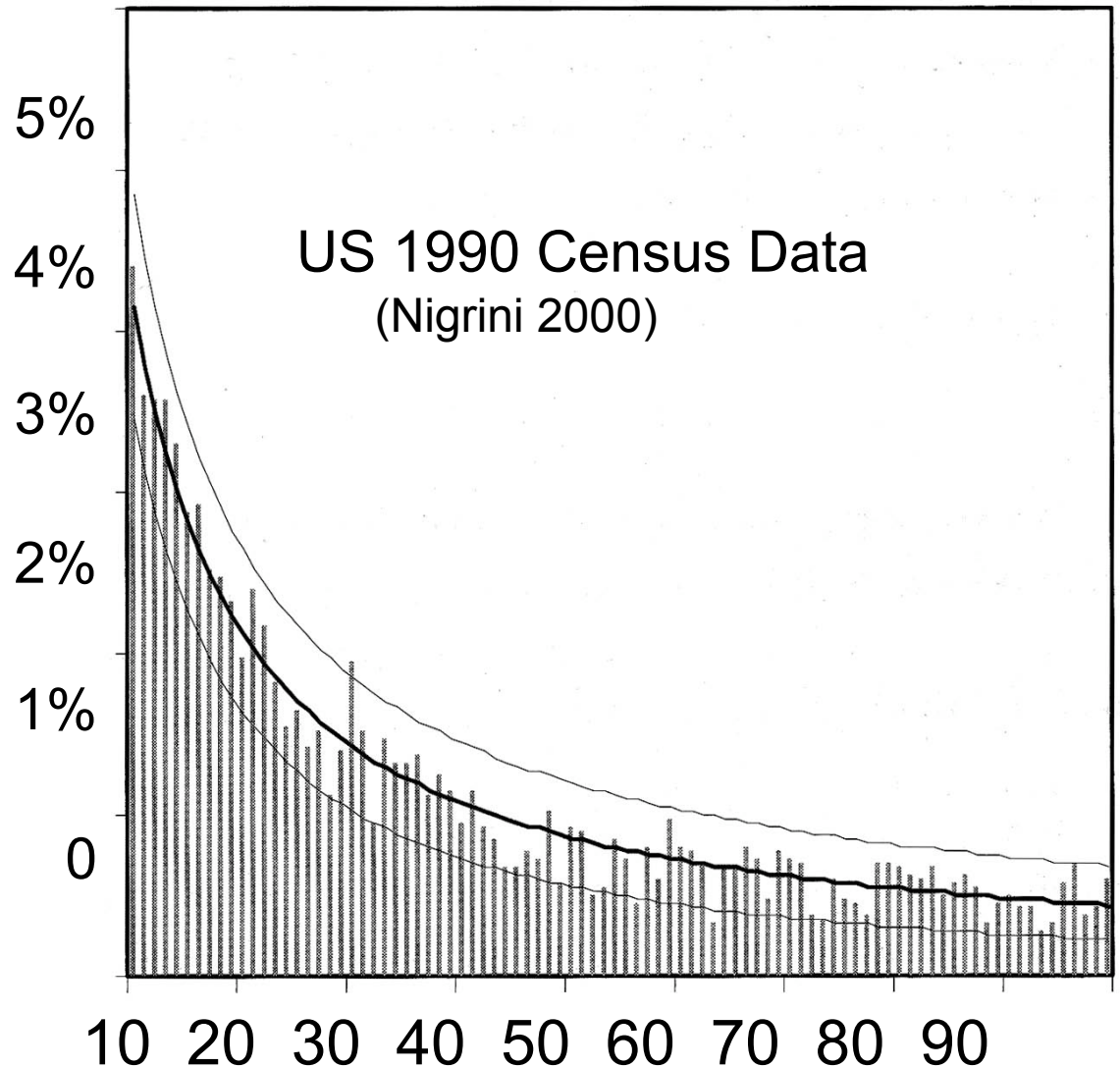
$$P(10) = 4.1\%$$

$$P(25) = 1.7\%$$

$$P(50) = 0.86\%$$

$$P(75) = 0.58\%$$

$$P(99) = 0.44\%$$



Middle Digit Probabilities

Digit	First	Second	Third	Fourth
0	--	0.120	0.102	0.100
1	0.301	0.114	0.101	0.100
2	0.176	0.109	0.101	0.100
3	0.125	0.104	0.101	0.100
4	0.097	0.100	0.100	0.100
5	0.079	0.097	0.100	0.100
6	0.067	0.093	0.099	0.100
7	0.058	0.090	0.099	0.100
8	0.051	0.088	0.099	0.100
9	0.046	0.085	0.098	0.100
totals:	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Nigrini 1996

1969 Ralph Raimi

1924 — University of Rochester



- Amateur wine maker
- Interest in academic dishonesty
- Math and Physics
- Several papers on initial digits
- Scientific American, Dec. 1969, pp. 109-120
Non-mathematical review of Benford's
Intuitive explanations of distribution

1992 Mark Nigrini

1924 — Southern Methodist Univ.

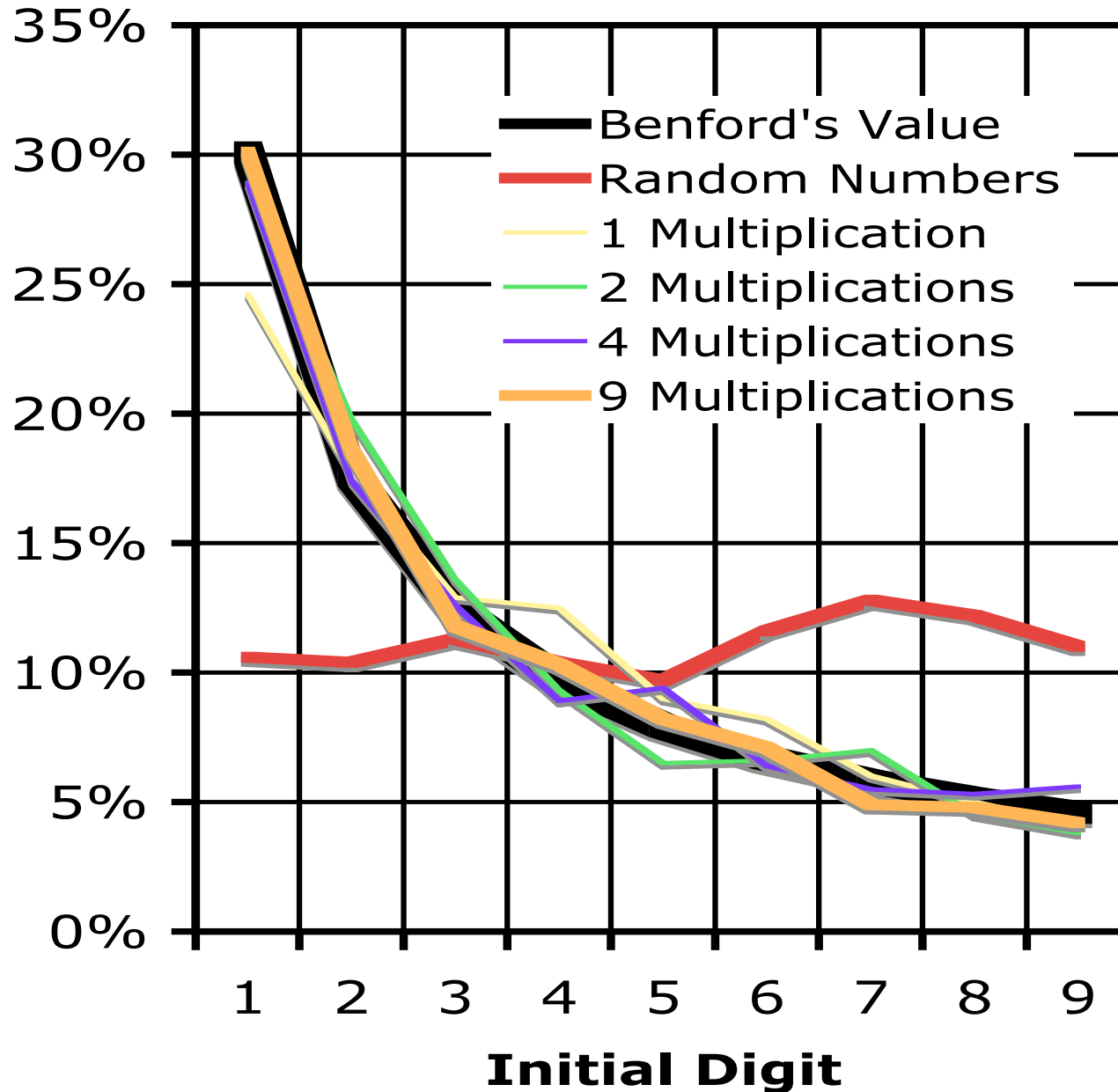


**WAS ONLY GUY TO MAKE
\$\$\$\$\$ FROM BENFORD'S LAW**

- Ph.D. thesis (1992):
Detection of **Income Tax Invasion** by Benford
- Assistant Professor of Accounting
- Analyzed Bill Clinton's 1977-92 tax returns
- Proprietary (big \$\$\$) **fraud codes** for accountants
Single and multiple digits, middle digits, round-off
Seminars (\$150+)
- **Book** (2000; 32¢ per page):
Digital Analysis Using Benford's Law
Many cases of accounting fraud studies

Multiplication of Random Numbers

Two random #s multiplied give a negative log distribution with a “soft” infinity at zero and zero at one. (Scott, 2005)



Random #s:

$$\chi^2 = 470$$

1 Multiplication:

$$\chi^2 = 24$$

2 Multiplications:

$$\chi^2 = 11$$

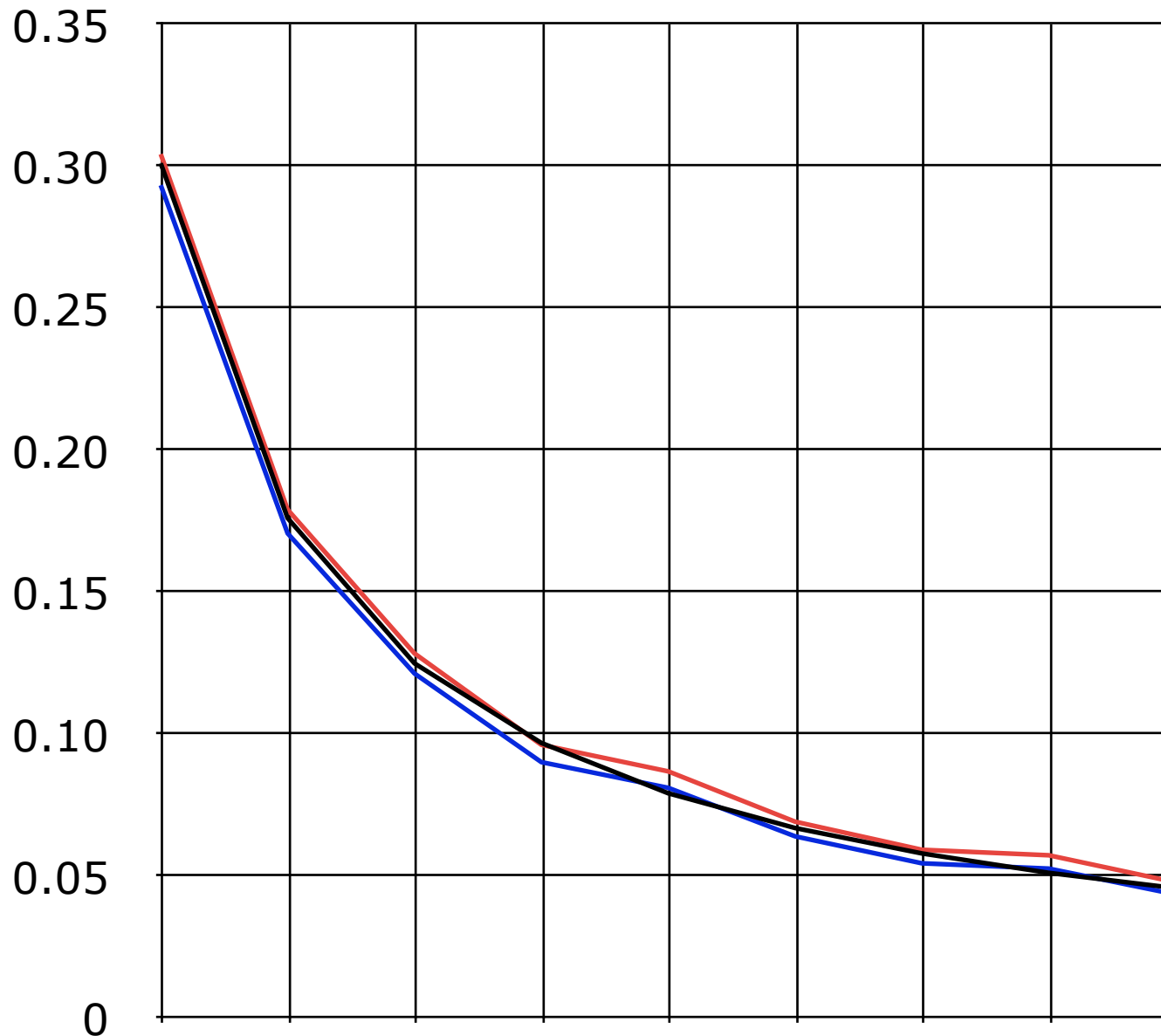
4 Multiplications:

$$\chi^2 = 6.6$$

9 Multiplications:

$$\chi^2 = 3.7$$

10,000 Random Exponentials



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 7.7$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 4760$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 370$$

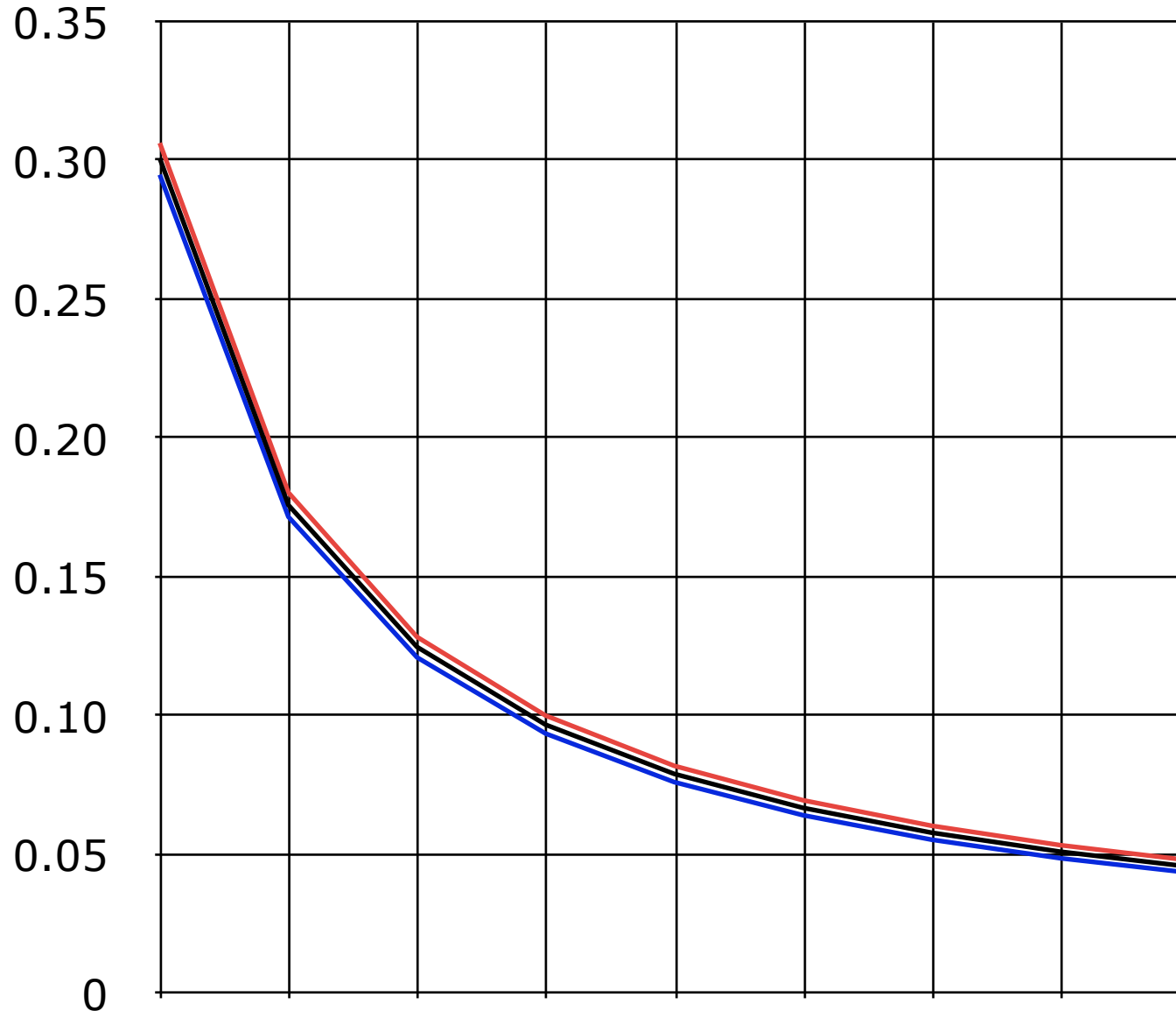
if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

9,210 Uniform Exponentials



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = .004$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 4500$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 328$$

if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

Dow Jones Intuitive Explanation

- DJIA took 1983 to 1999 to go from 1,000 to 10,000
- Implied compounded appreciation rate of near 15%

Dow Jones Avg.	Theor. quarters	Actual quarters
1k to 2k	19	16
2k to 3k	11	20
3k to 4k	8	12
4k to 5k	6	4
5k to 6k	5	3
6k to 7k	4.4	2
7k to 8k	3.8	2.5
8k to 9k	3.2	2.5
9k to 10k	2.6	1
Chi-Squared	0.05	14

Slide Rule Intuitive Explanation



C-scale: $\log_{10}$ from 1 to 10

If select random points on C-scale and consider initial digits:

$$\begin{aligned} P(1) &= (\text{length of log scale from 1 to 2}) / (\text{length from 1 to 10}) \\ &= (\log 2 - \log 1) / (\log 10 - \log 1) \\ &= \log 2 = 0.301 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} P(d) &= [\log(d+1) - \log(d)] / (\log 10 - \log 1) \\ &= \log(1 + 1/d) \text{ Benford's Law} \end{aligned}$$

1996 Ted Hill

Georgia Institute of Technology



- Math Professor
 - Stochastics
 - Probability theory
 - Fair division
 - Lottery strategies
 - Hill's Theorem:
 - 1) Showed that random sampling from random distributions will converge on the Benford distr.
 - 2) Benford is the **distribution of all distributions**
- American Scientist, 1998, Vol. 13, No. 6, pp. 358-363

Why do some distributions conform to Benford's Law but others do not?

- Feller (1966) proves that the empirical distribution of any first digit in observational data follows Benford's Law.
- Hill's Theorem (1998): Benford is the **distribution of all distributions**. Real data can be a complex mix of many distributions.
- Boyle (1994) proved that:
 - The **Benford distr. is the limiting distribution** when random variables are repeatedly multiplied, divided, or raised to integer powers.
 - Once achieved, the **Benford distribution persists** under all further multiplication, division, and raising to integer powers.
- Nigrini (2000): “We should **never assume**, dogmatically, that the Law *must* apply.”
- Limitations
 - Numbers with a natural or social origin, with dimensions, from calculations
 - No built-in min or max
 - Not assigned numbers (SSNs, car licenses, lottery numbers)
 - Numbers should not unduly duplicated
 - Four or more digits?
 - Sets should have 100+ terms (digit-9 < 5%)

Practical Applications 1

- S. S. Goudsmit (electron spin) in 1978:
... To a physicist Simon Newcomb's explanation of the first-digit phenomenon is more than sufficient "for all practical purposes." Of course here the expression "for all practical purposes" has no meaning. There are no practical purposes, unless you consider betting for money on the first digit frequencies with gullible colleagues a practical use.
- Ian Stewart (1993) writes of **betting on first digits** at a trade fair in England.

Practical Applications 2

- Errors in data sets.
 - NYSE daily volumes of buy-sell transactions (Benford distr.)
 - NASDAQ daily volume of each buy and each sell transaction (Benford distr.)
- Fraud detection: accounting, pay roll, tax returns (Nigrini, 2000)
 - Reported interest received: excess lower first digits.
 - Reported interest paid: excess higher first digits.
- Prices, sales figures
- Forecasts from data (Varian, 1972)
- Computer round off errors (Tsao, 1974)
- Failure rates and MTTF tables (Becker, 1982)
- Numerical structure of the Quran.
- Mathematician Peter Schatte at the Bergakademie Technical University, Freiberg, has come up with rules that optimize computer data storage, by allocating disk space according to the proportions dictated by Benford's law.

2005 Alex Trahan

Sophomore, La Jolla High School

- Science team member of 50±
- Freshman science award
- Academic varsity letter
- Academic League
- Benford Science Fair math project

“When does Randomness End”

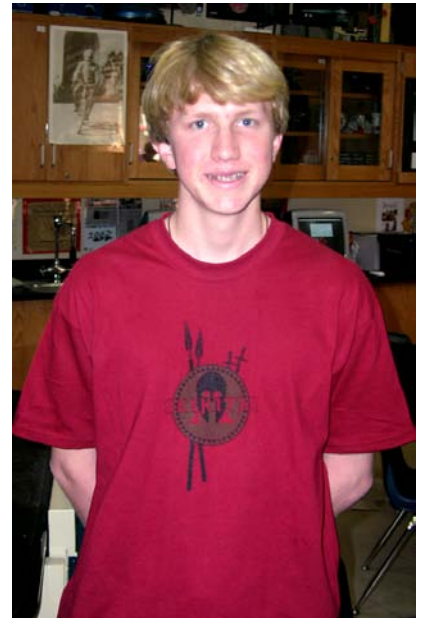
How fast do random numbers and functions statistically converge to a Benford distribution?

Sweepstakes Runner-up

First Place

Will go to State Science Fair

Three Society Awards

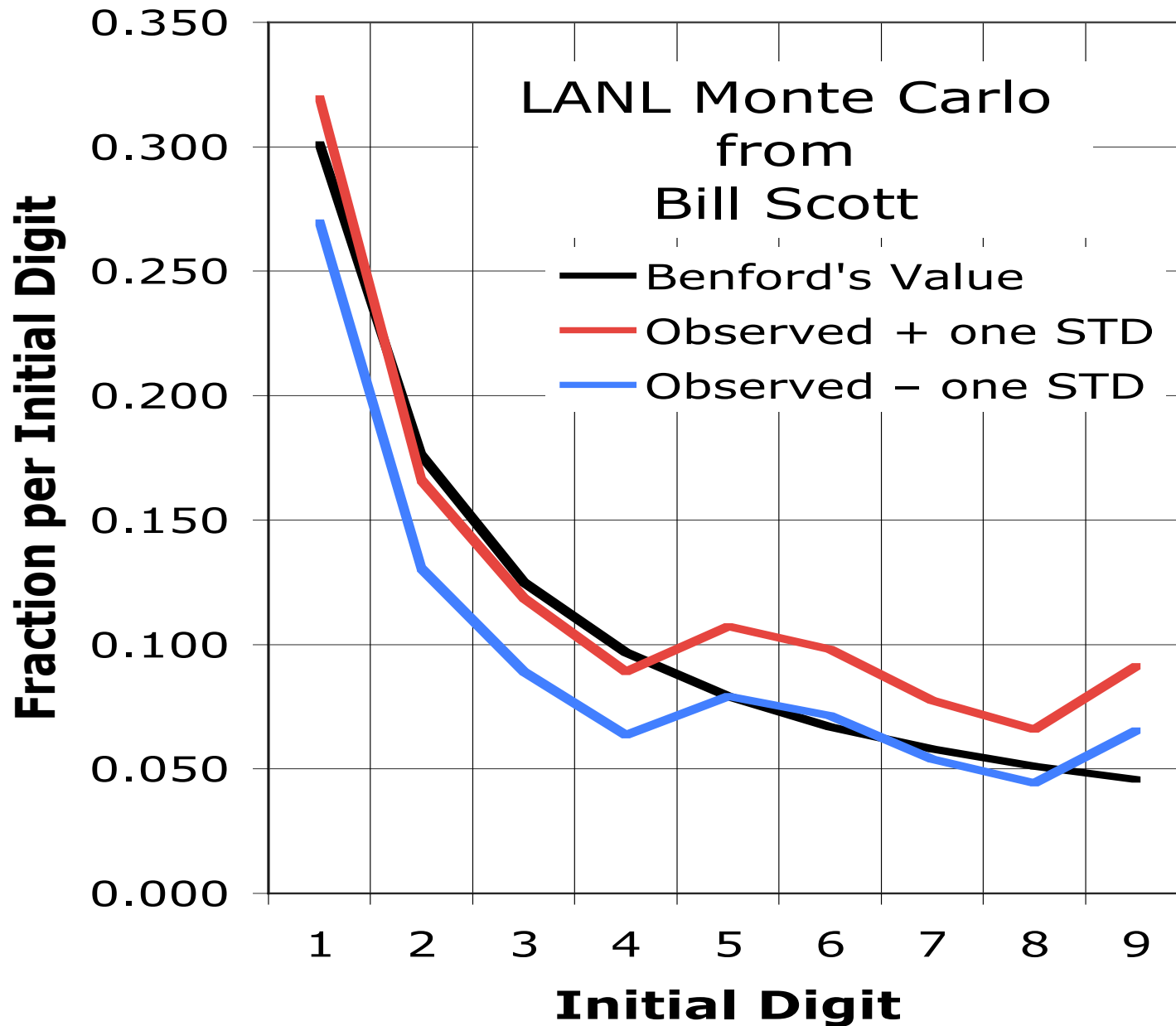


Has also made \$\$ from Benford's Law

References

1. “Benford’s Law” in **Google** gets 9,920 references.
2. Benford’s Law now has a **journal**:
Frequencies The Journal of Size Law Applications (pub 2001)
3. Benford’s Law has hit the big-time **newspapers**:
Wall Street Journal: L. Berton, *He’s got their numbers: scholar uses math to foil financial fraud*, p. B1, 10 July 1995
New York Times: Malcolm W. Brown, *Following Benford’s Law, or Looking Out for No. 1*, 4 August 1998
4. Journal articles:
Simon Newcomb, Amer J of Math, vol 4, 1881 (pp. 39–40)
Frank Benford, Proc of the Amer Philosophical Soc, vol 78, no 4, March, 1938 (pp 551–571)
5. Science Magazines:
Ralph Raimi, Sci American, December 1969 (pp 109–119)
T. P. Hill, Amer Scientist, vol 86, July-August 1998 (pp 358–363)
6. Book:
March J. Nigrini, Ph.D., *Digital Analysis Using Benford’s Law*, Global Audit Publications, Vamcouver, 2000 (ISBN 1-894497-09)

LANL Monte Carlo from Bill Scott



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 21$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 185$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 46$$

if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

Benford TidBits

- Nigrini (2000) claims for a Benford distr. the sums of all numbers with each initial digit are equal. Close but no cigar; $\pm 10\%$.

Chi-Squared vs. Significance

Goodness of Fit

Null Hypothesis: Observed distr. Is a random sample of the theoretical distr.

Significance (alpha): Risk of rejecting Null Hypothesis when it is true (Type I Error). Statisticians consider alpha of 0.05 to be statistically significant (1 chance in 20 of rejecting a true Null Hypothesis).

Chi-Sq	alpha	Chi-sq	alpha
15.5	0.05	2.7	0.95
13.4	0.10	2.2	0.975
10.2	0.25	1.7	0.99
7.3	0.50	1.3	0.995
6.2	0.75	0.9	0.999
3.5	0.90	0.5	0.9999

χ^2 for Interesting Sets of #s

	Sample #	Bedford	Random	Exp.
Fibonacci	20	3.3	8.8	--
Fibonacci	100	1.0	50	4.8
Fibonacci	200	0.7	98	8.5
Fibonacci	1,474 (1,1)	0.02	723	53
Lucas #s	1,474 (2,1)	0.06	723	53
"Groce #s"	1,474 (random)	0.05	716	54
Fibonacci	2,000,000	2×10^{-4}	--	--
Fibonacci	1,474 (div by π)	0.04	718	52
Fibonacci	1,474 (times e)	0.06	719	53
Fibonacci	Multiply each by random #s	5.2	700	56
Fibonacci	Multiply each twice by rand #s	3.9	693	71
Fibonacci	Square each term (739)	0.10	364	27
Bernoulli #s	32	4.0	14	--
Euler #s	30	11	25	12
Sine wave	270	1.0	125	2.5

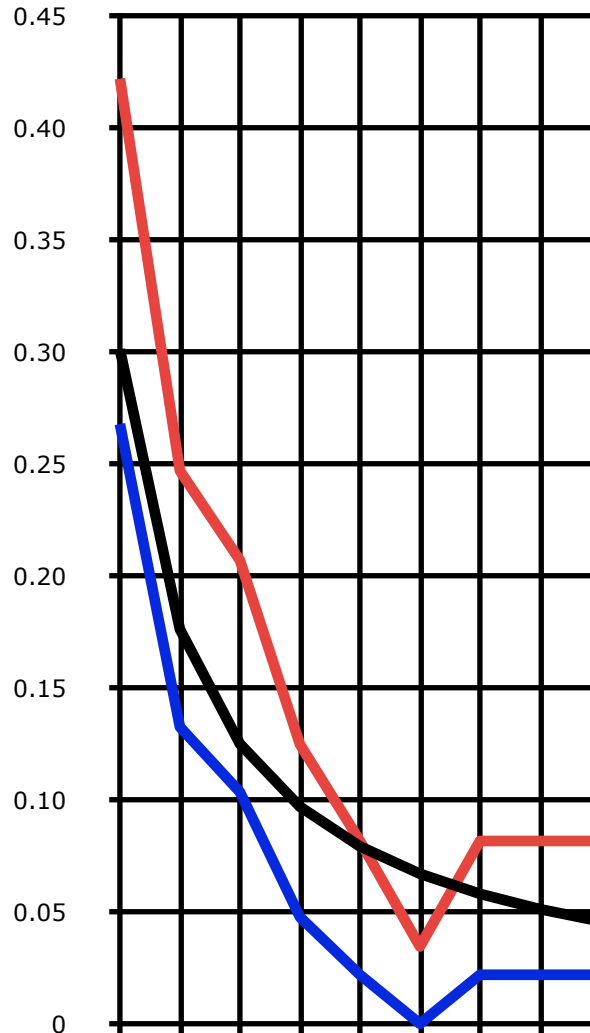
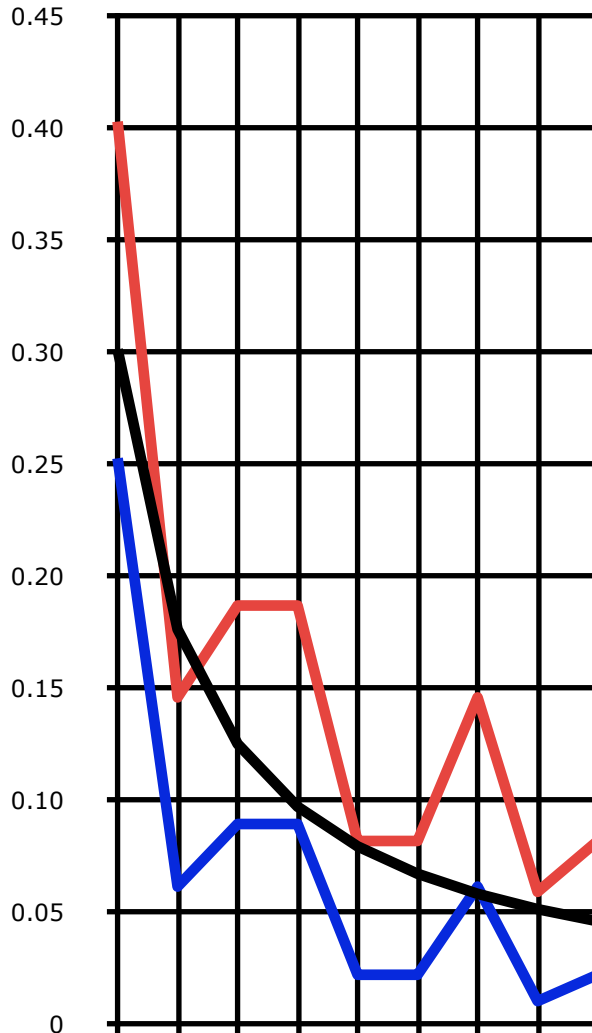
Addition?

- Addition of two random numbers [0 to 1] gives a triangular distribution with zero at both ends of interval (0 and 1) with a peak at 0.5. Scott (2005)
- Digit frequencies will be distorted by addition or subtraction unless the amount is small.

Area California Counties

Square miles

Square kilometers



58 Counties:

Square Miles:

$$\chi^2 = 6.1$$

Square Kilometers:

$$\chi^2 = 3.7$$

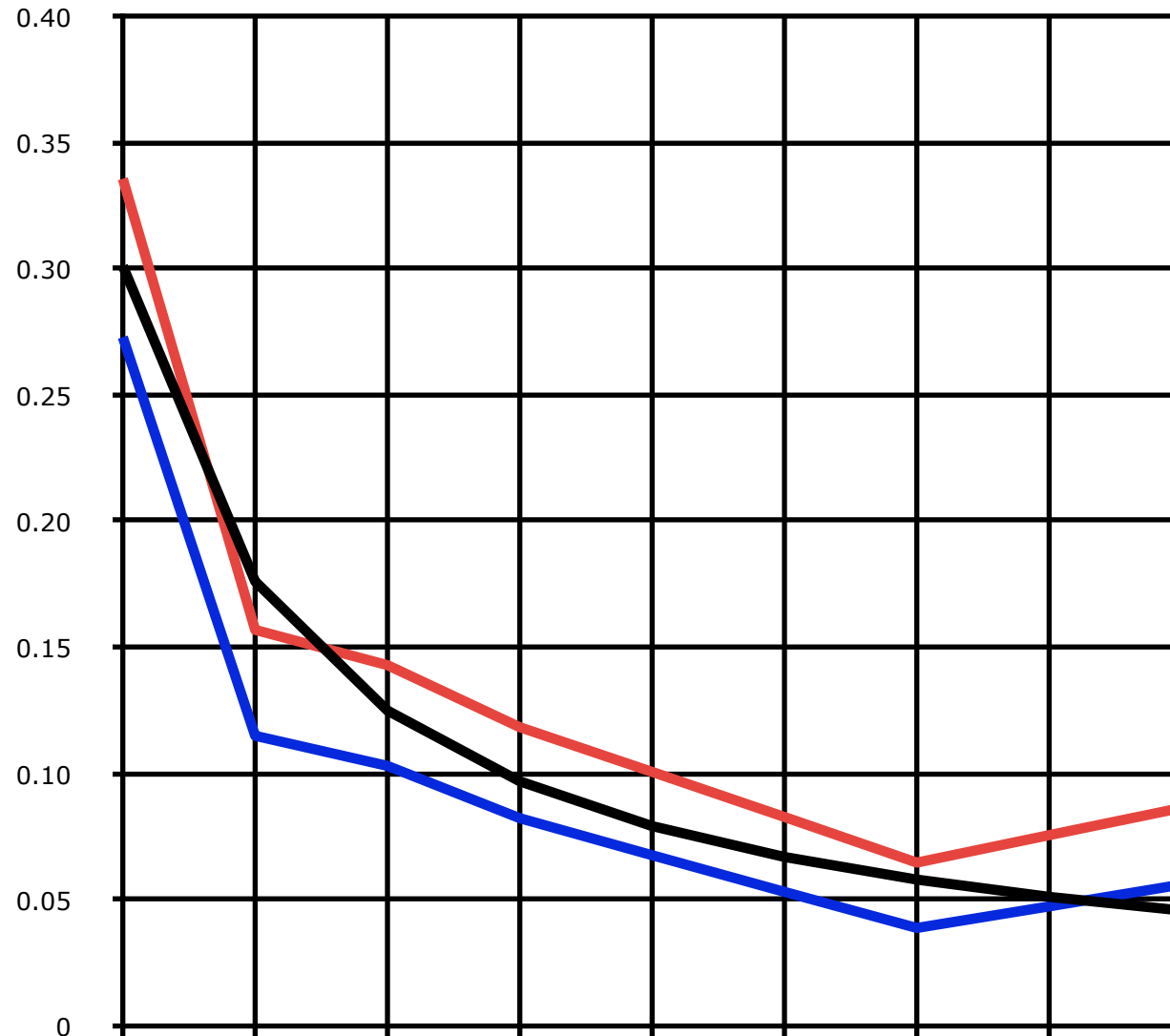
if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

Reciprocal Phys Constants



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 8.2$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 134$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 26$$

Multiplication of Random Numbers

Two random #s multiplied give a negative log distribution with a “soft” infinity at zero and zero at one. (Scott, 2005)

Random #s:

$$\chi^2 = 397$$

1 Multiplication:

$$\chi^2 = 33$$

2 Multiplications:

$$\chi^2 = 12$$

3 Multiplications:

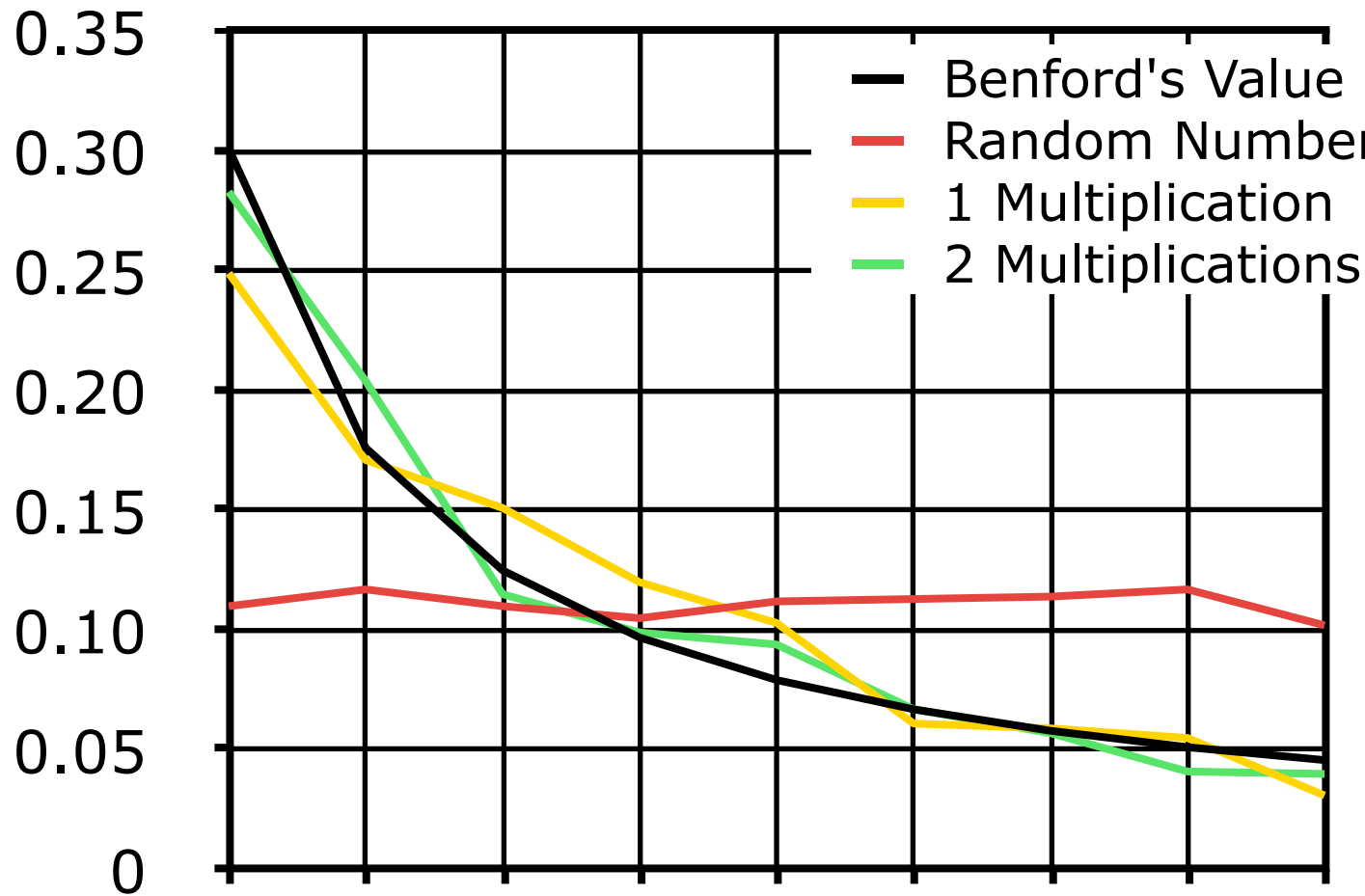
$$\chi^2 = 10$$

5 Multiplications:

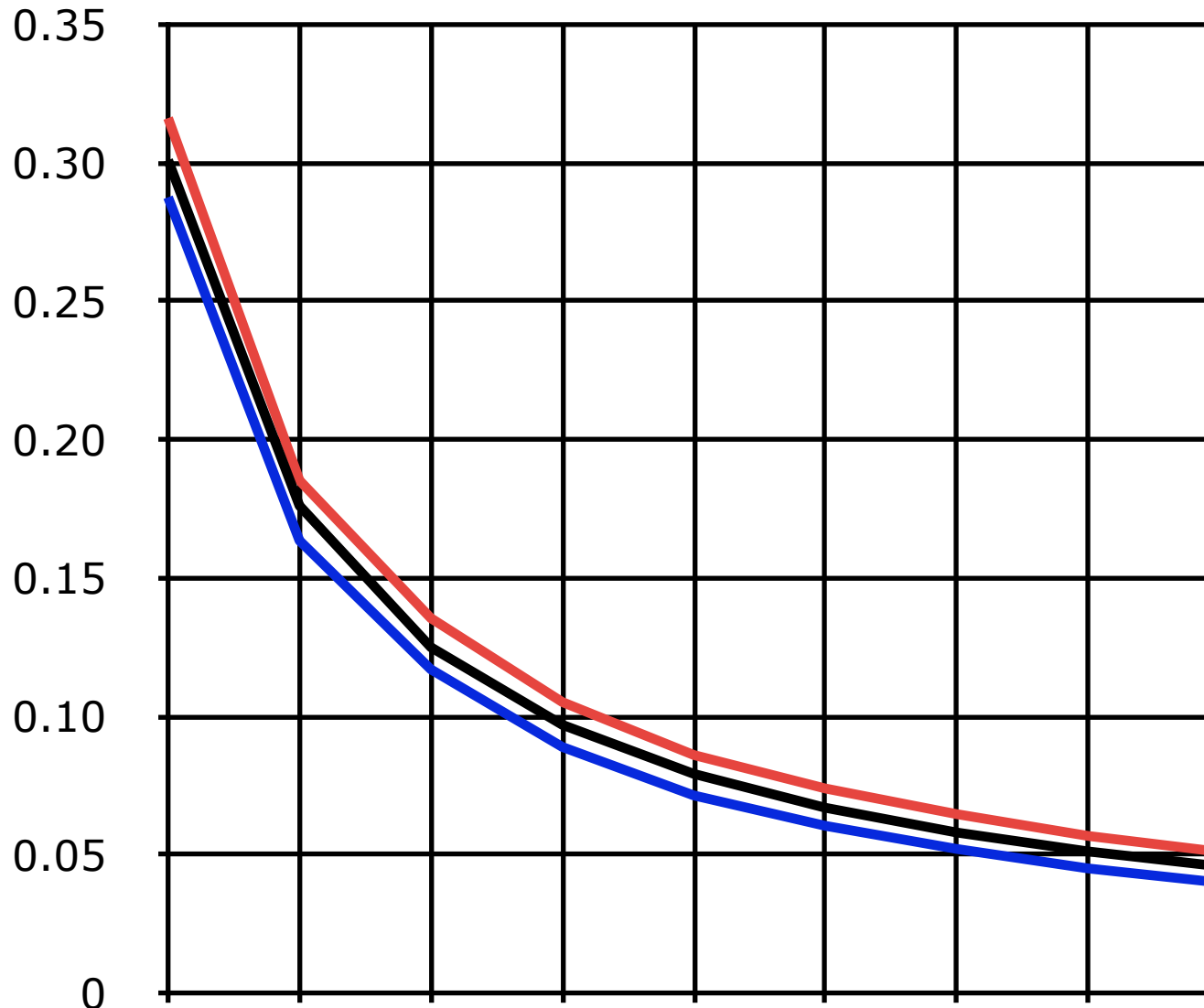
$$\chi^2 = 5.9$$

9 Multiplications:

$$\chi^2 = 5.5$$



1,474 Lucas Numbers (2,1 start)



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = .06$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 723$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 53$$

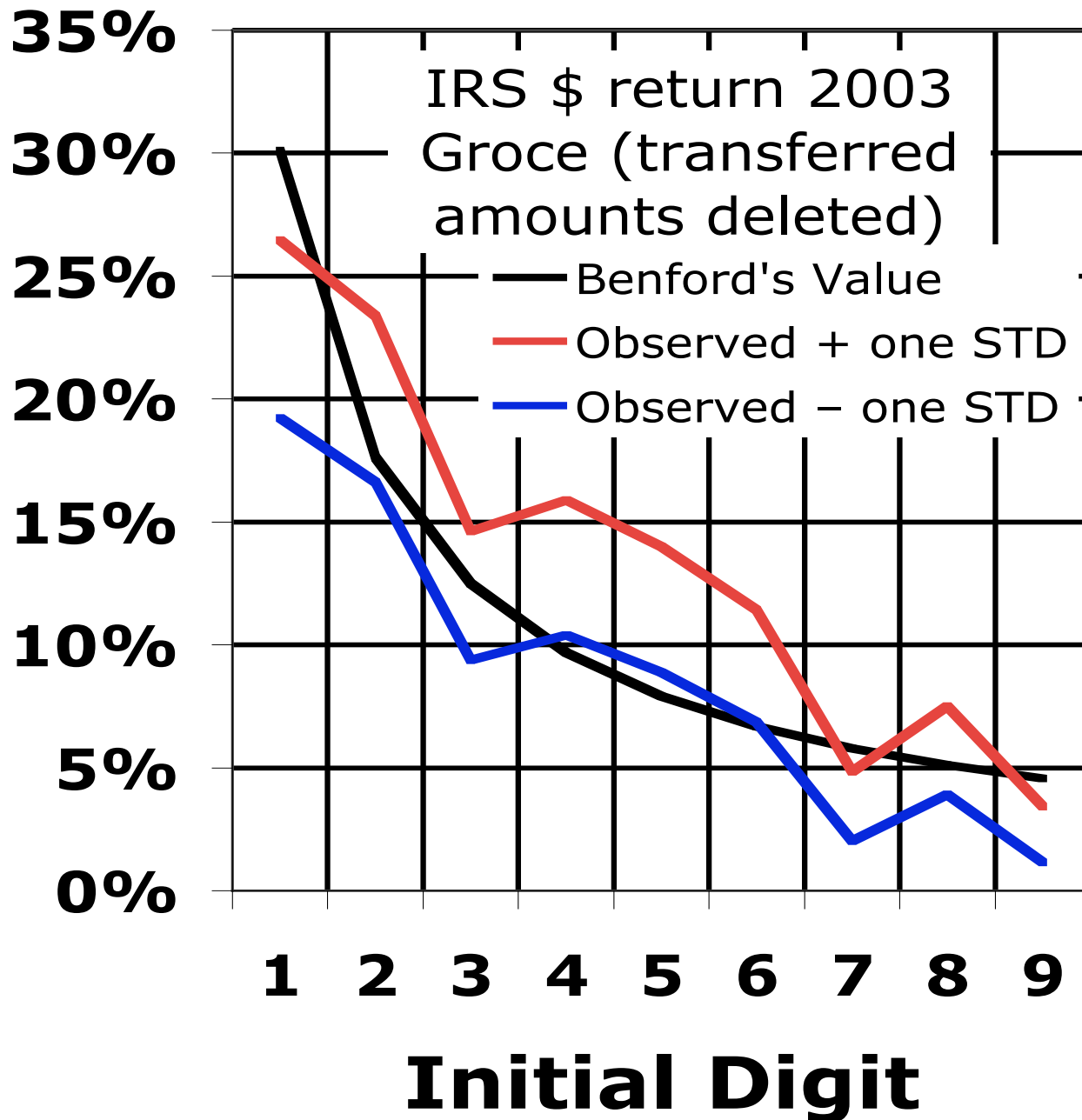
if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

Groce 2003 IRS Return



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = 14$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 62$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 7$$

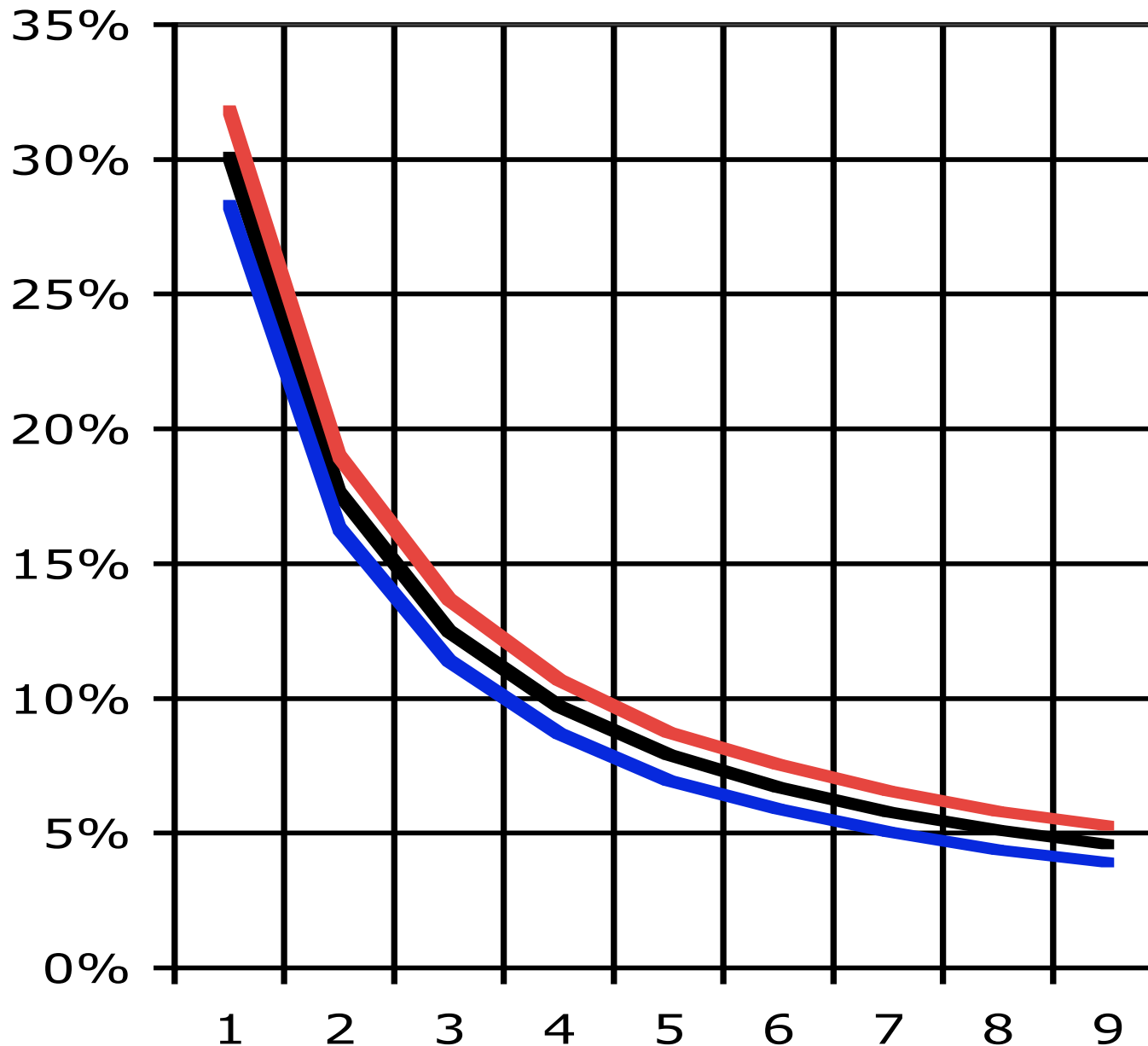
if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

Compound Interest (\$100 to \$1k in 981 periods)



Benford:

$$\chi^2 = .01$$

Random:

$$\chi^2 = 479$$

Exponential:

$$\chi^2 = 35$$

if χ^2 is small: good fit

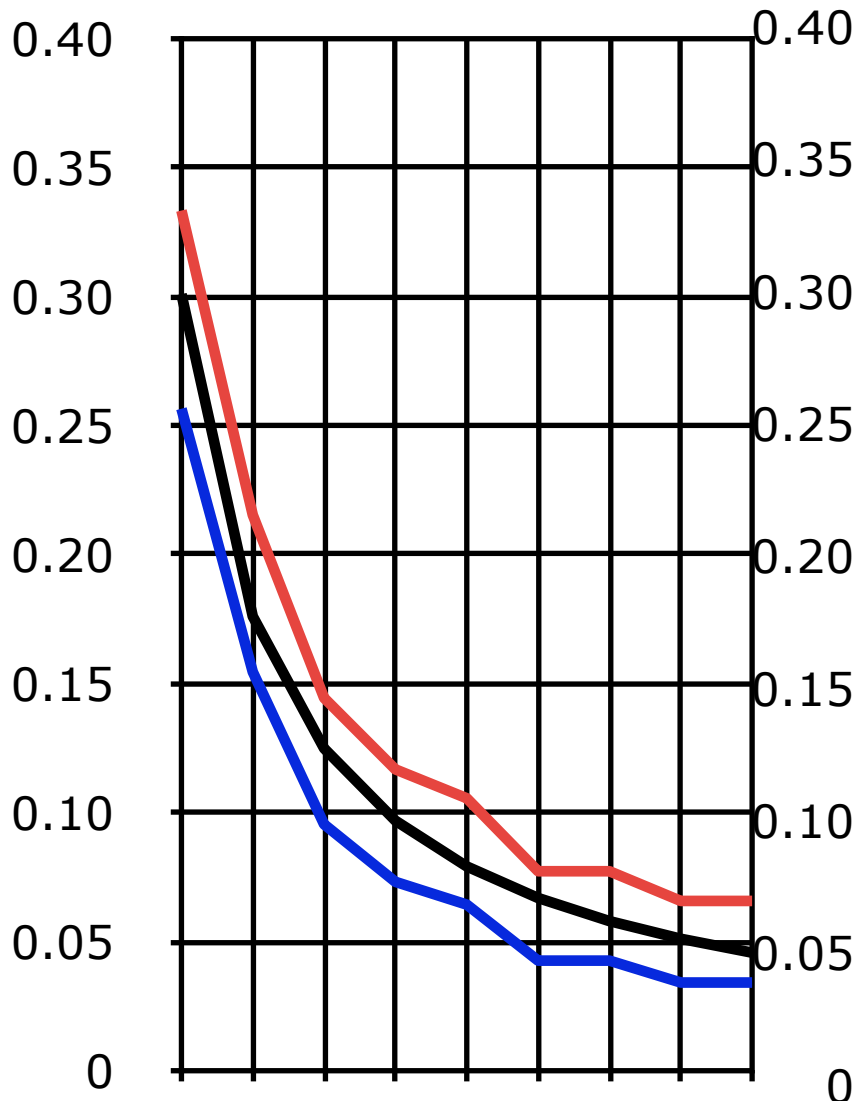
if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

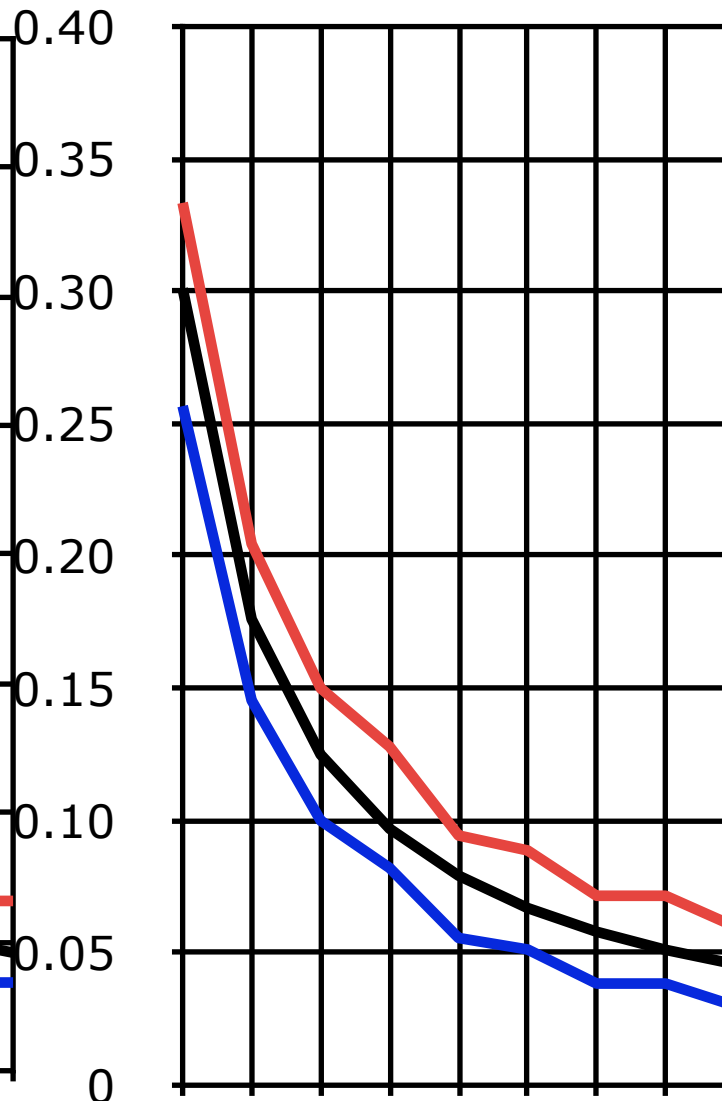
Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51

First 200 Fibonacci Numbers

divide by π



multiply by e



Fibonacci:

$$\chi^2 = 0.7$$

Divided by π :

$$\chi^2 = 0.3$$

Multiplied by e:

$$\chi^2 = 0.5$$

if χ^2 is small: good fit

if χ^2 is large: poor fit

critical value of χ^2 :

Alpha	df	χ^2
0.05	8	15.51