The combinatorics of degenerations of curves.

Riemann studied the variation of compact complex algebraic curves, and employed the term moduli to describe the parameters upon which curves depended. It was only almost a hundred years later that the term moduli came to describe a variety parameterizing curves of a given genus. The variety is not compact though: a compactification was obtained by adding points to the boundary corresponding to the so-called stable curves. These curves carry rich combinatorial data, and their projective geometry carries even richer data. I will describe work done by myself and Amini, and others, in trying to unravel these data.