statistical society of
australia incorporated

SSAI newsletter

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16TH Australian Statistical Conference

7-11 JULY 2002

NATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

CANBERRA

Call for papers

Abstract submissions for contributed papers are due by 5 April 2002. Abstracts must be submitted electronically through the web site http://www.statsoc.org.au.asc16.html (See Submit an Abstract)

Abstracts will appear in the Proceedings and be acknowledged to the submitting author(s). Oral presentations will be allocated 20 minutes plus 5 minutes question time. There is a limit of one oral presentation per author.

Program

The conference program committee, headed by Kerrie Mengersen, has put together an exciting program of sessions and workshops. A range of speakers has been invited to speak on each of these themes. Core (full day) themes are:

- Surveys
- Environmental Statistics
- Industrial Design and Experimentation
- Bioinformatics and Statistical Genetics

Complementary themes (half-day) are

- Modern Probability and Inference
- Internet Delivery of Data and Statistics on the WWW
- Nonparametric Statistics
- Government Statistics
- Financial Modelling and Biostatistics

A special Symposium in Honour of Richard Tweedie will be held.

The Opening Address will be presented by Peter Donnelly (Oxford, UK) and the Closing Address by Jim Ramsay (McGill, Canada).

A provisional program including details of invited speakers is available on the conference website http://www.statsoc.org.au/asc16.html

Workshops

Sunday 7 July 2002

- Statistical Consulting
- Bayesian Statistics

Friday 12 July 2002

- Bioinformatics
- Biostatistics

Social Program

There will be plenty of opportunities for socialising and networking with your fellow statisticians during the conference. On Monday night there is a welcoming cocktail party to be held at the conference venue. There are no conference sessions programmed for Tuesday afternoon to enable you to participate in one of the tours. On Wednesday evening there is the conference dinner.

The conference dinner will be held at Questacon, Australia's premier science and technology centre, with six galleries providing hands-on, interactive exhibitions. Questacon explainers will be in attendance to provide insight into each exhibit. There will also be shows in the theatres. Some of the attractions include:

Sideshow – investigating the science, psychology, maths, history and culture of sideshow alleys;

Good Vibes – experience the science of light and sound;

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Disclaimer

The views of contributors to this Newsletter should not be attributed to the Statistical Society of Australia, Inc.

Subscriptions

The Newsletter of the Statistical Society of Australia is supplied free to all members of the society. Any others wishing to subscribe to the Newsletter may do so at an annual cost of A$25.00 for an issue of four numbers.

Advertising

Advertising will be carried in the Newsletter on any matters which the Editors feel are of interest to the members of the Society. For details of advertising rates, etc. contact the Editors at the above addresses.

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22 Pirie Street, Fyshwick ACT 2609

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 20 April 2002

16th Australian Statistical Conference

Awesome Earth – experience an earthquake in a realistic house, view volcanic eruptions, lightning strikes and other natural phenomena;

Our Clever Country – view some of the clever technology used by indigenous Australians and examples of the country's scientific and technological advancements over the past century.

While all this is going on you can help yourself to the four-course buffet dinner served in four of the galleries. Beer, wines and soft drinks are included.

On Tuesday afternoon, a selection of tours will be available to choose from. These include **Heart of the Nation – Heritage and History**, where you will take a 'behind the scenes' look at Parliament House, see the unique architecture and styles of the embassies and High Commissions, and visit Screensound Australia and the National Museum of Australia. On the **Natural History Tour** you will visit Namadgi National Park, where an easy walk will take you though open grasslands and snow gum woodlands to an Aboriginal rock shelter. Enjoy the abundant wildlife, the solitude and the beauty. Or you may choose to take a tour of **Wineries with Dinner in a Country House.** Many cool climate wineries have developed in and around Canberra. This tour will take you to three wineries, and then to historic Bungendore where a delicious homestead evening meal at an old stone house, built in 1860 will be specially prepared for you. Alternatively on Tuesday evening, visit the award winning **Red Belly Black Cafe at Mt Stromlo**. The Red Belly Black is situated atop picturesque Mt Stromlo in the grounds of the Mt Stromlo Observatory. After the scenic drive up beautiful Mount Stromlo, enjoy the views from the mountain, the tranquil surroundings and a gourmet four-course buffet-style dinner. During the evening astronomers from the Mount Stromlo Observatory will guide guests around the wonders of the night sky through large telescopes assembled on the Observatory lawns.

Information and Registration

Details are enclosed with this newsletter. Details are also on the conference website http://www.statsoc.org.au/asc16.html. Online registration is available.

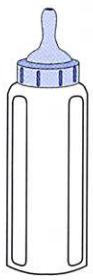
Further information is available from the conference secretariat

Conference Solutions
PO Box 238, DEAKIN WEST
ACT 2600
Ph: (02) 6285 3000
Fax: (02) 6285 3001
Email: asc16@con-sol.com

Congratulations..

Our very own editor Alice Richardson has just had a baby girl, 20 January, 2002.

We all wish Alice and baby Olivia all the very best.



Historic moment

For two weeks in March, during the absence of the Australian Statistician, Barbara Dunlop will act as Australian Statistician. It will be the first time a woman has acted in the position. Congratulations Barbara!

A.S.C. Registration Information

National Convention Centre, Canberra

7-12 July, 2002

Please visit the conference website at www.statsoc.org.au/asc16.html to obtain further details regarding the conference including travel and accommodation options.

On-line registration is also available!!!

(all costs are inclusive of GST and are quoted in Australian dollars)

FULL REGISTRATION FEES

Member (SSAI/NZSA) Early Bird $560 After 30 April $660

Non-member Early Bird $650 After 30 April $750

A-STAT/G-STAT REGISTRATION FEES

Early Bird $530 After 30 April $630

FULL AND STUDENT REGISTRATION FEES INCLUDE

- Name badge, satchel and materials
- Attendance at Conference sessions
- Lunches, morning and afternoon teas as per the Conference program
- Attendance at Welcome Reception (Monday, 8 July)
- Attendance at Dinner (Wednesday, 10 July)
- Access to Trade Display during advertised times

STUDENT REGISTRATION

Full-time students are encouraged to attend. Applications must be accompanied by student identification which can be verified by the relevant educational institution. Student registration inclusions are outlined above.

STUDENT REGISTRATION FEES

Student ID to be provided

Early Bird $320 After 30 April $370

DAY REGISTRATION FEES:

Member (SSAI/NZSA)	$250
Non-member	$300
Student	$150

DAY REGISTRATION FEES INCLUDE

- Name badge, satchel and materials
- Attendance at Conference sessions on nominated day
- Teas and lunch as per the Conference program on nominated day

**Day registration does not include the Welcome Reception or Conference Dinner.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

Notification of any alterations or cancellations must be sent by post, facsimile or e-mail to Conference Solutions. A full refund of registration fees, less an administrative fee of $100 will be paid to any participant cancelling before **Friday, 31 May 2002**. No refunds after this date will be possible. If a registered delegate is unable to attend, a substitute is welcome at no additional charge.

Official Conference Social Program

WELCOME RECEPTION

Monday, 8 July 2002
Venue: National Convention Centre
Included in full registration fee - additional cost of $25 applies to day registrants and accompanying persons.

CONFERENCE DINNER

Buffet Dinner with Six Galleries of Science and Fun!
Wednesday, 10 July 2002
Venue: Questacon
Included in full registration fee - additional cost of $80 applies to day registrants and accompanying persons.

Airlines

Qantas has been appointed the official airline for the 16th Australian Statistical Conference with a special conference fare of up to **40%** off the full economy fare (excluding taxes) for conference delegates and accompanying persons. This fare is subject to availability, changes are permitted, no cancellation penalties apply, and is valid up to seven days either side of the conference date. All bookings should be made through Qantas Association Sales on **1800 684 880** quoting **Association Profile number: 29 48 713**. Participants are strongly advised to book air travel as early as possible to take advantage of advance-purchase and other discount fares.

Day Tour Information

Minimum and maximum numbers apply. Bookings will be taken in strict order of receipt – so please book early to avoid disappointment.

Heart of the Nation – heritage & history
Cost: $68 per person
Cost includes transport, entry fees and refreshments.

Red Belly Black at Mt Stromlo – evening tour
Cost: $65 per person
Cost includes transport, dinner and observation of stars under the guidance of an astronomer.

Natural History Tour – Discover the Australian Alps
Cost: $58 per person
Cost includes transport, entry fee and picnic refreshments.

Wineries visit and dinner in a country house
Cost: $119 per person
The price includes, transport, three wine tastings, refreshments, evening meal and non alcoholic beverages at dinner. Alcoholic beverages at own cost.

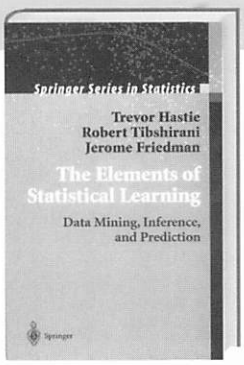
Privacy Act

In registering for this conference, relevant details will be incorporated into a delegate list for the benefit of all delegates (name and organisation only), and may be made available to parties directly related to the conference including Conference Solutions, Statistical Society of Australia Inc, the Conference Organising Committee, Amlink (host of the on-line registration facility), venues and accommodation providers (for the purposes of room bookings and conference options), key sponsors (subject to strict conditions) and parties associated with related conferences.
By completing the registration form, you acknowledge that the details supplied by you may be used for the above purposes. Should you not wish for your details to be used for these purposes, please contact Conference Solutions as soon as possible.

All Enquiries To:

Conference Solutions as agent for ASC 16
PO Box 238 Deakin West ACT 2601
Ph: 02 6285 3000 ~ Fax: 02 6285 3001 ~ e-mail:- asc16@con-sol.com

Springer for Statistics



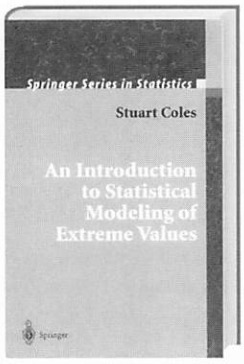
T. Hastie, R. Tibshirani, J. Friedman

The Elements of Statistical Learning

Data Mining, Inference, and Prediction

During the past decade there has been an explosion in computation and information technology, which has brought about the arrival of vast amounts of data. Here, the author describes the important ideas behind the different new tools, such as data mining and machine learning, which have been developed to cope with this explosion of data. While the approach is statistical, the emphasis is on concepts rather than mathematics. Many examples are given.
Topics covered include: neural networks, support vector machines, classification trees and boosting.

2001. XVI, 533 pp. 200 figs. in color. (Springer Series in Statistics) Hardcover € 79,95; £ 59,-; sFr 138,- ISBN 0-387-95284-5



S. Coles

An Introduction to Statistical Modeling of Extreme Values

Directly oriented towards real practical application, this book develops both the basic theoretical framework of extreme value models and the statistical inferential techniques for using these models in practice.
A wide range of worked examples, using genuine datasets, illustrate the various modeling procedures and a concluding chapter provides a brief introduction to a number of more advanced topics.
All the computations are carried out using S-PLUS, and the corresponding datasets and functions are available via the Internet for readers to recreate examples for themselves.

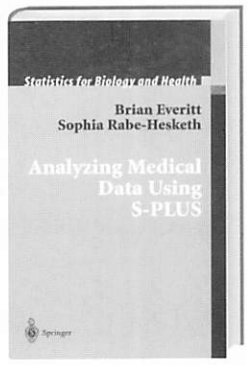
2001. XIV, 208 pp. 77 figs. (Springer Series in Statistics) Hardcover € 74,95; £ 45,-; sFr 129,- ISBN 1-85233-459-2

K.-S. Chan, H. Tong

Chaos: A Statistical Perspective

This book discusses dynamical systems that are typically driven by stochastic dynamic noise. It covers many of the contributions made by statisticians in the past twenty years towards our understanding of estimation, the Lyapunov-like index, the nonparametric regression, and many others - many of which are motivated by their dynamical system counterparts but have now acquired a distinct statistical flavor.

2001. XV, 300 pp. 94 figs. (Springer Series in Statistics) Hardcover € 84,95; £ 62,50; sFr 146,50 ISBN 0-387-95280-2



B. Everitt, S. Rabe-Hesketh

Analyzing Medical Data Using S-PLUS

Each chapter consists of basic statistical theory, simple examples of S-PLUS code, plus more complex examples of S-PLUS code, and exercises. All data sets are taken from genuine medical investigations and will be available on a web site. The examples in the book contain extensive graphical analysis to highlight one of the prime features of S-PLUS. Written with few details of S-PLUS and less technical descriptions, the book concentrates solely on medical data sets, demonstrating the flexibility of S-PLUS and its huge advantages, particularly for applied medical statisticians.

2001. XII, 485 pp. (Statistics for Biology and Health) Hardcover € 79,95; £ 59,-; sFr 138,- ISBN 0-387-98862-9

R.L. Brennan

Generalizability Theory

Generalizability theory offers an extensive conceptual framework and a powerful set of statistical procedures for characterizing and quantifying the fallibility of measurements. The author has written the most comprehensive and up-to-date treatment of generalizability theory. The book provides a synthesis of those parts of the statistical literature that are directly applicable to generalizability theory.

2001. XX, 538 pp. (Statistics for Social Science and Public Policy) Hardcover € 79,95; £ 59,-; sFr 138,- ISBN 0-387-95282-9

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Springer

G.S. Watson Annual Lecture

G.S. Watson Annual Lecture at La Trobe University, Bendigo

In 1999, the Department of Mathematics at La Trobe University, Bendigo established an annual lecture in the memory of Professor Geoffrey S. Watson BA (Melbourne), PhD (North Carolina State), DSc (Melbourne), (1921-1998).

Professor Watson was born in Bendigo, educated at Bendigo High School and took his first degree at the University of Melbourne. Professor Watson went on to a distinguished career in the mathematical sciences. He held positions at University of Melbourne, University of Cambridge, ANU, University of Toronto, Johns Hopkins University and eventually he was Professor and Head of Department of Statistics at Princeton University.

Professor Watson was always keen to be involved in applications of mathematics to many different areas and his own work reflects this interest. Also, he was keen to spread his own enthusiasm for mathematics and especially its applications in science. He once wrote "I regard myself as an applied mathematician. I have always spent more time reading science than mathematics."

Perhaps his name is best known through its association with the Durbin-Watson statistic which is very important in many branches of statistics, especially in economics and econometrics.

His work has had a great impact on various aspects of science as well as economics.

Throughout his life, Professor Watson regarded his home town with deep affection and, from time to time, visited Bendigo and wrote to the Bendigo Advertiser trying to contact colleagues from school days.

Hence the Department of Mathematics at La Trobe University, Bendigo offers an annual lecture in mathematics in memory of Professor Watson. The lecture is an occasion for an invited speaker to address an audience on a suitable mathematical topic of broad interest.

Presenters of the G. S. Watson Annual Lecture so far are listed below.

1999: Professor Ruth J. Williams, University of California, San Diego, "From Queueing Networks to Reflecting Diffusions"

2000: Professor Terry P. Speed, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Melbourne, and University of California, Berkeley, "Mathematics Meets Molecular Biology"

2001: Assoc. Prof. Doug M. Clarke, Director, Mathematics Teaching and Learning Centre, Australian Catholic University "Developing young children as mathematical thinkers in P-4: Exciting approaches from the Early Numeracy Research Project"

The 2002 lecture will be presented by Professor Lynn Batten of the School of Computing and Mathematics at Deakin University. Professor Batten's research interests include information security and reliability, cryptology, coding theory and optimization techniques. Further details of the lecture (including the date) will be available shortly at http://www.bendigo.latrobe.edu.au/mte/maths/

Terry Mills

Request for statistical disaster and success stories

The Society is preparing a public awareness campaign, primarily to support Professional Accreditation, but more generally, to promote awareness of the importance of professionalism in the practice of Statistics. The Society will be targeting groups such as Government, employers, contractors of statistical services, statisticians, students and prospective students.

In preparing the campaign, we are looking to accumulate a collection of stories, both of successes due to good statistical practice, and of disasters that arose from bad practice or from failure to use Statistics. For example, the Challenger disaster provides a classic example of failure to use statistical methods.

We are appealing to statisticians around the world to send us such materials. What we require is a description of (say) at most a page, together with references to any publications that provide verification.

We would also appreciate direct references to any books or journal articles addressing such matters.

Please send any responses to

SSAI Business Office
P.O. Box 85
AINSLIE ACT 2602

Fax (02) 6249 8266
Email: ssai@ozemail.com.au

All contributions will be acknowledged. We would hope to be able to make the consolidated information generally available.

Nicholas Fisher
President, SSAI

Since July 1, 2001, we have added a further 3 new Accredited Statisticians and 10 new Graduate Statisticians. Profiles of some of these are included in the Newsletter.

Maintenance of Accreditation

The current regulations state that "Accredited Statisticians shall provide to the Accreditation Committee every five years ... a summary of their activities in that five years to demonstrate at least continuing contact/involvement with Statistics and the practice of Statistics appropriate to them, plus the name of 1 referee to be contacted if desired." The Committee feels that the profession (and hence society in general) would benefit from a system that encourages ongoing learning and professional development. Many professional organisations for example have a points system based on activities undertaken over, say, the last 2 years. We are, however, very aware of the need to keep it simple, to consult widely and to phase in any such system. The Committee is working on this and plans to hold an open forum on the topic at the July conference.

Meet some recently accredited SSAI members

Johathon Khoo GStat, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Areas of Interest: Econometrics, Price Indexes and Analysis of Complex Survey Data.

I have just finished my first year at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the Analytical Services Branch. Currently I am working on construction of Price Indexes within the ABS.

I studied at the University of Wollongong and received a Bachelor of Mathematics and Economics. I would like to do further study in the coming years.

Ronald Albert Webster GStat, Queensland University of Technology

Area of Interest: Medical Statistics

I completed a Bachelor of Science (Hons) degree in mathematics at QUT in 2000 and I am presently employed as a Research Assistant in an arc-spirt collaboration with QUT and the infection control departments of the Prince Charles and the Princess Alexandra Hospitals. The research includes risk factors for infection with MRSA (antibiotic resistant golden staph) modelling the spread of MRSR and statistical process control for significant infectious organisms

Margaret Mackisack AStat, Stillman & Mackisack Pty Ltd

Areas of Interest: Time Series and Engineering Statistics

After completing a PhD in Time Series and the Australian National University I worked as Tutor then Lecturer at several Universities, then left to work as a freelance consultant.

David Pitt GStat, Australian National University

Areas of Interest: Extreme Value Theory, Applications of modern statistical techniques in actuarial science

I am a fully qualified actuary. I have worked in general insurance advising on statistical issues involved in pricing and valuation. As an academic at the Australian National University I have developed an interest in the application of Extreme Value Theory to reinsurance. I am also an enthusiastic teacher and follow developments in statistics education.

Member Advantage

brings a new benefit to SSAI members

Member Advantage is pleased to offer access to the Qantas Club Airline Lounge Membership.

The corporate rates for members are:

New member:

✈ **$690.00** (including joining and administrative fee) for two years membership – saving $179.16.

Renewal:

✈ **$473.00** (including administrative fee) for two years membership – saving $99.16.

Joining is easy.

For further information or to obtain a Qantas Club Application form, contact Member Advantage on

1300 853 352

(Please allow 15 working days for processing)

International Statistical Institute

The 55th Session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI), will be held in Sydney between 5 and 12 April 2005. This Session will provide an arena for the exchange of ideas and knowledge on statistics among participants. The ISI Session serves to enhance the coordination and integration of statistics and to strengthen the existing ties between statisticians in the government and academic circles as well as between statistical societies and official and non-official organisations.

The National Organising Committee for the 2005 ISI Session, comprising of Australian Statistician and ISI President, Dennis Trewin (Chair), members from ABS and representatives from the Statistical Society of Australia (Nick Fisher and Eden Brinkley), recently held a meeting at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre (see photo below) to discuss promotional, accommodation and venue requirements. Preparations remain on schedule and the organisers are determined to make available the best possible facilities for the 55th ISI Session.

The 2005 ISI Session will be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre. Located on the shores of Darling Harbour, the venue has magnificent views of the city and is only a short walk to the Central Business District and a wide range of hotels. A wide range of accommodation will be available during the Session to suit all budgets. The accommodation will be within close proximity to the Convention Centre.

The scientific programme of the 55th ISI Session will consist of Invited Paper meetings and Contributed Paper meetings. Professor Stephan Morgenthaler of EPFL-DMA (Lausanne, Switzerland) will be the Chair of the Scientific programme for the 55th ISI Session. Professor Morgenthaler is also on the Programme Committee for the 2003 ISI Session in Berlin. Information on the programme will be included in future SSAI newsletters, as it becomes available.

A number of Satellite Meetings will be held around the 55th ISI Session. A meeting will be held in Wellington, New Zealand on the likely theme of "statistics for

Members of the National Organising Committee for the 55th Session of the ISI: (left to right) Siu-Ming Tam (support for developing countries), Greg Bray (Social & Tours), Dennis Trewin (ISI President and NOC Chair), Graeme Hope (Public Relations, Promotions, Exhibitions), Geoff Lee (Scientific Program).

Members of the ISI NOC (Siu-Ming Tam, Geoff Lee, Greg Bray, Dennis Trewin) with members of Tour Hosts, conference organisers for the Sydney ISI Session (Roslyn McLeod, Lisa Cox, Nicole Turner and Susan Coote), and members of the ABS (Anna Poskitt & Annette Hants).

special populations, including minority populations". It has also been proposed that the ISI hold a satellite meeting in Noumea, New Caledonia on statistical issues associated with small countries. The Industry Statistics Committee is also looking to have a Satellite meeting in Cairns, Queensland. Other Satellite Meetings are also likely to be developed.

The NOC is developing a busy and exciting social program, which will give delegates, colleagues and accompanying persons the opportunity to relax among friends and experience some of Sydney's unique and varied attractions.

A Trade Exhibition will also be held in conjunction with the Conference. The Exhibition will cover a wide range of products and services related to the statistical industry.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is very pleased to be hosting the 55th ISI Session. In 2005, the ABS will also be celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Further information on the programmes and arrangements for the 55th Session will be included in future SSAI newsletters. If you are interested in attending the 55th ISI Session and would like your name on the mailing list please contact: Statistics Conference Managers, GPO Box 128, Sydney 2001.

NEW SOUTH WALES

presents...

Community Service Announcement from Bazza, SSAI NSW Branch Enforcer

Dear Ladies an' Gennelmen, it 'as recennly bin bort to my attenshun dat a certun fat, furry, rodenty-type fing 'as not bin doin' 'is job

propperly. I receeved a call from my frend an' valued frend Rodger Robertson tellin' me dat de Squirrel 'ad absconded. Az Branch Enforcer, 'e tole me ta track down de myskreent, miscree, b&#!*%d an' get 'im ta do 'is job. Let me tell yoo it woz not eesy. I wont bore yoo wiv de details, but if it werent for a rusted eggbeater, a pair ov Mickey MouseTM ears an' a three legged cat from de Lower Andes named Bruce, I wood not be heer today.

Wen I foun' de Squirrel 'e wuz in no fit state to perform 'is job. It 'as bin left up ta me ta do it. Wen last de fat, lazy rodent spoke to ya 'e promissed, an' I quote, "a star studded extravaganza on the highs, lows, loves and losses" from de PostGraduate Awards Day. Now, I is a man ov few words, well, few nice words, but I got plenny ov nasty ones if anyone wonts ta cross me like the f&#$!?g squirrel. Anyway, as I wuz sayin', I carnt tork orl fancy like de squirrel , an' I carnt let yoo kno all de comin's an' goin's ov de Awards Day coz I woz outside kickin' 'eads like dere werent no tomorrow ta keep orl de folks inside from bein' bovvered by troublemakers. I can give yoo a rundown tho an' dis is wot 'appened...

We orl met on Wednesday 28 November larst yeer foor de secon' Postgraduate Awards Day. De firs tork ov de day woz givven by Robert Clark from de University of Wollongong ('e is de yung gen' wiv de glasses on in de foto) on "Analysing People Grouped in Households". Now dis I dinnt unnerstand az peeple grooped in 'ouseholds ten' to be simlar, like me an' my luvverly mum boaf likin' de same foods an' TV shows an' beer. Nuffin much to analize dere I'd say. Anyway, Robert sed dat menny social surveys involv samples ov 'ouseholds an' selectin' one or moor peeple from dese 'ouseholds. Stannard analeses may be floored an' two tipes ov bias may arise unless depennencies ar accounned for (like my movver bein' depennent on de money I brings in each week, I guess). Robert discussed dese issues feoretically an' wiv sum survey darta.

Secon' on de list woz a gennelman from de University of Sydney named Remy Cottet, torking on "A Bayesian Approach to Forecast Electricity Load at Half Hourly Periods using Multi-equation

Assembled: the nine speakers from the Postgraduate Awards Day (their mothers know who they are).

Regression Models with Cross Sectional and Serially Correlated Errors". I dint get ta lissen ta much ov dis tork becoz by de time I finished takin' in de title it wuz over.

Daniela Leonte from de University of New South Wales woz next ta speek, on "Bayesian Hierarchical Modelling of the Geological Strata Beneath a Hazardous Waste Site". Now, 'azardous waste is sumfink I kno about. After a hevvy nite ov beer an' curry wiv de lads, so do a lot ov ovver peeple we meets. But Daniela woznt torking about dat, moor about de details ov de subb-surface geologogy ov a lan'fill dat wuz a disposal site an' de predicshun ov de fate ov kemikals in de lan'fill, includin' dere potenshal ta migrate off-site. Daniela described de analisis ov de gamm ray count darta, but wen peeple start torkin' about Reversible Jump Markov Chain Monte Carlo meffuds, I kno it iz time to leeve fings to de experts.

De Universityof Western Sydney woz represenned next, wiv Ahmed bani-Mustafa steppin' up to giv de next tork. "Recursive Residuals for Mixed Models" woz de title. I mus' admit dat I dint unnerstand much ov dis one, so I fort dat wen I got 'ome I'd 'ave a look ta see wot sum ov de words meant. I looked up in my dicshunary de meanin' of de word recursive, an' all it sed woz "See recursive". Bloody stoopid dischunary. Az yoo may 'ave guessed, I no longer 'as a dicshunary.

Next came de affernoon tea an' a chance ta mingle wiv de nobs. Unfortunately I woz corled outside ta deal wiv a few gatecrashers dat wonted ta spoil da affernoon for de folks. Az I woz kickin' a few heds, I missed de torks by Christian Rau ("Fault Line Estimation and Functionally-Based Signal Discrimination in Planar Settings", Australian National University), Leesa Sidhu ("Little Penguins – A Tale of Two Colonies", Australian Defence Force Academy) and Michael Stewart ("Inference for Finite Misture Models", University of Sydney). I did return for de torks by Elizabeth Stojanovski ("Comparison of Structural Equation Models Incorporating Observed Variables and Those Incorporating Composite Scores", University of Newcastle) an' Jiying Yin ("On Gauss Quadratures and on a Class of L-Estimators", Macquarie Universty), but de distan' sounds of sirens woz makin' me kinda edgy an' I coodnt pay az much attenshun az I wood 'ave liked.

Later in de evenin', de prizes for best torks were announced. Three ov de speakers shared de first place for best tork an' were recognised for excellence in Postgraduate Research, an' dey were Daniela Leonte, Leesa Sidhu and Michael Stewart. Congradulations orl.

De torks were followed by drinks an' dinner, at which my own speshul bran' of enforcin' woz also required (altho it woz real quiet like so de folks inside woz not upset). A fine dinner woz 'ad by all an' during de dinner we 'eard from an' old frend, Don McNeil. Don spoke on 'is career (now dat 'e is retirin') an' ennertained us orl wiv his manny stories. Fanks Don.

De evenin' ended az orl must do, de prize winners goin' 'ome de 'appiest. I certainly enjoyed my evenin' an' I 'ope dat orl who were dere did too. I is hoping dat everyone will enjoy de next few az yoo will orl be dere, wont ya?

Wiv love an' respect,

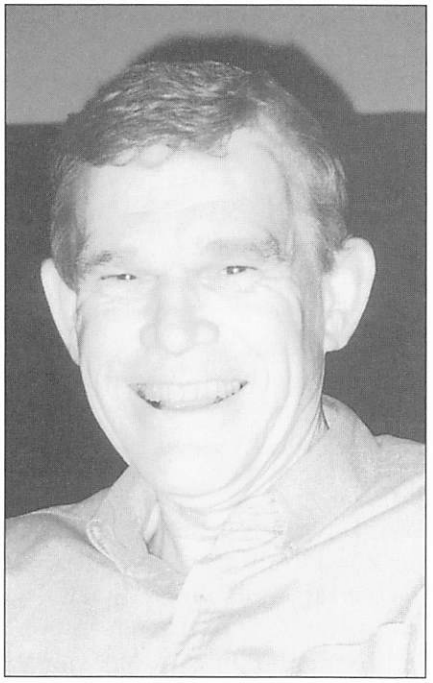
Bazza

SSAI NSW Branch Enforcer

Shhhhhhhhh!

Be quiet.

Has he gone? What? You know who I mean, the psychopath, Bazza. Self appointed SSAI NSW Branch Enforcer, two-bit thug and hater of small furry animals. He has! Good.



Here's to you, Rodger Robertson, outgoing NSW Branch President.

It's the Squirrel here. I apologise to my loyal and devoted readers that I was unable to fulfill my promise of regaling you with the pleasures and splendours of the Postgraduate Awards Day. That neanderthal, Bazza, chased me off, threatening all sorts of wicked evils upon my head. I've had to go into hiding to avoid being squished like a bug!

But I'm back. I can see that Bazza has laid bare his tawdry soul and spat phlegm all over that grand event that is the Postgraduate Awards Day, so I won't bother to explain the highs and lows of the day (I still have my spies). I would, however, like to take this occasion to offer some praise to a grand old friend, Rodger Robertson. Rodger became Branch President two years ago, bringing with him a grand vision of how the Council should be run. He has followed up on this, delivering a Council focussed on their tasks and seeing to getting things done. For that, I have prepared a song...

And here's to you, Rodger Robertson

We all love you more than you will know (Wo, wo, wo)

God bless you please, Rodger Robertson

Heaven holds a place for those who pray

(Hey, hey, hey...hey, hey, hey)

We'd like to know a little bit about you for our files

We'd like to help you learn to help yourself

Look around you, all you see are sympathetic eyes

Stroll around the grounds until you feel at home

<chorus>

and on until you just could burst with love for the great man. Thank you Rodger, thank you for all you've done.

Till next time...

Statistical Squirrel

VICTORIA

The 2002 Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Branch of the Statistical Society of Australia will be held on Tuesday 26 March 2002 in the Seminar room, Graduate Research Centre, Swinburne University of Technology. At this meeting, a President for the years 2003 and 2004 and up to eight other council members will be elected. The President-elect will serve as Vice-President for 2002.

All members are urged to consider serving on council. The council is necessary for the operation of the Branch, and in recent years a shortage of council members has meant that many council meetings have not been able to reach a quorum. The main duty of council members is to attend council meetings once a month, immediately prior to the monthly Branch meeting and talk, and to assist in the discussion and decision-making on Branch priorities and activities. Two council members will serve as Secretary and Treasurer. Nomination forms for council positions will be distributed with the next monthly Branch newsletter in early March, and will also be added to the Branch website soon (http://matilda.vu.edu.au/~ntd/statsvic/).

Gordon Smythe will be the guest speaker at the AGM. The April meeting will be addressed by John van der Touw.

The Importance of a Quality Culture (2001 Belz lecture)

Dennis Trewin, head of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, presented the 2001 Belz Lecture in October at which he described how a quality culture is encouraged and maintained within his organization.

Maintaining a high level of credibility and a strong reputation requires the ABS to use appropriate methodologies and to carefully avoid political biases. At the heart of the ABS culture is a set of core values

- Relevance – keeping an eye on the changing needs of government and other customers and incorporating changes into planning processes
- Integrity – maintaining objectivity via methodologies and practices that are open to scrutiny
- Access for all – recognising that the information is owned by all Australians and that no particular group has privileged or exclusive access
- Professionalism – a commitment to high technical and ethical standards
- Trust of providers – strict protection of privacy is maintained while encouraging the accurate supply of necessary and useful data.

Within the ABS, quality assurance is the responsibility of all staff so that it is expected that safeguards will be built into all activities. Having a representative on the management team emphasizes the key role of the Methodology Division. All levels of the organization are encouraged to be receptive to constructive criticism even if the 'problem' is perceived rather than 'real'. An aggressive response is taken to criticisms of integrity so that people inside and outside of the organization understand the seriousness with which this value is cherished.

Having a well-structured and coherent policy on quality does not necessarily translate into outcomes that are consistent with the espoused policy. Indications of the depth of the "quality culture" within the ABS can be gauged via:

- The overall reputation of the organization. The ABS is regarded within Australia as an authority with great credibility and this is an extremely difficult status to achieve and maintain without effective quality assurance.
- Adherence to international standards and participation in their construction. Strong ABS involvement with international standards is an indication that it is striving to provide consistent information that is useful for an international audience according to sound scientific principles. Departures from international standards are resisted unless there are compelling reasons and these are clearly described in the published information.
- The ability to manage methodological and other change. For me, the most compelling evidence of an effective quality culture is the

way that change is managed. Dennis described a change of methodology that affected economic modellers. The ABS gathered the affected users together, flagged that the change was about to happen, the reasons for doing it and provided two sets of output for a period of time so that the modellers could adapt to the change.

- One's own experience of the organization. On the same day as the Belz Lecture I received a report from the ABS with hand-written corrections in one of its tables. This indicates that the ABS is far more interested in accuracy of its information than maintaining appearances. This type of behaviour suggests that individuals are taking responsibility for maintaining quality.

Dennis described some of the challenges that the organization is facing. Amongst these are increasing availability of large databases, increasing user expectations, quality assurance of electronic outputs and the presentation of statistics on the Internet.

An appreciative audience acknowledged an interesting and thought provoking talk.

Neville Bartlett

The Analysis of Small and Non-Existent Datasets.

Geoff Robinson, of CSIRO, gave a very interesting and provocative talk to the Victorian Branch of the Statistical Society at its November meeting. He challenged our self-image as statisticians, arguing that the primary distinguishing characteristic of our business is variation and uncertainty not data analysis.

In the first part of his talk, Geoff discussed a number of consulting problems he has been involved with where the data has been scarce or non-existent but where he has still been able to make a major contribution. The problems included the design of a stockpiling system for the Olympic Dam expansion project and an assessment of public risk from rocket launches.

In the second part of his talk Geoff discussed the current state of statistics, suggesting that many do not see the need for our services. Part of the problem was competition from other "brands" such as quality management, TQM, six sigma, data mining, neural networks etc., and the widening gap between academic journals and practice. Geoff argued that both the profession and society would benefit if we changed by taking ownership of the class of problems involving variation and uncertainty.

Neil Diamond

QUEENSLAND

Young Statisticians Seminar Afternoon

On 7 August, a successful Young Statisticians seminar afternoon was attended by twenty young statisticians. Polished talks were presented on a range of diverse topics. Joanne Walker (Colmar Brunton) provided an interesting account of a day in the life of a market analyst, James Penhaligon (Queensland Rail) spoke on the application of queuing theory and statistical risk to the export grain logistics chain, Jess Mar (University of Queensland) elaborated on the challenges in statistical analysis of microarray data, David Wilson (QUT) presented his approach to mathematical modelling of the cellular dynamics of human infectious disease and Mary Kynn (QUT) outlined ELICITOR: A novel interactive graphical approach to eliciting expert opinion.

Following the seminar afternoon, Professor John Eccleston, UQ, spoke on the Design of Experiments under Spatial Dependency - Optimality and Visualisation. He noted that the design of experiments for situations where the plots are correlated has been an area of active research for the last decade. Of particular interest was the application to variety trials where spatial dependency between plots has been modelled by some researchers, for example Gilmour et al (1997).

The design of experiments for these situations poses significant problems. The complexity of the variance-covariance structure means that theoretical results are difficult to obtain and often impose unrealistic conditions. However, there are some general properties, which were suggested from computational investigations. The method of analysis and an algorithm for producing designs optimised for various optimality functions, including A-optimality, nearest neighbour balance and an approximate A-criterion was presented. Simulated annealing was employed to avoid local minima. Finally, visualisation of the experimental layout, which assists in understanding the effects of the spatial dependency on the designing process, was provided.

Levene's Homogeneity of Variance Test: Updating to Complex Designs

On 25 September, Ky Mathews, University of Queensland, spoke on a weighted least squares approach to Levene's test of homogeneity of variance for a general design. The approach, which is available both for univariate and multivariate situations, and results of simulation studies were outlined.

For the univariate case, both mean and median-based tests were discussed and comparisons made

with other commonly used homogeneity of variance tests. When the design is balanced, the weighted least square test statistics turn out to be design-dependently proportional to the ordinary least squares test statistic. It was also shown that, since Levene's test applied to a multivariate situation assumes but does not test the equality of covariance matrices, it is not equivalent to a likelihood ratio test for this hypothesis. The distribution of the univariate test statistic is close to a standard F-distribution, although it can be slightly underdispersed. For a complex design, the test assesses homogeneity of variance across blocks, treatments or treatment factors, and offers an objective interpretation of residual plots.

A preliminary investigation into the power and robustness properties of these statistics was also sketched. This showed that, in terms of nominal significance level, the proposed tests were closer to or at least the same as the alternative tests.

Joint Meeting with AMOS

On 20 November an afternoon joint meeting with the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (AMOS) was held at the University of Southern Queensland. This was a special occasion for the branch, being the first time we have had a joint activity with AMOS and also the first time we have met in Toowoomba since February 1997. In both respects the meeting was very successful, with about sixty people attending, an enthusiastic welcome from USQ, six very interesting talks and plenty of discussion of climate and its statistical features over afternoon tea and after the meeting.

After welcoming remarks from the societies and Professor Stuart Hazell, (Dean, Faculty of Sciences, USQ) the opening talk was by Joachim Ribbe (Biological and Physical Sciences, USQ). Joachim outlined a new climatology degree course at USQ, Toowoomba which has been set up in response to an increased demand for climatologists in industry, government and education sectors. The new BSc degree programme is a highly structured course on climatology incorporating mathematics, physics and statistics. Plans for certificate and postgraduate courses and research degrees were also outlined.

Andries Potgieter, Qld Centre for Climate Applications, QDPI, spoke on measuring quality of a commodity forecast from a system that incorporates seasonal climate forecasting. He outlined the integration of climate forecasts and crop model systems in order to improve commodity forecasts. To account for the multidimensional nature of crop quality, factor analysis was employed. Similarly, a single measure was inadequate for assessing the forecast distribution and so quality of the forecast distribution was measured via reliability, shift and dispersion. This work was in collaboration with Yvette Everingham and Graham Hammer.

Professor Andy Sturman (Centre for Atmospheric Research, University of Canterbury) provided an interesting view of localised climatology via the example of multi-scale interaction of atmospheric processes in the Southern Alps, New Zealand. He considered interactions on a very small scale up to the sub-synoptic scale and showed they have an important impact on local meteorology and climate. Diurnal variation and speed at various sites around Lakes Tekapo and Pukaki and surrounding mountains were described by a thermally-induced pressure variation model. Predictions of the resultant sea breeze phenomenon have implications for tourism in the form of gliders and joy flights, dust, pollution and agricultural activities such as forestry and wine production.

Following afternoon tea, Hamish McGowan, (Geographical Science and Planning, UQ) discussed atmospheric dust and its role in global climate systems. His talk included the major sources, the influences of dust on climate, research currently being undertaken on the topic and further research planned.

After introducing many of the issues by analogy with the problems of translation of a message from a lost language by the only three translators, each of unknown expertise, Ron Addie compared six models for Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) forecasting. These included various forms of autoregressive models and methods based on matching of past patterns. Evaluation of the models included fitting of linear time series, generating extra data from the fitted model and seeing how the methods performed on the generated data.

Finally Peter Dunn discussed modeling rainfall (or lack thereof). After summarizing the various problems (including the mixed discrete and continuous nature of the data, timeframe definition, spatial aspects and small amounts) he briefly described current approaches to jointly modeling occurrence and the amount given some rainfall. He then presented an alternative based on Tweedie distributions. This arises naturally for the total rainfall in an interval when the number of events is Poisson and amounts follow a gamma distribution.

Examples from two extremes (Charleville monthly and Melbourne daily) showed such models can fit well.

Special thanks to Peter Dunn and Joachim Ribbe for their help in organizing the meeting and

handling all the local arrangements.

Tony Swain and Peter Baker

SA

Design of Experiments by computer for manufacturers

Professor Tony Greenfield, a member of the European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics (ENBIS), addressed the November meeting with a talk structured in his own words as an "amble through life". Tony started his career as an electronic engineer and became more involved in statistics with British Steel. His story read as an account of the late twentieth century working life in industry and the never ending restructures, opportunities arising out of necessity, redundancy forcing a move from the steel industry to academic medical research.

Tony presented DEX, a software program he developed for experimental design, used initially as a teaching tool and for use in industry. In Tony's experience, ninety five percent of engineering experiments in industry can be covered by fractional factorials with additional observations to augment the response surface. Often experiments take a haphazard approach with progressive adjustments to the design absorbing many of the observations. Whereas designed experiments are much more efficient, requiring fewer observations providing cheaper and quicker results. The audience was engaged with a remedial lesson in fractional factorials including a practical exercise.

A demonstration of the DOS version (DEX) was shown plus a sample of the Windows version, (WINDEX) was distributed to the audience. Windex can interface with Excel and is a preferred tool in industry. The talk was lively and interactive and provided a highly entertaining account of a long career from somebody fortunate to span industry and academia.

Margaret Swincer

CANBERRA

Outlandish Outlier Detection Methods

At the October Canberra Branch meeting, Rohan Baxter from Enterprise Data Mining CSIRO, presented an interesting talk about outlier detection methods. Data mining practitioners developed some techniques like Hotspots (G. Williams and others) clustering and decision trees applied to Medicare fraud detection and NRMA claims analysis.

Rohan said that outlier detection methods require identifying outlyingness from the bulk of the data rather than distance from the regression plane, an outlyingness score rather than outlier identification only and they need to differentiate qualitative types of outliers. Outlier detection methods have become faddish and focus seems out of proportion with importance. Most data mining papers are variations on the scale clustering algorithm and evaluation methodology is almost non existent.

Rohan chose four outlier detection methods and ran them on some publicly available data. The methods he chose were:

- The Donoho-Stahel method, which produces an estimator of location and scatter. It is a sub-sampling algorithm of 1-dimension projections that then calculates the Mahalanobis distance.
- The Hadi 94 method starts with a set of "good points" selected via a robust estimation method and then computes the Mahalanobis distance for all the points with the mean and covariance calculated from the good points.
- The MML model, which is a mixture model using Gaussian/multinomial/poisso n components in a fast efficient heuristic search.
- The RNN which uses a 3-hidden layer multi-layer perception, the inputs are the same as the outputs and the error in the outputs is used as a measure of outlyingness.

He concluded that it is worthwhile avoiding the "league table" of outliers detection methods. The Hadi 94 and Donoho methods are more scalable than assumed by some papers. Hadi 94's location/scatter estimator was confused on one dataset but otherwise good. The Donoho location/scatter estimator was also confused on one dataset but good in the others. The MML works well on scattered radial outliers, but not on low variance relative to the bulk clustered out. The RNN does not work very well for small datasets or radial outliers.

The Role of Statistics and the Statistician

In November the Canberra Branch enjoyed a very entertaining and interesting presentation by Lynne Billard from the University of Georgia about the role of statistics and the statistician. Lynne found lots of interesting issues after reading all volumes of JASA until 1939.

She started with the question: What is statistics? In the 1800's and early 1900's the statistical society was social scientists, political scientists, economists, historians, medical scientists, etc and statistical methodology was thought to solve problems in these areas. So she asked are we the same today or not? And if

not, Why not? We should. In 1909 North pointed out that we had lost our way and had become moribund. We run the same dangers today. North asked: "What can be done – what ought to be done – to make the (profession) a vital, predominating force in determining the directions in which statistical science shall advance..." North's call can be our call to action, as we too engage our talents, our expertise to address the problems of the day. Also, she said that she thinks all the stations along the axis between Mathematical Statistics and Applied Statistics are valid and that the mathematical methods defined the 1900's like computerised methods define the actual times. Then Lynne pointed out that whatever the backdrop, in these papers there was a persistent insistence that statistics had a major role to play in solving society's problems, and the statistician must remain.

Then she followed with the question: What is a Statistician? And she answered by saying that minimally the role of the statistician is that of someone who will analyse, and will draw inferences from data and then will interpret this data. Then she quoted Rorty (1931) in a description of the statistician "is, in effect, a Sherlock Holmes of figures, who must work mainly, or wholly, from circumstantial evidence. So the statistical detective must learn to approach each complicated problem from as many independent angles as possible and must combine and weigh and balance the results of the different solutions at which he arrives...the trained worker will never complete and pass final judgment upon an analysis without first appointing counsel for the defence...the checking of circumstantial evidence by...the application of the statistical third degree.... The statistician, as the chief pathfinder among scientific pioneers, must necessarily combine that vision which comes from fertility, breath, and incisiveness of hypothesis, with the balance and sureness of step of the scientific method as a whole. But, above all, he must possess something of the rude spirit of the frontiersman and must seek his results in every legitimate way, regardless of refinements of method and rigidity of conventions." So Lynne asked: "Are we a statistical Sherlock Homes?"

Then she focus on education and training and quoted Florence Nightingale: "What we want is not so much (or at least not at present) an accumulation of facts, as to teach men who govern the country the use of statistical facts" Lynne pointed out that radical changes in our thinking are needed and some fundamentals need to be mastered. Programs should be structured to build a platform, which stimulates creativity, to teach the essential skill of how to garner and how to use information, to provide basic skills and mechanisms and to focus on training for a lifelong versatility.

About introductory service courses she said that we need an entirely different approach, one that instils an appreciation of statistics, fosters a mind of inquiry rather than an accumulation of facts, develops intellectual capacity and shows statistics in society and statistics in research. She quoted Wright (1908) and North (1909), who challenged those who thought statistics as "dry bones" by asserting "there is nothing dry about them, that they are moist, juicy, fragrant as all the 'perfumes of Arabia'. They are more poetic than poetry, more artistic than art, more musical than music, more philosophical than philosophy".

Lynne also talked about how to make statistics popular. For this, we need to make conclusions and deductions succinct, able to be read easily by the busy citizen. Paraphrasing Storey (1914) she said that this means that the statistician must understand the mind of the public and of the reader. The statistician must put himself in that reader's place and design his exhibit from their standpoint, not from his own.

About the role of associations, she said that whether it be government, academia, industry or private sector, wherever statistics and statisticians reside, it is the role and purpose of the professional association "to encourage the use and perfect the purposes of a scientific method" Newcomb (1909). Lynne stated that statistics as a discipline cannot exist by itself and as individuals and as associations, we must ask ourselves if we are addressing the needs of audiences that seek us out and if we are even connected to these to these audiences.

To conclude she asked: Are we counting machines? Can we count? Do we count? And even more crucially she said: Do others think we count? That answer and our response to it will fashion our future.

Reporter's note: I would like to thank Lynne for giving me the overheads from this talk, which enabled the report to be much more complete. A copy of Lynne's paper "The role of statistics and the statistician" can be found at www.stat.uga.edu/faculty/lynne/lynne.html

Social events

After Lynne Billard's talk we enjoyed the Canberra Branch Annual Dinner at The Burley Griffin Centre of the Rydges Lakeside where we were served a delicious buffet.

Veronica Rodriguez

Australasian Conferences

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Effective Data Mining

18 – 20 March, 2002 Massey University, Palmerston North, NZ or 24 – 26 June, 2002 Massey University, Albany NZ

3-Day Workshop

Information: http://www-ist.massey.ac.nz/dmworkshop/ email: s.ganesh@massey.ac.nz

16th Australian Statistical Conference,

8-11 July 2002, National Convention Centre, Canberra.

The themes will be bioinformatics, surveys, design of experiments and trials, medical statistics, financial statistics. A tribute to Richard Tweedie will also be given.

Information : www.statsoc.org.au/asc16

Enquiries asc16@con-sol.com

Australasian Genstat Conference 2002,

4 – 6 December, 2002, Abbey Beach Resort, Busselton, Western Australia

Information: http:/www.agric.wa.gov.au/biometrics/genstat2002 or email genstat2002@agric.wa.gov.au

Genetics and Financial Services Conference – Threat or Opportunity?

11 – 12 April, 2002, Rydges Lakeside Canberra, Australia

Conference sessions include Latest Developments in Genetics, Emerging Legal Issues and Financial Services Impacts.

Information : http://ecocomm.anu.edu.au/conference or email, conference.ecocomm.anu.edu.au

Fourth Conference on Statistics in Ecology and Environmental Monitoring Population Dynamics. The Interface between Models and Data

9 – 13 December, 2002, Dunedin, New Zealand; and

Pre-Conference Workshop on Matrix Population Models

4 – 6 December 2002, Dunedin, New Zealand

Information: http://maths.otago.ac.NZ/SEEM4/or email igoodwin@maths.otago.ac.nz

Overseas Conferences

7th Valencia International Meeting on Bayesian Statistics

2-6 June 2002, Canary Islands, Spain.

Information and updates at conference web site, http://www.uv.es/valencia7, and its US mirror site, http://www.stat.duke.edu/valencia7

Hawaii International Conference on Statistics

5 – 9 June 2002, Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu Hawaii, USA.

Sponsored by: University of Hawaii – West Oahu; and College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources-University of Hawaii.

Web address: http://www.statistics.hawaii.edu

Email address: stats@hawaii.edu

22nd International Symposium on Forecasting

23-26 June 2002, Department of Statistics, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.

Information: www.isf2002.org

The Sixth International Conference on Teaching Statistics, ICOTS-6

7-12 July 2002, Durban, South Africa.

Theme: 'Developing a statistically literate society'

Organised by the International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) and the South African Statistical Association (SASA).

Option of full refereeing of papers.

Proposals invited for contributed papers and posters.

Information: Brian Phillips, E-mail bphillips@swin.edu.au or see website http://www.beeri.org.il/icots6/

8th Islamic Countries Conference on Statistical Sciencres (ICCS-V111).

21 – 24 December, 2002, University of Bahrain, Bahrain.

Conference Theme: "Business, Population, Environment and IT Strategies of the Islamic World"

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