



New Zealand Statistical Association 2003 Conference
Massey University, Palmerston North, 2-4 July 2003
'Abandoning Independence'

*“dealing with data which are related in time,
 spatially, or measured on the same thing”*

So what does that cover?

Spatial Statistics, Longitudinal Data, Multilevel Modelling (both Bayesian and Non-Bayesian), Small Area Statistics, Data Mining, and Meta-Analysis. We also plan sessions on Statistical Education (both formal, and in the workplace) and Applied Statistics.

Who's going to be there?

We hope to have Joe Gani (Australian National University) on “Patterns in Sequences of Random Events”; Bruce Weir (North Carolina State University) on “Dependence in the Human Genome”; Brian Pink (NZ Government Statistician); Kerrie Mengerson (University of Newcastle, Australia); and Nick Longford (De Montfort University, UK).

Workshops

Nick Longford will be giving a workshop on Small Area Estimation in National Surveys on Tuesday 1 July. Contact Steve Haslett (email: s.j.haslett@massey.ac.nz) for more information.

Students and Recent Graduates

At the end of the first day of the conference (2 July), there will be a function for students and relatively recent graduates (people who have graduated in the last 5 years or so). This will be a great opportunity to get to know statisticians who are at a similar stage in their careers. There will be a few anecdotes about working life and some advice from experienced statisticians. Then we'll continue on to a restaurant in town. For details, contact Maaike Bendall (email: BendallM@crop.cri.nz)

Although in the first case support is the responsibility of the student's institution, a limited budget is available to assist with travel for students who are presenting a paper and are NZSA members (student membership is free). Contact Maaike Bendall (email: BendallM@crop.cri.nz). The amount of reimbursement will be correlated with the cost of travel to Palmerston North.

Important Dates (all 2003)

- 30 April Deadline for Early Bird registration
- 1 June Deadline for Abstracts
- 18 June Cutoff for full refund of registration fee (50% refund up to 2 July)
- 2-4 July Conference
- 1 July (Evening) Pre-Conference Mixer
- 2 July (Evening) Young Statisticians' Function
- 3 July (Evening) Conference Dinner

So where do I sign up?

Visit the conference website (<http://www-ist.massey.ac.nz/stats/nzsa2003/>) or use the form with this copy of NZSA News (off-line members only). All registration costs include NZ GST at 12.5%.

I want to present a paper about...

There is a form for submitting abstracts at the website (<http://www-ist.massey.ac.nz/stats/nzsa2003/>); alternatively, abstracts (ideally in Word or Latex format) can be emailed to Chin Diew Lai (email: c.lai@massey.ac.nz). The deadline is 1 June 2003.

Accommodation

Attendees are responsible for making their own accommodation arrangements. There is a range of options. Prices include NZ GST at 12.5%. Delegates must request “Massey University rate” when booking to get the price (p.n. = per night). Details may change by July:

On-campus (\$49.60 p.n.; contact AFS Catering Limited, email: afscatering@massey.ac.nz, phone 06 350 5056, form from conference website)

Motels (\$83-\$110 p.n.; see conference website)

Quality Hotel (\$106.88 p.n.; phone 06 356 8059)

Rydges Hotel (\$121.50 p.n.; includes breakfast; phone 06 356 5065)

Contacts

The conference website is <http://www-ist.massey.ac.nz/stats/nzsa2003/>; the conference secretary is Duncan Hedderley (HedderleyD@crop.cri.nz); the organizing chair is Mark Bebbington (M.Bebbington@massey.ac.nz)

President's Column



There is an irony in the reported remarks of John Hattie (Professor of Education at the University of Auckland) at the recent Knowledge Wave Conference. As reported both on radio and newspapers, his view is that Statistics and Mathematics graduates are among the most likely to be unemployed. Jeff Hunter's more detailed analysis elsewhere in this Newsletter provides the required rebuttal.

There is a need for better understanding of how to interpret statistics. Learning sound interpretation as part of an applied statistics programme needs to be recognised as a professional skill rather than one that can be passively absorbed as part of a more general education.

Applied Statistics is an integral part of any professional training in Statistics, and many of NZSA's members would see themselves as applied rather than theoretical or academic statisticians. In the universities there is ambivalence – applied statistics is certainly a poor cousin, despite the critical importance of disseminating newly developed theoretical techniques into other disciplines, and having them properly used, if there is to be any tangible economic gain.

The ambivalence has another aspect. Public perception seldom recognises the statistician's role: What we do is either perceived as something others (for example Prof Hattie) can do, or it introduces a level of sophistication that is not 'required'. To give an example from the applied field I most often work in, government departments spending \$500,000 on a sample survey will begrudge spending even \$30,000 on survey design and analysis. Using a skilled and experienced survey designer to assess the statistical merits of proposals from organisations contracting for government surveys now seems to be *passé*. The waste of resources is lamentable. The failure to analyse data much beyond tabulating summary statistics also means that key policy decisions are often not properly or adequately informed.

At a more academic level, dropping the statistical component from research programmes such as the Public Good Science Fund, when the funding available is only part of what was sought, will remain inevitable if high statistical standards do not form a necessary criterion for funding availability.

The question is, what can we as the New Zealand Statistical Association do? The answer falls back on

us as the Association's members.

We need to raise our profile. We could, like the British and Australians, establish Chartered Statistician (CS) status for suitably qualified members. We could better recognise the past contributions of our own members – after all, I understand no one has been elected a Life Member of the Association since 1983. We could make more effort to get recognition for more statisticians through the Royal Society or the New Year and Queen's Birthday Honours systems. I am sure you have more and possibly better ideas. I would like to hear them.

Ideas alone are not enough, however. Lists of nominations or general support for a CS framework are not enough either. Nominations require documentation. A CS system would require a protocol, nomination procedure, and a sub-committee to vet applications. The NZSA Committee can take on some of this responsibility, but not all. Free time is an increasingly rare commodity.

A number of you are already very much involved in NZSA's affairs; others less so. Without your views and continued involvement nothing much is likely to change. I look forward to hearing from more of you (email: s.j.haslett@massey.ac.nz).

Steve Haslett

Submissions to the Newsletter

The Newsletter welcomes any submissions of interest to members of the New Zealand Statistical Association. News about New Zealand statisticians, statistical meetings, statistical organisations, statistics in education, or statistical curiosities are suitable for inclusion. Letters that raise issues of importance to statistics in New Zealand are also welcomed. Photographs of recent gatherings and new appointees are of particular interest. Electronic submissions are preferred.

Next deadline 29 August 2003.

Advertising In the Newsletter

The Newsletter accepts advertising of interest to statisticians in New Zealand. Advertising is placed subject to space considerations. Personal advertising by NZSA members will be published free. Other advertising is \$250 per page, \$140 per half page, and \$75 per quarter page. Other sizes can be quoted on request. All advertising requests should be directed to the editor.

Editor

Roger Littlejohn

AgResearch, Invermay

Private Bag 50034, Mosgiel, New Zealand

Phone: +64-3-489-9082; Fax: +64-3-489-9037

Email: roger.littlejohn@agresearch.co.nz

Editorial



Our Autumn 2003 newsletter brings insight into a current public debate, details of upcoming conferences and workshops for statisticians, lots of local news, and (as is customary) an apology. Firstly, I apologize for the marginal quality of the images in the printed version of Newsletter

56. The pdf and online versions were not affected. Fortunately the photo of the President was not compromised, while the Editor and the dolphins came out worst. In view of these circumstances we chose to economize rather than re-doing the print run.

“Abandon Independence” – go on, I dare you to! If you need peer support, gather at Massey University over 2-4 July, and we can all *abandon* together. If you can't wait, the Hastie and Agresti workshops could be what you need. And deadlines for the Delta conference are coming up fast. Details and web references are included.

The recent “Knowledge Wave Conference” brought the suggestion that there is an over-supply of graduates in science and mathematics. This is investigated from a statistical perspective by Professor Jeffrey Hunter. We feature his letter to the Editor of the New Zealand Herald, which argues that Prof Hattie's original statement misinterprets the data. This will be of interest to all NZSA members, as it is about Statistics as a profession, and also about statistical thinking. The online version of the newsletter will be kept up-to-date with correspondence on this issue.

We include several reports from the great December conference crawl of 2002. I attended the GenStat Conference in Western Australia, which featured several talks taking REML into uncharted territory and a vigorous debate on appropriate methods for analysing microarray data. There was a strong contingent from all state agricultural departments, a heartening contrast with the situation 15-20 years ago. And, for the conference tour, we had an unsuccessful chase after a pair of elusive blue whales which had been spotted earlier in the day; later we saw 3 mother-child pairs of humpback whales on their southerly summer migration.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this newsletter, to make it an interesting and varied read.

Roger Littlejohn

Newsletter on Web

An online version of this newsletter is available at <http://nzsa.rsnz.govt.nz/Newsletter57/index.htm>

NZIMA

The NZ Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (NZIMA) has been established as one of the seven Centres of Research Excellence selected by the NZ government in 2002. The NZIMA is hosted at the University of Auckland and headed by Fields Medallist Vaughan Jones DCNZM FRS FRSNZ (based at Berkeley) and Prof Marston Conder FRSNZ (Auckland), with involvement of many of the best pure and applied mathematicians and statisticians from across the country.

Principal aims of the NZIMA are to:

- create and sustain a critical mass of researchers in concentrations of excellence in mathematics and statistics and their applications,
- provide NZ with a source of high-level quantitative expertise across a range of areas,
- act as a facilitator of access to new developments internationally in the mathematical sciences, and
- raise the level of knowledge and skills in the mathematical sciences in NZ.

Decisions on initial NZIMA programmes, fellowships, scholarships and a number of small grants were made in October, and include the following statistically related awards: Partial funding has been offered to *Phylogenetic genomics*, led by Prof Mike Steel (University of Canterbury). An NZIMA scholarship has been awarded to Jean Gong (University of Canterbury), who is in the early stage of her PhD on “Improved statistical methods for modelling health outcomes: Linking multi-state modelling and causal inference”. Small grants (of between \$5000 and \$10000) have been offered to help with the costs of several local conferences and workshops as well as research visitors, including Assoc Prof Steve Haslett (Massey) for conference on Multilevel Modelling (December 2002); Dr Ross Ihaka (Auckland) for visit by John Chambers (Bell Labs); Dr Thomas Yee (Auckland) for visit by Trevor Hastie (Stanford); Dr Ilze Ziedins (Auckland) for visit by Kavita Ramanan (Lucent Technologies).

The NZIMA is now calling for a second round of proposals for programmes (for 2004-05); applications for Maclaurin fellowships (for 2004); postgraduate scholarships and small grants (for 2003-04). Application deadlines (all 2003) are as follows:

31 Jan: NZIMA postgraduate scholarships;

31 Jan: NZIMA small grants;

15 Mar: Preliminary proposals for NZIMA programmes (for 2004 and 2005);

15 Mar: Maclaurin Fellowships (for 2004).

For contact details (including formats) see the NZIMA website <http://www.nzima.auckland.ac.nz/>.

New Zealand Needs Mathematics Graduates

The Weekend Herald, February 22-23 reported that Professor John Hattie, Professor of Education at the University of Auckland, stated in a speech delivered at the 2003 Knowledge Wave Conference that “graduates in science and maths were among the highest in the ranks of unemployed university graduates. Boosting their numbers might simply drive more of them overseas.” Further, the New Zealand Herald Editorial of February 25 suggests “there is not much call for more of them unless the science or technology industry grows”.

Firstly, Professor Hattie’s remarks do not necessarily reflect what is actually happening in the country. I believe that he may have misinterpreted the figures from the “University Graduate Destinations” Reports produced by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors’ Committee. Secondly, we have a major problem in that the country is producing too few graduates in the quantitative areas and little is being done to alleviate the situation.

Let’s focus on Maths/Operations Research (OR) and Statistics graduates (fields that interest me!) and delve a little more deeply. I’ll compare some figures [percentage of students graduating in the given year in the given group for the next year - ‘Not employed’ and ‘Full-time study’ are not mutually exclusive - Ed] from the NZVCC reports from the last four years(<http://www.nzvcc.ac.nz/pubs/UGD2001.pdf>, etc) :

%	1997	1998	1999	2000
Fulltime Employment:				
Mathematics/OR	34.07	46.77	18.00	38.36
Statistics	37.14	44.44	31.58	50.00
All Bach & Hons	54.02	52.75	49.56	55.40
Not Employed:				
Mathematics/OR	32.97	22.58	38.00	36.99
Statistics	37.14	33.33	36.84	12.50
All Bach & Hons	22.11	23.42	24.24	21.58
Fulltime Study:				
Mathematics/OR	51.65	41.94	60.00	47.95
Statistics	25.71	44.44	52.63	62.50
All Bach & Hons	31.02	32.59	36.03	31.78

One of the problems is that while Maths and OR graduates superficially appear to have higher unemployment rates than other graduates they also have a much higher rate of being involved in “Fulltime study” than other disciplines. The NZVCC reports combine both Bachelors and Honours graduates - in many disciplines students leave university as soon as they can after a Bachelors degree while in the Maths area in particular many continue for an Honours degree or an additional qualification that makes them much more employable.

In a major report for MoRST that I was involved with in 1998 we pointed out that NZ has a low percentage of total graduates in the maths & the computing sciences (0.8% compared to an average of 3.5% for OECD countries in 1996), poor performance in our schools (evidenced in the Third International Mathematics and Science study in 1997), a shortage of Mathematics teachers, a diminished research capacity in our CRIs, and mathematics is generally undervalued and under-utilised in NZ business and government. Yet Mathematics directly underpins a significant proportion (often over 50%) of total business and government activity.

Last week I attended a seminar delivered by the Government Statistician, Mr Brian Pink, on “Some Challenges for Official Statistics” at Massey University, Palmerston North. Let me quote direct from his overheads on one of those challenges: “Shortage of Quantitative Skills”

- Demand within Government now obviously exceeds supply;
- Premium for skills in the marketplace;
- Major capability challenge for the sector;
- Impacting very specifically on Statistics New Zealand capability;
- No real signs of an increased supply from within New Zealand.

I questioned him as to his requirements and he spoke of the need for around 25 graduates a year (preferably at Honours level).

The rather superficial comment attributed to Professor Hattie unfortunately gives the public the perception that the country does not need mathematicians and quantitatively trained graduates. To the contrary we have a major national problem with diminished capabilities because of a lack of graduates in these areas.

*Professor Jeffrey J Hunter
Massey University, Albany Campus, Auckland*

Blackwell Synergy and ANZJS

We'd like to give you some more information about Blackwell Synergy, Blackwell Publishing's advanced online journal platform, since the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics will be available on Blackwell Synergy from 2003.

Blackwell Synergy is a simple, user-friendly and up-to-date means of accessing original peer-reviewed research online. Blackwell Synergy incorporates state-of-the-art features and functionality designed to improve the quality of research time, and so is very popular amongst both researchers and librarians. Note that this is in addition to StatsWeb access for members described in the last newsletter (<http://nzsa.rsnz.govt.nz/Newsletter56/journal.htm#StatsWeb>).

To use Blackwell Synergy follow these steps:

- * Go to www.blackwell-synergy.com
- * Click on a subject area you are interested in, then a specific journal in that area.
- * Each journal has a free sample issue available. After choosing a specific journal, you will be taken to a page titled 'List of Issues'. Ensure that the drop down box in the middle of the page shows 'Free Sample Issue', then click the 'Go' button beside it.
- * Access these sample articles by clicking on the blue buttons throughout the table of contents.

Blackwell Synergy has the capability of presenting journals in both HTML and PDF formats, but for the immediate future Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics will be available in PDF format only.

We are very excited about moving your journal to Blackwell Synergy, as it offers superior features to many other services. Since it is Blackwell Publishing's own service, we retain greater control over the journal's content and can generate detailed usage statistics. However, we will continue our policy of making your journal available through other online journal services, such as Ingenta, Ebsco Online and Swets Wise.

As content for ANZJS becomes available, we will be in contact again to establish all Editorial Board and Council members with individual access to it. In the longer term, there are several options for establishing society members with access. In the meantime, you may notice the Blackwell Synergy logo appearing on 2003 marketing materials and on the proofs of your first 2003 issue.

If you have any questions regarding Blackwell Synergy, or the online availability of ANZJS in general, please do not hesitate to contact me (Jennifer.McDonald@blackwellpublishingasia.com).

Jennifer McDonald

New members

A warm welcome to new members of the NZSA
Andy Smith Arunas Verbyla Dinu Corbu
Estate Khmaladze Darryl MacKenzie
Helen Blayney Markus Neuhäuser

Join the NZSA

A membership application form is available at
<http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/nzsa/form.shtml>

I received feedback on the last newsletter enquiring about the reference in Tony Aldridge's 'Local News' to *Six Sigma*, what does it mean? Is it the ± 3 standard deviations we know and love? And so I asked Tony for this background.

Roger

Background on Six Sigma

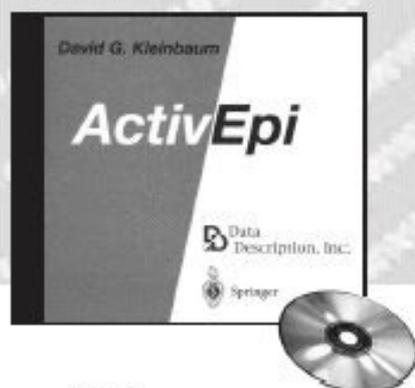
Six Sigma is a structured method for removing variation out of business operations. It's becoming more widespread with industry despite the start-up costs and commitment required. Statistical tools are key to Six Sigma and are tied to a logical sequence that one could loosely describe as a scientific approach. The sequence consists of the steps: Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, and Control, which are often referred through the acronym DMAIC.

Many statisticians have been through various problem solving methods, so one could reasonably ask "what's different about Six Sigma?" To me, there is greater emphasis on the quantifying of present costs, the stress and strain being experienced, and the setting of achievable goals. Next difference is the structure behind making sure the expected improvements have occurred - that is, there has been a sustained and significant shift in one or more measurements (called metrics in Six Sigma). Finally, I've noticed that worthwhile projects do get the support and funding required to achieve success. That is, not the usual increase in workload, or the "when spare-time available" efforts of many businesses.

Data and its analysis feature a lot in the decision making of Six Sigma - components of variance, repeatability, reproducibility, and experimental design are just part of a huge list of required tools for those who participate. For those who wish to learn more about Six Sigma, there are book reviews in recent issues of *Technometrics*, case studies in *Quality Engineering*, and no doubt useful sites to be found through the internet.

Tony Aldridge

Springer for *Statistics*



D. G. Kleinbaum,

ActivEpi

ActivEpi is a complete multimedia presentation on CD-ROM of the material commonly found in an introductory epidemiology course. It incorporates video, narration, animation, text, and interactivity into a self-paced learning environment.

ActivEpi includes 15 lessons and over 50 hours of content via more than 250 launchable activities and homework exercises. It can be used in a variety of teaching formats: distance learning, self-paced learning, on-campus courses, and short courses.

Runs on both Macintosh and Windows computers.

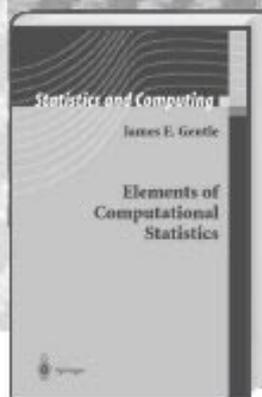
2003. CD-ROM in jewel case. € 74,95; sFr 135,00; £ 52,50 ISBN 0-387-14257-6

D. G. Kleinbaum, K. Sullivan, N. Barker

ActivEpi Companion Textbook

Contains the content of the ActivEpi CD-ROM plus additional exercises and an appendix on computer packages.

2003. 528 p. Softcover € 39,95; sFr 68,50; £ 28,00 ISBN 0-387-95574-7



J. E. Gentle

Elements of Computational Statistics

This book describes techniques used in computational statistics and considers some of the areas of applications, such as density estimation and model building, in which computationally intensive methods are useful. In computational statistics, computation is viewed as an instrument of discovery; the role of the computer is not just to store data, perform computations, and produce graphs and tables, but additionally to suggest to the scientist alternative models and theories.

2002. XVIII, 420 p. 86 illus. (Statistics and Computing) Hardcover € 79,95; sFr 133,00; £ 56,00 ISBN 0-387-95489-9

H. Toutenburg ^{2nd Edition} Statistical Analysis of Designed Experiments

Unique in commencing with relatively simple statistical concepts and ideas found in most introductory statistical textbooks, this book goes on to cover more material useful for undergraduates and graduate in statistics and biostatistics.

2nd ed. 2002. XV, 500 p. (Springer Texts in Statistics) Hardcover € 79,95; sFr 133,00; £ 56,00 ISBN 0-387-98789-4



E. Zivot, J. Wang

Modeling Financial Time Series with S-PLUS

The field of financial econometrics has exploded over the last decade. This book represents an integration of theory, methods, and examples using the S-PLUS statistical modeling language and the S+FinMetrics module to facilitate the practice of financial econometrics. This is the first book to show the power of S-PLUS for the analysis of time series data. Written for researchers and practitioners in the finance industry, academic researchers in economics and finance, and advanced MBA and graduate students in economics and finance.

2003. XIX, 632 p. Softcover € 59,95; sFr 99,50; £ 42,00 ISBN 0-387-95549-6

L. Györfi, M. Kohler, A. Krzyzak, H. Walk

A Distribution-Free Theory of Nonparametric Regression

The authors provide a systematic in-depth analysis of nonparametric regression with random design. The book covers almost all known estimates. The emphasis is on distribution-free properties of the estimates.

2002. XVI, 647 p. 86 illus. (Springer Series in Statistics) Hardcover € 89,95; sFr 149,50; £ 63,00 ISBN 0-387-95441-4

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<http://www.springer.de/statistic/>



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Statistics Education News



The International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) is already planning activities for the 55th Session of the ISI, Sydney, Australia, April 5-12, 2005. There may still be time to propose an Education Session for ISI-55. Chris Wild is Chair of the IASE Programme Committee, which is in charge of preparing a list of Invited Paper Meetings to be organised by the IASE alone or in co-operation with other ISI Sections, Committees and sister societies. The committee will pay special attention to new topics that have been not discussed at previous ISI Sessions. Those who want to participate as organisers and have good ideas about possible topics, please email Chris Wild at c.wild@auckland.ac.nz.

The editorial board of the Statistics Education Research Journal (SERJ) is pleased to announce that the second issue of volume 1 was published in December 2002. This is the electronic research journal of the International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) and initially it is being published twice a year. The board is also pleased to announce that the Executive Committee and Council of the ISI have approved its request that SERJ is to be a joint publication of the ISI and the IASE. The URL for the SERJ website is <http://fehps.une.edu.au/serj>. Access to issues of SERJ is currently free, so please do visit the site and see what is on offer. Besides refereed papers, there are other features such as reports and announcements of meetings of relevance to statistical education research. If you are interested in and/or involved with statistics education you are encouraged to contribute to SERJ and to join IASE (<http://www.cbs.nl/isi/iase.htm>) if you are not already a member. Full information about the journal, including its aims, guidelines for referees and contributing authors, and a template are available online.

There is a growing list of Statistics Education meetings for people to attend. For a full list see <http://www.swin.edu.au/math/iase/conferences2.html>. Some of these meetings are:

Feb 28 - Mar 3, 2003 Stochastic Thinking Group at the Third Conference of the European Society for Research in Mathematics Education (CERME 3), Bellaria, Italy. <http://fibonacci.dm.unipi.it/~didattica/CERME3/>

June 5-8, 2003 Hawaii International Conference on Statistics and Related fields. <http://www.hicstatistics.org/>

July 7-10, 2003. IASI Inter-American Statistical Institute: IX Seminar on Applied Statistics: "Statistics in Education and Education in Statistics" Rio de Janeiro. http://www.indec.mecon.ar/proyectos/iasi_ingles/act_seminarios.htm

July 13 - 18, 2003. PME 27th conference. Honolulu, Hawaii. <http://igpme.tripod.com/hawaii2003.html>

July 23-28, 2003, SRTL-3 International Research Forum: Reasoning about Variability. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA. <http://tc.unl.edu/srtl/>

August 3 - 7, 2003 · JSM San Francisco, California. <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2003/>

August 11-12, 2003 IASE Satellite Conference on Statistics Education and the Internet, Berlin. <http://www.ph-ludwigsburg.de/iase/>

August 13-20, 2003 ISI, 54th Biennial Session Berlin. <http://www.isi-2003.de/>

The International Statistical Literacy Project (ISLP) website is now available. The ISLP homepage is accessible to the public and is located at <http://course1.winona.edu/cblumberg/islphome.htm>. As part of the ISLP, webpages have been developed on resources for enhancing the statistical literacy of various groups at all age levels, including the primary and secondary school levels. An index to these resource pages is at <http://course1.winona.edu/cblumberg/islplist.htm>. Any suggestions for additions to this list will be welcome. For further information contact Carol Blumberg at cblumberg@winona.edu or at Department of Mathematics & Statistics, Winona State University, Winona MN 55987-5838 USA, Fax: +1-507-457-5376.

Delta '03 (Fourth Southern Hemisphere Conference on Undergraduate Mathematics Teaching) will be held in Queenstown from 23-27 November 2003. A statistics strand is being organised with Chris Wild as plenary speaker. For more information see: www.maths.otago.ac.nz/delta03.

Megan Jowsey has been awarded a Royal Society Teacher Fellowship in 2003 to help set up a School Census project (www.censusatschool.org.nz) in New Zealand. The CensusAtSchool project was started in the UK based on a trial project by Dr Sharleen Forbes, SNZ. The RSS Centre for Statistical Education began the project in 2000 with the main aims of providing students with real data and of increasing awareness of the national census. It is becoming an international teaching and learning resource with projects already underway in South Africa, Queensland, and South Australia. Megan is based in the Department of Statistics at University of Auckland and can be contacted at: jowsey@stat.auckland.ac.nz.

Maxine Pfannkuch

Conference Brief

See Gordon Smyth's Australasian conference list

<http://www.statsci.org/conf/index.html>

Details for planned conferences and workshops are given below.

Popular Methods for Supervised Learning - One Day Workshop

McMeekan Centre, Ruakura, Hamilton, NZ

3 April, 2003

Leader: Trevor Hastie

Web: www.stats.waikato.ac.nz

Email: harold.henderson@agresearch.co.nz

Analysis of Repeated Categorical Measurement Data - One Day Workshop

School of Mathematical and Computing Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington, NZ

15 April, 2003

Leader: Alan Agresti

Registration Date: April 7, 2003

Web: www.mcs.vuw.ac.nz/events/workshop03

Email: iliu@mcs.vuw.ac.nz

New Zealand Statistical Association Conference 2003

Massey University, Palmerston North, NZ

2-4 July, 2003

Web: www-ist.massey.ac.nz/stats/nzsa2003

Email: HedderleyD@crop.cri.nz

Satellite Workshop: Small Area Estimation in National Surveys

1 July, 2003

Leader: Nick Longford

Email: s.j.haslett@massey.ac.nz

Southern Institute in Statistical Genetics

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

14-18 July, 2003

Leader: Bruce Weir

Web: statgen.ncsu.edu/statgen/sum_melbourne.html

Email: hibbard@stat.ncsu.edu

12th International Workshop on Matrices and Statistics

Dortmund, Germany

5-8 August, 2003

Web: www.statistik.uni-dortmund.de/IWMS/main.html

Email: werner@united.econ.uni-bonn.de

Delta '03 - Fourth Southern Hemisphere Symposium on Undergraduate Mathematics Teaching

Rydges, Queenstown, NZ

23-27 November, 2003

Web: www.maths.otago.ac.nz/delta03

Email: igoodwin@maths.otago.ac.nz

Second Asia Pacific Bioinformatics Conference

Dunedin

18-22 January, 2004

Web: www.fit.qut.edu.au/~chenp/APBC2004

Deadline for submission of papers: 5 Sept, 2003

International Biometric Conference and Australian Statistical Conference

Cairns Convention Centre

July 11-16, 2004

Web: www.ozacom.com.au/ibc2004

Email: cairns2004@ozacom.com.au

International Statistical Institute Conference

Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre

April 5-12, 2005

Web: www.tourhosts.com.au/isi2005

Email: isi2005@tourhosts.com.au



Fourth Southern Hemisphere Symposium on Undergraduate Mathematics Teaching

Rydges, Queenstown, New Zealand

23-27 November, 2003

FROM ALL ANGLES

Programme includes four panels on the topics of Bridging Courses, Undergraduate Issues, Teaching Statistics, and the Uses of Technology.

Plenary speakers

- * Prof Johann Engelbrecht (U. Pretoria)
- * Professor Anna Sierpinska (Concordia U.)
- * Professor Lynn Steen (Minnesota)
- * Professor Chris Wild (U. Auckland)

Submission of Abstracts - Final Date April 30th
Early-bird registration - Final Date July 31st

Web: www.maths.otago.ac.nz/delta03

Email: igoodwin@maths.otago.ac.nz

Workshop Details

Popular Methods for Supervised Learning

Venue: McMeekan Centre, Ruakura, Hamilton

3 April, 2003

Presenter

Professor Trevor Hastie, Stanford University, California



Trevor Hastie was born in South Africa in 1953. He received his university education from Rhodes University, South Africa (BS), University of Cape Town (MS), and Stanford University

(PhD Statistics 1984). After graduating he returned to South Africa for a year, and then returned in March 1986 to the US and joined the statistics and data analysis research group at what was then AT&T Bell Laboratories. After 9 enjoyable years at Bell Labs, he returned to Stanford University in 1994 as Professor in Statistics and Biostatistics. His main research contributions have been in the field of applied nonparametric regression and classification, and he has written two books in this area: “Generalized Additive Models” (with R. Tibshirani), and “Elements of Statistical Learning” (with R. Tibshirani and J. Friedman). He has also made contributions in statistical computing, co-editing (with J. Chambers) a large software library on modelling tools in the S-plus language (“Statistical Models in S”). His current research focuses on applied problems in biology and genomics, medicine and industry, in particular data mining, prediction and classification problems.

Abstract

Two technologies are on the frontiers of supervised learning: Boosting and Support Vector Machines. In this workshop, I will describe the essence of each from the point of view of a statistician. At the end of the day, we will find that they have a lot in common with techniques more familiar in statistics, such as logistic regression and regularized model search procedures. Indeed, we will find that boosting and SVMs have a lot in common with each other.

Registration

Register online at <http://www.stats.waikato.ac.nz/>

The programme starts at 9:15 with an introduction to Data Mining by Dr Thomas Yee (University of

Auckland), followed by sessions on Boosting and SVMs with Trevor Hastie. The workshop ends at 4:30 pm, leading on to a group booking at the Station for drinks and dinner.

Cost: \$100 including dinner, or \$75 without dinner.

Webpage http://www.stats.waikato.ac.nz/hastie_workshop.html

Contact harold.henderson@agresearch.co.nz

Analysis of Repeated Categorical Measurement Data

Venue: School of Mathematical and Computing Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

15 April, 2003

Presenter

Distinguished Professor Alan Agresti, University of Florida

Prof Agresti is internationally renowned for his work with categorical data. He is the author of “Categorical Data Analysis”, “An Introduction to Categorical Data Analysis”, “Analysis of Ordinal Categorical Data” and coauthor of “Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences”.



Prof Agresti is the Shayle R. Searle Visiting Fellow in Statistics for 2003. We are most grateful to Emeritus Prof Searle for making this visit possible.

Topics

1. Models for Matched Pairs
2. Marginal Models
3. Conditional Models: GLMs with Random Effects

Registration

The registration fee, covering lunch, is NZ\$100 (free of GST), payable in cash or cheque upon arrival at the workshop. Students with current student ID are free of charge.

Please register through the workshop webpage or Ivy Liu (iliu@mcs.vuw.ac.nz) before April 7, 2003.

Webpage

<http://www.mcs.vuw.ac.nz/events/workshop03>

Contact iliu@mcs.vuw.ac.nz

A Secondary Teacher's View



April Patrick teaches Mathematics at Otago Boys High School, Dunedin Last year I made use of a Teacher's Study Award to undertake a post-graduate diploma in applied statistics at Otago University. As someone who teaches maths and statistics to secondary students it was a great opportunity to upskill in statistics and become more computer literate. As the diploma also involves statistical practice I was lucky enough to work with Peter Johnstone and Roger Littlejohn at Invermay.

Peter introduced me to CAST-computer assisted statistics learning - developed by Doug Stirling at Massey. We have now added CAST to our computer network at Otago Boys. I am looking forward to using it with my Year 13 statistics students. At the moment we spend one period a week in the computer room. So far we are exploring what we can do in statistics with Excel, which I must admit after my year at Otago is a lot more than I thought.

Also at Invermay I had the opportunity to observe Roger working in a consulting capacity with scientists. It was fascinating as well as very insightful to see statistician and scientist working together around a computer screen. I have gained a new perspective into how statisticians actually work which I hope will rub off in my teaching.

At Otago I was the first statistics teacher to make use of a Teacher's Study Award to do a post-graduate diploma in applied statistics. When this diploma was set up it was thought it would appeal to teachers. It is good to hear that another maths teacher is doing the course this year. I would certainly recommend it to anyone thinking of doing it. There is a wide variety of papers from different subject areas that you can choose from. I particularly enjoyed the Public Health paper Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

With Level 3 NCEA to be introduced next year I hope more teachers consider doing this very enjoyable and worthwhile diploma.

April Patrick

SEEM4

The fourth conference on Statistics in Ecology and Environmental Monitoring took place at the University of Otago during the week 9-13 December 2002. The theme was "Population Dynamics: The Interface Between Models and Data", the aim being to bring

together ecologists, statisticians, fisheries scientists and modellers in order to discuss common issues in the modelling of population dynamics. The invited speakers were Hal Caswell (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, USA), Jean-Dominique Lebreton (Centre for Functional and Evolutionary Ecology, CNRS, Montpellier, France) and Byron Morgan (University of Kent, UK). Approximately 80 delegates took part, coming from Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand. There was a good mix of ecologists, applied statisticians and modellers. In addition, 25 delegates took part in a three-day workshop on matrix population models held prior to the conference, run by Hal Caswell and Jean-Dominique Lebreton. The conference proceedings will appear in a forthcoming issue of the ANZJS. As is usual with smaller conferences, there was plenty of opportunity for people to interact in a way that is not possible at larger events. We are now looking forward to the next conference in 2005.

David Fletcher

NZSA Campbell Award

This award was initiated in 1999 to promote statistics within NZ and to recognise an individual's contribution to the promotion and development of statistics. The first recipient was Stan Roberts. Stan will be remembered most recently for his efforts in the NZ statistics history project. The award was given to him at the conference in Wellington in 1999. The second recipient was Murray Jorgenson and the award was given to him at the conference in Christchurch in 2001.

We are now calling for nominations for the 2003 NZSA Campbell Award. The presentation will be made at the July conference in Palmerston North (see newsletter for details). The recipient of the award need not be attending the conference.

The criteria for the award are:

- i) publishing the best, recent, original statistical research undertaken within NZ, or,
- ii) making an outstanding contribution to statistical education, or,
- iii) playing a key role in consulting on a major, innovative research project that has direct relevance to NZ, or,
- iv) making a significant contribution to promoting statistics within NZ.

One point worth noting is that the award may only be given to fully paid up members of the NZSA. All membership categories are eligible. This could be a way of encouraging new members - promise new members that they *may* one day be given an award!

Please send your nominations to Jennifer Brown (J.Brown@math.canterbury.ac.nz) or Steve Haslett (S.J.Haslett@massey.ac.nz)

Local Scene

Crop and Food Research

It's been an eventful few months at Crop and Food Research. Duncan Hedderley (right) started work at Crop and Food the week after the Australasian GenStat conference, but he managed to make it to the multi-level modelling workshop held at Massey University, along with Andrew Wallace. A good time was had by all at their respective conferences and workshops (the multi-level modelling workshop at Massey was somewhat lacking in sun and sand, though).



Andrew was impressed with the course, and writes "at last there is a mainstream GUI-enabled computational tool for implementing the MCMC approach to hierarchical modelling problems, able to cope with the complications of real world situations". Andrew also learned some new acronyms on the course, some of which were quite unfortunate and not fit for repetition in this reputable newsletter. Ruth Butler describes the GenStat conference as "the best ever", and says presentations on spatial statistics, developments in genetics, and renewing old contacts were special highlights.

John Koolaard will be lecturing for half a semester in a third-year course on multivariate statistics, at Massey University. All three biometricians in Palmerston North are making regular treks over to Massey, helping to organise the upcoming NZSA conference there in July. As conference secretary, Duncan is assiduously passing on correspondence to other committee members. Maaïke Bendall is organising a function for students and recent graduates, and John will undoubtedly be stuffing satchels in his role of 'local organiser'.

Maaïke Bendall

Massey University, Albany Campus

The statisticians at Massey's Albany campus have moved to a brand new building. Continuing growth in student and staff numbers at Albany meant that the Institute of Information and Mathematical Sciences could no longer fit in its existing location, so Statistics, Mathematics and Information Engineering have all moved into the new "IIMS" building. An

added bonus is that the campus library has also moved into an adjacent new building, so now browsing in print is almost as easy as browsing online (formerly it was a 10 minute walk to the library). Howard Edwards has stayed behind with Computer Science and Information Systems, wearing his other hat of Programme Director for the Information Sciences. However he is a regular visitor and so far has managed to avoid the Auckland showers while walking between buildings.

Paul Bracewell passed his PhD oral examination with emendation. He has also been working for Team NZ (Weather Team) and setting up a sport statistics unit delivering match statistics to the media in a joint venture between Offlode (a data mining company) and Massey University. Paul has also just been appointed to a one-year lectureship here.

Kathy Ruggiero has just returned from a three month sabbatical in Melbourne, conducting research on the design and analysis of microarray experiments. Research time was spent at La Trobe University, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (WEHI) of Medical Research and the Victorian Institute of Animal Science (VIAS). Kathy also visited the Plant Biotechnology Centre (Agriculture Victoria) and attended a workshop in Perth on "Statistics for Microarray Data Analysis". A good portion of her last six weeks in Melbourne was spent working with Kym Butler, senior biometrician with Agriculture Victoria and a former colleague, developing a small catalogue of experimental designs suitable for spotted cDNA microarray experiments.



Albany Stats Group on the Open Day. From left to right: Barry McDonald, Tasos Tsoularis, Paul Cowpertwait, Kathy Ruggiero, Howard Edwards, Paul Bracewell, Jeff Hunter. (The T-Shirts were designed by Paul Bracewell and Kathy and read: "We're into Deviance" (front) & "Team Stats" (back)). Those keen to win a chocolate fish were encouraged to guess probabilities and roll the dice ("heads will roll" (bottom left)).

Jeff Hunter is now getting into the swing of teaching after having stepped aside from being Head of the Institute last year. However, before starting teaching he was granted two periods of “duties overseas”; one was spent at the Department of Statistics of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the second at the Department of Statistics, University of Oxford, but included visits to both the University of Nottingham and University College London (initiating, respectively, collaborative research with Professors Frank Ball and Val Isham). Jeff is also coordinating a review of our stats major programme.

Denny Meyer is currently on study leave and is working with Rob Hyndman in the Econometrics Department at Monash University.

I’ve also been on study leave in Dunedin (which initiated some collaborative work with Peter Whigham in Information Sciences on spatial modelling). In addition, I’m taking leave to work in Adelaide with a former colleague in the area of statistical hydrology.

Finally, we had a successful campus open day last semester in which “Team Stats” played a crucial role (see picture on page 11).

Paul Cowpertwait

AgResearch

The GenStat conference in Western Australia was attended by five AgResearch biometricians, comprising 80% of the South Island biometricians plus Zaneta Park-Ng as the representative of the smaller northern isle. Busselton, on the coast south of Perth, was a very pleasant venue, and the 80 attendees had a great time, being stimulated scientifically by the varied talks and socially by local entities such as humpback whales, wineries and even a solar eclipse.



David Baird, Murray Hannah, Maaike Bendall and Roger Littlejohn (left to right) are among those watching a projection of the solar eclipse through Roger Payne’s telescope

David Baird was an invited speaker, talking on “Updates to the GenStat spreadsheet and data manipulation in Release 6” and “Using GenStat for microarray analysis.” Peter Johnstone talked on “A procedure to randomly generate 1 and 2 dimensional designs for blocks of natural size,” Roger Littlejohn on “A GenStat procedure for population genetic data analysis” and Dave Saville on “Multiple comparison procedures: consistency and family-size robustness.” After the Conference, David Baird took off to work on GenStat at VSN in England over the summer, also stopping off in Bangladesh, China and Korea on the way.

Benoît Auvray has started a two year appointment working with Ken Dodds on linkage disequilibrium mapping of quantitative traits in sheep. The project is funded by Ovita and he is based at Invermay. Benoît comes from Belgium and has a background in computing for animal breeding applications.

Gwenda Hill, who is Head of Mathematics at The Taieri High School, has a Royal Society teaching fellowship and is working with the Invermay biometrics staff this year. She has been teaching for 28 years and is enjoying the opportunity to observe some of the applications of statistics. The CAST program, written by Doug Stirling, is one of the things that Gwenda is interested in studying, with a view to writing guidelines so that this interactive program can be used in secondary schools. Gwenda was an inaugural recipient of the Jim Campbell Award presented by the NZ Association of Mathematics Teachers and the NZ Mathematics Society for Excellence in Teaching. Last year she had a book published. This book, “Units in Maths,” is designed for students who need basic arithmetic skills development and helps them earn credits towards their National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and National Certificate of Employment Skills.

The AgResearch group’s annual 3-day “get-together” will be in April at Ruakura and will wrap around the workshop by Trevor Hastie (note that the word “retreat” has been superseded following the debate in the last newsletter about whether the word “advance” would be more appropriate). This is an occasion for discussing issues of mutual concern, organising fresh initiatives, giving morning talks to each other, and meeting newcomers such as Katarina Domijan (above), Benoît Auvray and Gwenda Hill.



Dave Saville

Statistics Research Associates

Last year saw Alistair Gray join Robert Davies, Peter Thomson, and the two Davids (Vere-Jones and Harte) as full Associates, and Ray Brownrigg join as a Consulting Associate, willing to be called upon in times of need (not too frequent, we hope). The group meets once a week in the Royal Society's rooms, and in this way has avoided the issue of acquiring a real rather than a virtual office.

Activities continue at a rather hectic pace, the current environment creating more work than money it often seems, although the financial side continues healthy under Robert's scrupulous eye. Peter flits to and fro across the Tasman when he is not flitting to and fro across Cook Strait, attending Statistical and Econometric Society Meetings in Australia, and continuing his consulting work with CSIRO. Last year he also visited Tokyo twice, as an invited speaker at Conferences on seasonal time series and financial statistics. His other main consulting work was with Treasury (various studies) and Telecom (joint work with Alistair Gray on proposed TSO (i.e. the old Kiwi-Share) methodology).

The two Davids both celebrated the appearance of books, David Harte's book on Multifractals and Vol 1 of the second edition of David V-J's monograph with Daryl Daley on Point Processes. Earthquake projects with IGNS (FRST-funded) and Marsden ate up a fair amount of time for both.

Together with Mark Bebbington they were invited speakers at a Workshop on point processes and seismology run by the IMA (Institute of Mathematics and its Applications) in Minneapolis, giving a variety of talks and seminars on the side. David Vere-Jones also visited ANU to work with Daryl Daley, and in November went to Taiwan and Tokyo to lecture on point processes and earthquakes, and join in discussions of the significance of ionospheric disturbances as possible precursors of large earthquakes in the Taiwan region.

Apart from the earthquake contracts and Peter's teaching commitments at Victoria and Auckland, the main consulting work of the group stems from former and current government departments. Robert's main clients were Opus International Consultants (formerly part of Ministry of Works and Development), where he has been advising on methods for segmentation of the State Highway network and modelling rutting, roughness, texture and skid resistance of road

surfaces, and the New Zealand Lotteries Commission. Alastair has worked on survey design projects for the Department of Labour (children and work study), Ministry of Social Development (living standards surveys), Ministry of Health (impact of oversampling of ethnic groups), Ministry of Tourism (review of core data sets) C.Y.F (forecasting youth justice beds) and Telecom.

David Vere-Jones

Massey University, Palmerston North

We appointed three new lecturers at the end of 2002. David Alexander and Jonathan Godfrey are both in the final stages of their PhDs at Massey. Alasdair Noble, also in the final stages of his PhD, has been on a succession of fixed-term contracts here before finally achieving permanence. Part of Alasdair's work will be in the Statistical Research and Consulting Centre as a replacement for Duncan Hedderley, who after several years' sterling service has joined Crop and Food in Palmerston North.

Steve Haslett has continued to commute between Washington, Cardiff and Thailand, showing up occasionally in Palmerston North. He and Alasdair, together with the Epicentre, organised an enjoyable and well-attended workshop on Multi-level Modelling in December, presented by Bill Browne and David Draper.

Ganesalingam is still in Oman, but is planning to return in September or October, just after the teaching stops. Someone should have told him about Semester 3.

After returning early from sabbatical for the birth of his twins, Mark Bebbington returned to the US to 'pick up a few threads' or, for the cynical, get a few good nights sleep without 3 am feeds. He also somehow found time to present an invited paper at the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco, and to visit the US Geological Survey in Pasadena, also giving a seminar at the seismological laboratory at CalTech.



Chin Diew Lai (left) is continuing to fulfil the strenuous and largely thankless role of Subject Leader in addition to his usual duties, and is looking forward even more than the rest of us to the appointment of a new Professor.

Geoff Jones

University of Auckland, Tamaki Campus

We're all adjusting to teaching again this week, except for Marti Anderson who is on sabbatical this semester. Marti is still keeping busy, and will be off to Italy later this month to give a multivariate workshop, and then will repeat the process in June.

Marti and Russell Millar went to the SEEM4 conference in Dunedin in December, and enjoyed catching up with old friends and colleagues down there. They were very impressed by the number of overseas delegates attending, including some "conference classics" such as Malcolm Faddy ("Classic in Action" below). The standard of talks



was mixed, but there were certainly enough good ones to make it a very worthwhile conference and they are looking forward to SEEM5. After SEEM4 Marti and Russell did the Milford Track. It didn't rain all the time - they got hail, sleet and snow too!

Tamaki folk did well with promotions this year. Ross Parsonage and Mike Forster were promoted to senior tutors (or super tutors as we prefer to say), Thomas Yee to Senior Lecturer, and Russell Millar to Associate Professor. Chris Triggs has taken on the role of Assistant Dean of Science for Tamaki Campus, and now finds himself spending more time at the City Campus in meetings! Alan Lee has now taken up residence at Tamaki, having passed on the baton of HOD to Chris Wild.

On the student front, doctoral student Arier Lee and husband Phal had a baby boy, Prasitt in October last year. Postdoc Trevor Willis is now at the Università di Bologna in Ravenna on a 3-year postdoc. He reports that the single-malt whiskey is considerable cheaper there than at our Faculty Club. Joe Helu arrived in February to start doctoral study with Russell in the general area of Bayesian fisheries models. Joe came from Seattle, but is originally from Tonga and plans to return to Tonga to assist with their fisheries management upon completing his PhD.

Russell Millar

University of Auckland, City Campus

In the City Campus there has been a great flurry of activity with the opening of a new building for Statistics, Computer Science, and Mathematics, adjoining our existing accommodation. Several staff have moved into the new building, and the competition among graduate students for space in the new Grad Room has provided some interesting insights for the statistical ecologists among us. Meanwhile, the department has had a change of leadership, with Chris Wild taking over from Alan Lee as Head of Department. Chris got his headship off to a flying start by organizing a day-long departmental retreat to the Tamaki Campus, to discuss future schemes and directions. Despite some initial disappointment that the advantages of Waiheke Island vineyards as potential retreat venues had been overlooked, the day turned out to be profitable and stimulating. The department took the opportunity to thank Alan Lee for his exceptional contributions and endlessly cheerful style over the last six years as department head.

We have welcomed several new arrivals recently. Yong Wang joins us as a lecturer, after completing a PhD in Computer Science at the University of Waikato. Michael Wu has joined the technical staff for programming and computer support. New PhD students include Chris Gooch, working on statistical ecology with Brian McArdle; Kristy Su, investigating internet traffic control with Ilze Ziedens; Richard Umstaetter, to work with Renate Meyer on a Marsden-funded project looking at Bayesian analysis of astrophysical data; and James Russell, working jointly with Rachel Fewster, the Department of Conservation, and Mick Clout of the School of Biological Sciences, on a DoC-funded project to study invasion ecology of rats on offshore islands. Marcus Davy is working towards a Masters thesis on microarray analysis with Mik Black. And we are delighted to welcome Andrew Balemi back to the lecturing life, after serving five years of hard labour with market research organization Colmar Brunton.

Visiting the department for the first semester are Brant Deppa, from Winona State University, and Robert Easterling, from the University of Michigan. Keith Worsley from McGill University is visiting for two months, and Kavita Ramanan from Bell Labs has recently completed a three-week trip to work with Ilze Ziedens, who visited Bell Labs in December.

In February, Ross Ihaka and Paul Murrell were joined by Robert Gentleman and Bill Venables to host a two-day Workshop on Advanced S Programming. The workshop had 14 participants from research and

industrial organizations throughout New Zealand. As an added bonus, John Chambers, the designer of the S programming language, visited from Bell Labs to give two talks on the past, present, and future of statistical computing.

Brian McArdle recently spent three weeks in New Caledonia working with scientists at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to investigate the impact of village fisheries on the reef ecosystem in Fiji and Tonga. Brian's visit was funded by the MacArthur Foundation, which also provided luxurious accommodation featuring panoramic views across the island, perfect to enjoy over a cool drink on the verandah as the sun set on yet another idyllic tropical day... (Note that Brian was far too busy to notice any of the above: it is purely journalistic conjecture.)

And finally, congratulations to Renate Meyer and her husband Kevin, for the birth of their bouncing baby boy, Timothy Mervyn, and to PhD students Carl Donovan and Monique Mackenzie, for their wedding on Waiheke Island last November. Monique has since moved to St Andrews, in Scotland, to take up a new lecturing position, where Carl will join her in July. Fittingly, the wedding occurred on St Andrews Day and included the traditional Scottish piper - but the traditional Scottish weather failed to materialize and consequently a great time was had by all.

Rachel Fewster

University of Otago

Our main item of news is that our fourth attempt at filling the vacant Chair in Statistics was unsuccessful and so the position will remain unfilled at least for the immediate future. To help fill the gap in teaching staff Darryl MacKenzie from Proteus Research will teach a large part of our stage 2 design of research studies paper. We also appear to have been successful in convincing our mathematics colleagues of the virtues of statistics: Boris Baeumer will teach one half of the paper 'Probability and Inference 3'. Nick Dudley-Ward (recently University of Auckland and University College London) and Dennis McCaughan taught a Summer School paper called 'Casino Studies' with a focus on applied probability and risk management.

Among good news, Richard Barker celebrated the news late last year of his promotion to Associate Professor and MSc student Lisa Avery celebrated the new year by safely delivering a baby boy.

With the onset of the New Year, Richard Barker and Markus Neuhäuser also started their new tasks as Associate Editor of Biometrics and Communications in Statistics, respectively. In February, Markus visited the first New Zealand Bioinformatics Conference in Wellington. He

presented a paper on 'Exact tests for the analysis of case-control studies of genetic markers'. We are looking forward to the 'Second Asia-Pacific BioInformatics Conference' that will be held in Dunedin in January 2004 (see www.fit.qut.edu.au/~chenp/APBC2004 for further information). John Harraway has been appointed Scientific Secretary for the International Programme Committee for ICOTS-7 (International Conference on Teaching Statistics) which is to be held in Brazil in the summer of 2006. Claire Cameron, currently Senior Teaching Fellow at our department, started to do a PhD under the supervision of Richard Barker.

Prior to the start of the semester, Stefan Steiner (University of Waterloo, Canada) visited the Department and presented the seminar: "An Overview of Statistical Engineering". Furthermore, Jennifer Hoeting and Geoff Givens, both Associate Professor at Colorado State University, visit our department until the end of July.

Prof David Skegg addressed the Otago Local Group of the NZSA November meeting on "Statistics and Epidemiology: A Productive Marriage?", a delightful biographical portrayal of the life and times of the great epidemiologist Sir Austin Bradford Hill.

Markus Neuhäuser

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

The MAF Statistics group has been involved in monitoring and evaluating trends in the primary sector and has contributed to several recent press releases. Full details are given in the online version of the newsletter.

Mieke Wensvoort

University of Canterbury

The new year presents challenges and new vigour as always in statistics at UC. We will be welcoming a new staff member to statistics as of April 2003, Dominic Lee from DSO in Singapore. Dominic has a strong background in mathematical statistics in the areas of engineering, time series and wavelets. He will be a welcome asset to the statistics group in terms of research and teaching - a scholar and a gentleman! He will be joining the Research Centre for Healthcare Technology NZ (CHCTnz) in the statistics department and add to the CHCTnz group of computer scientists, physicists, statisticians, mechanical and bio-engineers, mathematicians, and medical/clinical researchers.

Mike Steel was promoted to a personal Professorial Chair in the end of year 2002 promotions round - well deserved! From mid-2003 Marco Reale will be on study leave, during which he will spend a substantial time researching at the University of

Lancaster. Marco Reale has recently celebrated the birth of his new baby daughter and is on parental leave at the moment. Jennifer Brown is also adding "little feet" to her family mid-year and we wish her well with the birth and with keeping fit and healthy.

In 2003, under a new HOD-ship in the department of mathematics and statistics, Easaw Chacko is the new manager of our departmental finance portfolio - one more role to add to Easaw's many activities. Irene Hudson had an Erskine research study leave in December-January and worked in biometrics, statistics and epidemiology departments at the ANU, UWS and the Universities of Queensland, Melbourne, Wollongong and Monash. Stats staff have attended and presented at numerous conferences: the Royal Statistical Society Conference, Plymouth University (Irene Hudson); SEEM4, University of Otago (Marco Reale, Jennifer Brown and Easaw Chacko); and the 8th Summer Statistics Workshop 2003, Graphical Models, Macquarie University (Marco Reale).

The new Vice Chancellor, Professor Roy Sharp, who hails from Victoria University, Wellington commenced his duties at UC in early March. It is hoped that he will be involved in improving the lot of both arts and sciences on campus.

Irene Hudson

University of Waikato

Things have been relatively quiet in the department lately. Nye John has returned from leave. At the end of his sabbatical he attended the GenStat conference which was held in Busselton, Western Australia. Also attending the conference was Dave Whitaker. Nye and Dave were visited in January by Emlyn Williams from CSIRO, Canberra. Emlyn was relieved to know that his home was not one of the ones destroyed by the disastrous bush fires, but the area he lives in was high risk, and many properties close to his, were.

Bill Bolstad and James Curran are both currently on leave. Bill is working on his book, "Introduction to Bayesian Statistics", which is to be published by Wiley later in the year. James is planning to visit England, where he will work in the Research and Development Unit of the Forensic Science Service. While he is away he hopes to catch up with Alain Vandal in Montreal. James and his wife Karin welcomed their second daughter, Fiona, into their family in October.

Lyn Hunt was visited by Kaye Basford from the University of Queensland in February. Bruce Miller (our part-time tutor) survived teaching our first year statistics course over Summer school.

Judi McWhirter

Victoria University of Wellington

The summer news from the Stats and OR group at VUW is dominated by travel, visitors to Wellington

and event planning. Estate Khmaladze was visited in January by Dr Spiridon Penev from UNSW, Sydney, who gave a talk on his research in wavelet methods. Professor Wolfgang Weil, Director of the Institute of Mathematics, University of Karlsruhe, Germany, will visit VUW from 16 March to 15 April. Prof. Weil is one of the world's leading specialists in differential geometry and he will work with Estate on his Marsden grant on "Local point processes in the neighbourhood of sets". Dr Amparo Baillo, a postdoc from Carlos III University of Madrid, Spain, is visiting VUW from 1 March to 15 June. She is working with Estate on several topics in the spatial change-point area, and will also be involved in work on his Marsden grant. Estate is currently two thirds of the way through a series of six seminars that he is presenting in Wellington on "Martingale Methods in Orthodox Statistics". Estate is also the Programme Chair of the Tbilisi Conference in Probability Theory and Mathematical Statistics, to be held from 22-28 September 2003, devoted to the centenary of the birth of A.N. Kolmogorov. The conference is hosted by the Georgian Academy of Sciences, its A. Razmadze Mathematical Institute and N. Muskhelishvili Institute of Computational Mathematics, jointly with the Georgian Statistical Association.

Megan Clark spent 10 days in the US during February, as an invited guest of the NIH federal programme to increase cultural diversity in the biomedical professions and especially in research in the biomedical area. Given that the mathematical sciences are often an obstacle in this regard, Megan was "head hunted" and given five star treatment as a guest of the University of Kansas and the Haskell Indian Nations University. She evaluated the programmes currently in existence there, made suggestions for alterations and presented a seminar on what is done in NZ (at VUW, in particular). Megan was also involved in many discussions on possible ways forward in that area of research.

Yu Hayakawa visited Dr Paul Yip at the University of Hong Kong and also worked with Dr Liping Liu from Peking University during the summer.

John Haywood spent quite a bit of the summer on parental leave looking after Helen, who arrived safely on 5 December 2002. Helen has been enjoying herself, teaching John and her mum quite a lot about nappies and fluid flow, and also helping to conduct an extensive research program into variable sleep patterns.

John Haywood

See online newsletter for complete story - Ed

How many babies in the Local news? Is this characteristic of the national rate? Prize for best answer to roger.littlejohn@agresearch.co.nz
See nzsa.rsnz.govt.nz/Newsletter57/editorial.htm