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New Zealand Statistical Association
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Newsletter

Number 74

December 2011

NZSA 2011 Conference University of Auckland 28 - 31 August 2011

The 2011 NZSA conference was held in Auckland. James Curran, chair of the local organising committee, writes:

Thanks from the organizing committee to all the members who attended this year's conference in Auckland. You made it a great success. I look forward to seeing many of you again next year in Dunedin. I would also like to formally thank our invited speakers; Nick Fisher, Robert Gentleman, Trevor Hastie, Xihong Lin, and Alan Welsh and our sponsors; University of Auckland, SAS, Hoare Research Software and BNZ.

Student Prizes

Congratulations to the winners of the student prizes, which were generously sponsored by Hoare Research Software:

First

Jing Liu (University of Auckland)

Diffusion approximation and maximum entropy

Second

Adam Smith (Massey University)

Linking zeros to abundance in zero-inflated models of species count data

Third =

Sam McKechnie (University of Auckland)

The potential of life-history models of Coho salmon dynamics

Third =

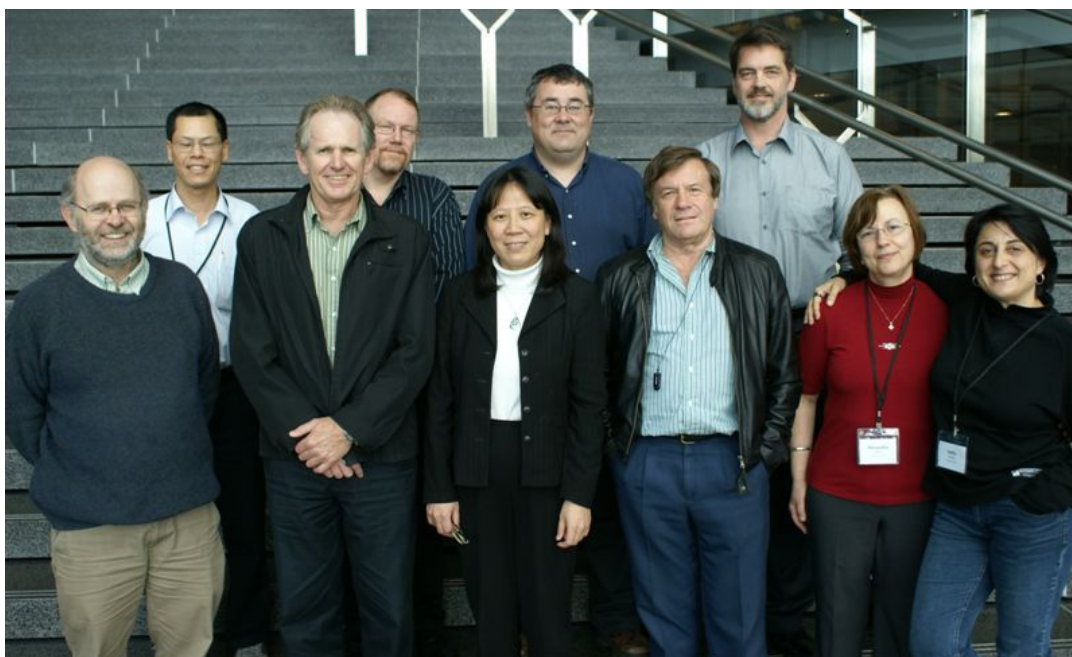
Peter Green (University of Otago)

Sequential analysis of the Moran Process

Student Comments

I would like to thank NZSA for giving us the opportunity to meet new friends and to gather around some of the most successful statisticians in this generation. It was one of the best conferences I have ever attended – a great range of talks, excellent food and even a cash prize for students to grab (special thanks to HRS for that). It simply couldn't have been better.

Jing Liu, University of Auckland



The local organising committee and invited speakers.

Editorial

Welcome to the final NZSA newsletter for 2011. There has been quite a turnover of contributors to the newsletter of late, so on behalf of all readers I would like to thank all those who have provided their time and words so willingly, and extend the warmest of thanks to those who have filled the vacancies. In particular, I would like to pass on my most sincere thanks to outgoing editor Esther Meenken – I never realised how much effort is involved putting this newsletter together until trying to do so myself.

In this issue you will find a brief report from the NZSA 2011 conference held in Auckland. I thought the conference went very smoothly, with a wonderful variety of talks. Congratulations to the student prize-winners, and to joint Campbell Award winners Alastair Scott and Roger Littlejohn. Both of these eminent statisticians have had significant influences on my own career, and I'm sure they have likewise affected many members of the association. In addition, a big thanks to Harold Henderson for providing a magnificent photographic record of the event, which you can find on the NZSA homepage <http://www.stats.org.nz>.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone all the best for the holiday season, and for the start to the new year.

Steven Miller



President's Column

Writing a column as the president of the NZSA, rather than simply tossing a snippet of news to the local newsletter representative, is a new experience I must say, and one that has me wondering what on earth I am going to fill the column space with!

In the first instance I would like to take the opportunity to thank our outgoing president Jennifer Brown and secretary Richard Penny for all the hard work they have put into making the New Zealand Statistical Association a success. Jennifer and Richard always seemed so professional, and so well organized, that I don't know how we can maintain



their standard. We shall try.

We should also welcome our new executive committee members: Beatrix Jones (Massey) will replace Richard as secretary, and Ivy Liu (Victoria), Peter Smith (Canterbury), Alain Vandal (AUT) and Thomas Yee (Auckland) join the exec. Jennifer Brown will stay on as a member of the exec, and Richard has agreed to become corporate representative. Steven Miller (Waikato) replaces Esther Meenken as newsletter editor. Being newsletter editor is a tough job, and I thank Esther for the work she has done, and Steven for the work he is going to do.

I would like to take the opportunity once again, but in a more formal and permanent way, to thank those people who helped make this year's conference at Auckland a real success. The real champion of the show was Alexandra Miliotis, one of Auckland's departmental assistants, who did a huge amount of the leg work. I tried to persuade Alex that she wasn't obliged to turn up at the Sunday reception, but she wouldn't have a bar of it – she (rightly) didn't trust anyone else to make sure it all ran like clockwork. Thanks also to Kathy Ruggiero (Treasurer), Chris Triggs, Alain Vandal and Thomas Yee (Scientific Programme Committee), Karen McDonald, Nancy Wong and Christina Miliotis (admin support), and of course all our judges for the student talk prize who had to divvy up 24 talks between them.

I'm looking forward to seeing what Austina Clark and her crew can do in Otago next year. We also shouldn't forget that this conference is followed a few days later by the Australian Applied Statistics Conference (formerly the Australian GenStat and ASREML conference) in Queenstown, which is being organized by Ruth Butler and team. Watch this space.

Of course the end of the year is rapidly approaching, and those of us at universities are preoccupied with exams, marking, and the forthcoming PBRF round. Couple this with the end of the Rugby World Cup, and the November 26 election, and it is easy to forget that the holiday season is not that far away. Best wishes to you and all your families and friends, and good luck for the new year.

James Curran

Stats Chat

Stats Chat, a blog hosted by the University of Auckland Department of Statistics, <http://www.statschat.org.nz/> has lots of interesting things, so check it out.

ANZJS Corner

ANZJS Editors' Column

The last two years have seen some major changes at ANZJS. The majority of these have happened out of sight, or are only partially on view, so I thought it may be useful to give a glimpse behind the scenes.

The most obvious example is the ScholarOne (S1) paper submission system

<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/anzjs>. S1 is now the only conduit for submitting manuscripts to ANZJS. This electronic system is standard, and similar to that for other journals. It operates independently of the journal's publisher. Simplicity of use has been questioned at times, by associate editors and referees as well as authors. However, for the editors, and I trust for you as authors, it has been a marked improvement over the previous fragmented and sometimes opaque system for paper tracking that it has replaced. Those of you with questions about your submitted but not yet published papers will, I hope, have noticed a marked improvement.

Production has changed too. Wiley (USA) and Blackwell (UK) have merged. Previously, Blackwell was the publisher and production editing took place in Australia through a senior Blackwell editor in Melbourne. Under Wiley-Blackwell, ANZJS production editing has been shifted to Singapore, we have already had two different production editors there, and overall authority for journal production is now at Wiley-Blackwell in New Jersey, USA. Other publishing aspects are now in the UK: the senior editor at Wiley-Blackwell is now in Oxford and the marketing is run from Chichester. Recently, Wiley-Blackwell indicated they intended to move production yet again, this time to Manila in the Philippines. The ANZJS editors' strong objections have been listened to for now, but continuing change seems to be inevitable. Every change of location and personnel has thrown considerable additional editing work back onto the ANZJS editors, particularly on Neville Bartlett, our technical editor. There has also been teleconferences and extensive ongoing correspondence with Wiley-Blackwell, and I have found it necessary to proof-read the entire issues from Wiley-Blackwell several times rather than just once very near the end of the production



process. A number of extra steps, such as regular telephone conferences with the production team in Singapore, have now been put into the process. In August, I also visited the senior editor at Wiley-Blackwell in Oxford during research leave in the UK. I also plan to visit the Wiley-



Blackwell production team in Singapore on my way to Cambodia for the UN World Food Programme in early December. This personal contact should help improve workload control, at least until the next change of production editor at Wiley-Blackwell, when our proof-reading load will almost certainly climb again. These changes have had consequences for you the ANZJS authors and readers too: we are currently behind in the production schedule for 2011, but we are (along with Wiley-Blackwell) doing our best to catch up, subject of course to maintenance of technical standards.

The annual editors' face to face meeting will take place in Canberra in late November. Previous meetings have been in Melbourne but, with none of the Wiley-Blackwell editors for ANZJS located there any more, we have greater flexibility about location. We had initially planned to meet in New Zealand this year, but Mervyn Silvapulle had to go into hospital (from which I am pleased to be able to tell you he has now returned home) and holding the meeting in Australia instead was then an obvious decision. Mervyn is standing down as Theory and Methods editor, and in recognition of workload is to be replaced by two people, Michael Martin, and Martin Hazelton. Since Michael, and Alan Welsh our current Applications Editor, are both in Canberra, having our meeting there seemed an obvious choice. In terms of editorial structure, this means Martin and Michael are the new Theory and Methods Editors, Alan is the Applications Editor, Petra Graham is the Book Review Editor, Neville is Technical Editor, and until mid-2012 at least I remain Managing Editor. I also must note here and thank the forty or so Associate Editors, since without them, the referees, and of course the authors and readers, ANZJS would not be in operation.

A final comment, not strictly editorial but nevertheless relevant. The publication contract with Wiley-Blackwell, which is being negotiated through the ANZJS Management Committee, is close to final agreement. Those of you at the NZSA and SSAI AGMs this year will remember motions were passed agreeing to the signing. There has

been a delay however, due to concerns about the currencies specified in the draft contract through which payments to and from Wiley-Blackwell were to be made. Marked currency movements now seem to be characteristic of foreign exchange markets. The original arrangement would have severely disadvantaged ANZJS and hence SSAI and NZSA. A solution has now been agreed in principle: all transactions will happen in a single currency. The likely prognosis is that the publication contract will be agreed and signed quite soon.

*Stephen Haslett
Managing Editor, ANZJS
anzjs@statsoc.org.au
20 October 2011*

Statschat.org.nz joins the blogosphere

If you want to take statistics education where young people are, you need to go to the blogosphere. That's part of the motivation behind www.statschat.org.nz, a new blog (the word blends 'web' and 'log') run by the Department of Statistics, The University of Auckland.

The blog was set up in April to foster discussion of data around us, particularly in the media, and build an archive of resources for the general public, journalists and teachers, says Head of Department Professor Chris Triggs.

Recent posts have looked at how the risk of accidental injury can be interpreted in wildly different ways, explored the claim that women take more sick leave than men (they don't to any degree that explains a 12% pay gap), discussed the unreliability of crowd estimation and even, ahem, commented on what one Richie McCow brought to Rugby World Cup predictions.

Statistics department staff post regularly, but anyone with an interest in statistics is invited to get involved. Readers can subscribe to blog updates via email, Facebook, Twitter or an RSS reader.

One Department staff member who has become something of a star blogger is Professor of Biostatistics Thomas Lumley. "We want New Zealanders to be more aware of statistics and the role they play in the media" he says. "We see numbers in the media every day and we want people to think carefully about them – what they actually mean and whether or not they make sense."

In August, the blog launched its interactive Stat of the Week competition. Anyone can nominate a statistic quoted in New Zealand media, explaining

why it is noteworthy, says blog moderator Rachel Cunliffe, a former lecturer in the department.

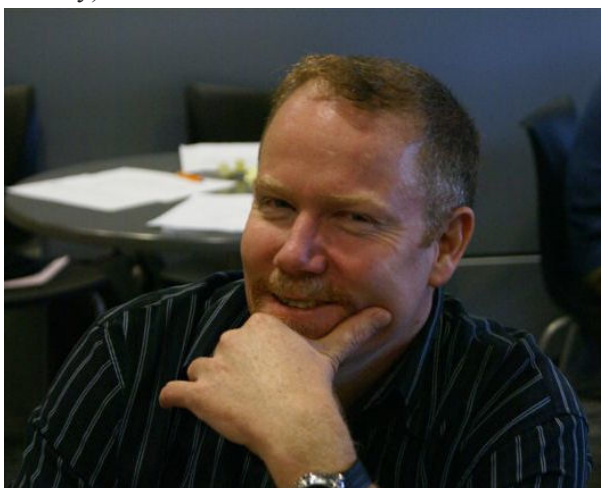
"We're looking for bad, exemplary or fascinating examples of statistics" she says. "All people need to do is quote the statistic, when and where it was published, and tell us why it should be our Stat of the Week."

2011 AGM: New Executive

The 2011 Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Statistical Association was held Tuesday August 30, 2011. The agenda, and Executive Committee reports are available online.

Information on members of the NZSA Executive elected and endorsed at the AGM of 2011 can be found at <http://www.stats.org.nz/executive.shtml>.

President: James Curran (University of Auckland)
Secretary: Beatrix Jones (Massey University, Albany)



James Curran



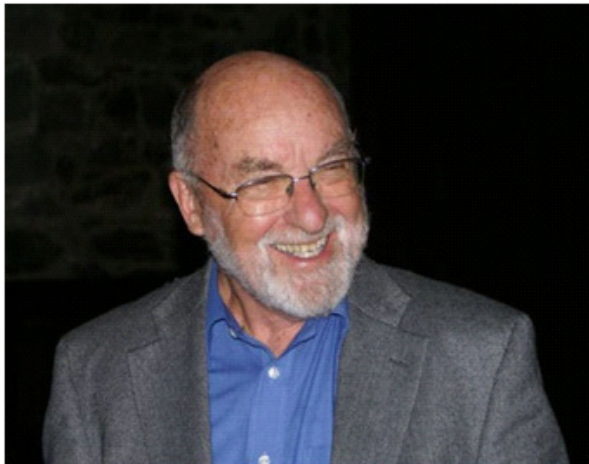
Beatrix Jones

Awards

Campbell Awards for Roger Littlejohn and Alastair Scott

Arguably the most important activity of the Awards Committee is administering the Society's Campbell Award. This is the premier honour bestowed by the NZSA, and is awarded in recognition of an individual's contribution to the promotion and development of statistics in New Zealand. Following a call for nominations in May 2011 the Awards Committee received a number of submissions. The cases for Roger Littlejohn and Alastair Scott were both absolutely compelling. Rather than attempt a judgement of Solomon, the members of the Awards Committee agreed unanimously that the 2011 Campbell Award should be made jointly to Roger and Alastair.

The Campbell Awards were presented by the Society's outgoing President, Jennifer Brown, at the conference dinner during the 2011 NZ Statistical Conference in Auckland. Alastair Scott received his award with every appearance of surprise (had we really managed to keep the secret so well?!), and with typical good humour. Sadly Roger was granted the award posthumously. His wife Annette, and children, Tabitha and Jeremy, were present to accept the award on Roger's behalf.



Campbell Award winner Alastair Scott

Alastair Scott's published research comprises more than 125 papers, most published in top journals. The quality of his work has been recognised by his peers; his 1981 JASA paper with Jon Rao, "The analysis of categorical data from complex sample surveys" was recognised on the centenary of the International Association of Survey Statisticians as one the 19 landmark papers in the history of survey sampling. This paper has almost 300 citations (Web of Science 291, 9 July 2011) 24 of which were in

papers published in the last calendar year. Not only does this paper continue to be regularly cited but it also exemplifies the quality of Alastair's work. It takes a very real practical problem and provides a solution both elegant and applicable. His work in sample survey theory as it touches official statistics, social science, and medical statistics was also recognised in 2006 by the Waksberg Award, from the American Statistical Association and the Statistical Society of Canada, for services to survey sampling.

Apart from six years at the London School of Economics immediately after completing his PhD, Alastair has made his career in New Zealand. Several universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of the highest calibre have attempted to recruit him. Both the University of Auckland and the New Zealand statistics profession have been fortunate that he has chosen to live and work in this country. Over many years he has been a consultant and advisor to several government statistical agencies; Statistics New Zealand, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and Statistics Canada. This is but one demonstration of his intellectual generosity. He is unfailingly helpful to all who seek his advice. The wisdom and quality of this advice has been relied on by the administration of the University of Auckland. Alastair has chaired many departmental reviews, served on many appeals, and research grant reviews. He has also carried out the same roles for other universities and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

An examination of the list of his research grants is another illustration of this generosity of his time and advice. There is an unbroken record of grants since the establishment of the Marsden Fund for his own research in statistical methodology. This is matched by an equal list of grants to Alastair and his collaborators in social statistics, in epidemiology, and in medical statistics.

Alastair is a life member of the New Zealand Statistics Association and has served as President. His career is marked by statistical research of the highest quality which has been applied in a wide variety of areas of application. He has a deep record of service to the statistical profession both in New Zealand and overseas. His greatest achievement, however, may be as having been a generous and wise mentor overseeing and advancing the careers of many people to whom he has been a teacher, supervisor, collaborator, colleague and friend.

Roger Littlejohn was a well-known, highly respected, and very active, member of the NZSA. A stalwart of the NZSA, Roger made a considerable contribution to the Association. He took on the responsibility of numerous roles within the association



Campbell Award winner Roger Littlejohn (1955-2011)



The Littlejohn family, Jeremy, Annette and Tabitha.

including; Editor of the newsletter, President, and Webmaster. He treated these responsibilities seriously, carrying them out professionally, but with his trademark enthusiasm and good-humour. Furthermore, as many members will testify, Roger was adept at recruiting and encouraging others into active roles within the NZSA, willing to provide support and advice when needed.

Roger was generous with the time he devoted to the NZSA, working quietly and efficiently for the Association. In 2004 Roger accepted the enormous job of re-designing the NZSA website which was in urgent need of an update. The breadth and detail of the information now available on the website is a testament to Roger's hard-work and dedication. He also instigated, and took responsibility for, the online newsletter. As a direct result of Roger's efforts the website and the online newsletter are now prominent vehicles in the promotion of statistics, New Zealand statisticians, and the NZSA, within New Zealand and abroad.

Roger's contribution to the New Zealand statistical community extends much wider than just his involvement with the NZSA. A very practical

and creative statistician, Roger devised innovative solutions to the many and diverse problems presented to him during his statistical consultancy role at AgResearch. In the research arena he made major advances in the analysis of hormone profiles and animal movement-behaviour studies. An expert in Time Series, Roger developed a number of GenStat procedures including DFOURIER, MOVINGAVERAGE, MCROSSSPECTRUM, PERIODTEST and REPPERIODOGRAM. With regards to education, Roger was always ready to help and tutor young statisticians, including mentoring of summer-student projects and thesis students.

Roger leaves an enduring legacy to Statistics in New Zealand through his leadership in the New Zealand Statistical Association; his academic and research work; his role in educating, encouraging and supporting students and young statisticians; and most of all through his life-long passion for the subject.

Campbell Bequest Fund Awards

The Campbell Bequest Fund can provide funding for special projects, typically up to a total value of \$1500 per year. Details of the principles guiding the selection process for submitted projects are given at http://stats.org.nz/Campbell_Bequest_Fund.shtml.

The Awards Committee recently granted an award of \$780 to Ilze Ziedins, in support of the Summer Workshops in Probability, to be held in Auckland in January 2012. The Awards Committee noted that these monies should be used in the first instance to support NZ postgraduate students who wish to attend the workshops.

*Martin Hazelton
Convenor, NZSA Awards Committee*

Geometry of Statistics Book

Local statisticians Dave Saville and Graham Wood have recently self-republished one of their statistics text-books, entitled "Statistical Methods: A Geometric Primer" (first published by Springer of New York). The book is an easy-reading introduction to the vector geometry (/linear algebra) which underpins linear model methods. Self-publishing means the price can be reduced by 70-80%, to \$US19.95. More details are available via the Amazon web site (ISBN is 1456420429), or on the book's Amazon e-store page: www.createspace.com/3515786

Young Statisticians

Given my age, it seems funny for me to be the new “Young Statistician” rep. However, I meet the criteria of “studying statistics” and “working in the statistics area”. In fact, I feel very fortunate to have been able to get



a job at AgResearch before completing my Masters in Applied Statistics, which I’m currently half-way through.

Following my B.Tech in Operations Research from Massey University, I worked for 4 years at New Zealand Steel in Glenbrook and then spent time overseas and at home with young children. I did statistical analysis of the sensory data at Fonterra Research Centre after starting as a taste panellist, then decided that more study would be required so that I could become a consulting statistician.

Please feel free to e-mail me (Catherine.LloydWest@agresearch.co.nz) with any suggestions you have about how NZSA can better support “Young Statisticians”.

Catherine Lloyd-West

NZSA Young Statistician Representative

Join the NZSA

A membership application/change of address form is available at
<http://stats.org.nz/form.php>

NZSA Membership rates

These rates apply from April 2012 - March 2013 and are in NZ\$.

	NZ	Overseas
Ordinary	80	85
Student & Retired	40	45

There is a \$5 discount for electronic-only access to the journal.

New members

We welcome new members:

Elena Moltchanova, Jeong Eun (Kate) Lee, Robin Hankin, Jieping Li, Catherine Lloyd-West, Steven Lee, Abby Morgan;

new student members:

Michael Kao, Oliver Hannaford, Jing (Stephen) Liu, Muhyiddin Izadi, Nick Chen;

and new corporate member:

SAS Australia and New Zealand.

This brings current membership to 427.



Submissions to the Newsletter

The Newsletter welcomes any submissions of interest to members of the NZSA. 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 14 May, 2012

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

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Newsletter on Web

An online version of this newsletter is available at
<http://stats.org.nz/Newsletter74/index.htm>

It will be regularly updated with information and your letters.

Email: vanessa.cave@agresearch.co.nz

Back Copies of NZ Statistician

A CD archive of “The New Zealand Statistician” is available from the NZSA. For details see
http://stats.org.nz/archive_NZS.shtml.

Copies of this CD are available for

Current members \$5

Past members \$25

Non members and libraries \$55

To order a copy email Harold Henderson

(Harold.Henderson@agresearch.co.nz).

International Statistical Literacy Project 2011

Joint winners for the Best Cooperative Project in Statistical History from the International Statistical Literacy Project were announced at the ISI conference in Dublin. They were:

- From Ethiopia, The Belgian (Flemish), Ethiopian and Mozambique universities under the umbrella of the Flemish Interuniversity Council, VLIR-UOS with the project, North-South-South (NSS) International Collaborative Project in Biostatistics (participants: Luc Duchateau, Yehenew Getachew, Ziv Shkedy, Paul Janssen)
- From New Zealand, Statistics New Zealand and NAOS (the Network of Academics in Official Statistics) with the project, A post-graduate program in official statistics (participants: Alan Lee, Andrew Sporle, Sharleen Forbes, Richard Arnold, John Harraway, Greg Breetzke, Natalie Jackson).



Sharleen receiving the award from the Director of the International Statistics Literacy Project, Reija Helenius from Finland.

The award is given every two years in recognition of outstanding, innovative, and influential statistical literacy projects that affect a broad segment of the general public and are the fruit of cooperation of different types of institutions (national statistical offices, schools, statistical societies, media, libraries etc.). Projects considered for this award need to have the following characteristics:

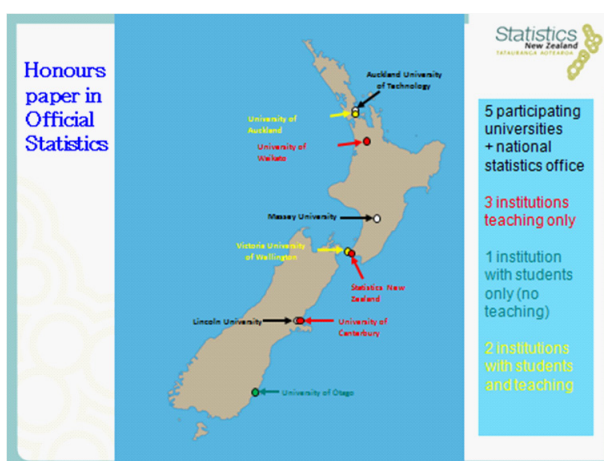
- (a) be currently alive and have potential to remain so;
- (b) free access to all for the project resources;
- (c) educate on concepts of statistical theory and data analysis, and their use;
- (d) have pedagogically sound contents for a general audience;
- (e) involve two or more institutions that would usually not work in cooperation;

- (f) are attractive to a wide audience; and
- (g) have archives that are widely available.

The 2011 international judging panel comprised:

- Larry Weldon – Canada – Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, SFU
- Tatevik Zohrabyan – Armenia – Texas A&M University, Senior Consultant at Baker Tilly Armenia – ICARE Foundation
- Adriana D'Amelio – Argentina – Universidad Nacional de Cuyo and ISLP
- Pedro Campos – Portugal – Statistics Portugal, University of Porto, and ISLP (Chair)

The winning New Zealand project is the Official Statistics honours paper taught in the second semester of 2011 to 29 applied statistics students nationally using the Matrix Grid as shown in the following slide.



The course is taught across the KAREN network between the participating universities.

The Official Statistics Honours course provides an overview of the key areas of Official Statistics including topics such as:

- data sources (sample surveys and administrative data);
- the legal and ethical framework of official statistics;
- an introduction to demography;
- the collection and analysis of health, social and economic data;
- data visualisation including presentation of spatial data;
- data matching and data integration;
- macroeconomic indicators and the System of National Accounts.

Focus on Education

Congratulations to John Harraway on his election as President of the International Association of Statistical Education (IASE)!

International News

IASE Roundtable 2012.

The International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) is organizing the 2012 Roundtable Conference on Technology in Statistics Education: Virtualities and Realities, which will be held July 2-6, 2012 in Cebu City, Philippines (see <http://icots.net/roundtable/>).

ICME-12, July 8-15 2012, Seoul, Korea.

The 12th International Congress on Mathematical Education has two topic study groups organised by IASE, one on the Teaching and Learning of Statistics (TSG 12) and the other on probability (TSG 13). Deadline for paper proposals was 30th November 2011. For more information see: <http://www.icme12.org/>

Volcanic Delta 2011. The 8th Southern Hemisphere Conference on the Teaching and Learning of Undergraduate Mathematics and Statistics, Rotorua, New Zealand, 27 Nov–2 Dec, 2011.

The statistics keynote speaker for this conference is Prof. Jennifer Brown, University of Canterbury. For more information see: www.delta2011.co.nz

International Statistical Literacy Project Awards

Poster Competition 2010-2011. New Zealand schools were invited to participate in this competition, which was sponsored locally by the NZSA, Waikato University and Auckland University. Sashi Sharma (Waikato University) was the organizer. In the international competition New Zealand attained 3rd prize in the younger age division (age 12-15). The poster was: “Can you predict the weather at midday by looking out your window in the morning?” from Cashmere Primary School, Christchurch by students Megan Snell, Jack Boyd and Mitchell Sammut. See: www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~iase/islp/competition-second

Best Cooperative Project Award in Statistical Literacy 2011. New Zealand was a joint winner: Statistics New Zealand and NAOS (the Network of Academics in Official Statistics) for their project,

“A post-graduate program in official statistics” (participants: Alan Lee, Andrew Sporle, Sharleen Forbes, Richard Arnold, John Harraway, Jenny Brown, Natalie Jackson). See: www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~iase/islp/bestproject

Inaugural Journal of Statistics Education Best Paper Award

This award was given by the American Statistical Association to Maxine Pfannkuch, Matt Regan, Chris Wild (Auckland University) and Nick Horton (Smith College, USA) for their 2010 paper Telling Data Stories: Essential Dialogues for Comparative Reasoning. Available at: www.amstat.org/publications/jse/v18n1/pfannkuch.pdf

Local News

Stats Chat Blog (www.statschat.org.nz)

This blog, the brainchild of Rachel Cunliffe and Julie Middleton, was launched this year by the Department of Statistics, Auckland University. Primary contributors to date are: Thomas Lumley, Rachel Cunliffe, Julie Middleton, Stephen Cope, David Scott, Andrew Balemi, and James Curran. The aim of the blog is to increase the statistical literacy of journalists and the general public. The blog will also be a very useful resource for teachers for delivering the statistical literacy strand of the curriculum. The latest blogs are about the election, the Rugby World Cup predictions, and Bayes’ Theorem in relation to court evidence. If you would like to become a regular contributor please contact Rachel Cunliffe, the coordinator of the blog at: statschat@gmail.com

CensusAtSchool Project

This project, sponsored by the Department of Statistics of The University of Auckland, Statistics New Zealand, and the Ministry of Education, launched the 2011 school census (Rachel Cunliffe) on 2 May 2011. To date over 27,700 students have participated. The project is directed by Chris Wild and aims to give 10 to 18 year-old students the experience of participating in a census. See: www.censusatschool.org.nz

Statistics Teachers Day, 23 November 2011, Auckland

This annual day is run jointly by the Department of Statistics, The University of Auckland and the Auckland Mathematics Association for teachers under the direction of Ross Parsonage. The theme for the day is: Death of the Normal Distribution: Resampling (Bootstrapping), Randomization

and More. Prof Jennifer Brown, University of Canterbury is the guest speaker. Workshops will be given on the new Year 12 curriculum as well as updating teachers' knowledge of bootstrapping and randomization methods in preparation for the new Year 13 curriculum in 2013. Information on this day is available at: www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~teachers/index2011.php

New SURF released

Statistics NZ has released a set of datasets based on the NZ Income Survey. Each dataset contains about 11,000 records for six variables. Students can explore the features of the distributions and relationships. These are close to the features in the original real dataset. This product should help meet the needs of teachers and students, as they work on the Mathematics and Statistics area of the NZ Curriculum. Available at: www.stats.govt.nz/tools_and_services/services/schools_corner.aspx

Statistics Education Research Project

A collaborative two-year Year 13 and Stage One research project across Auckland University (Maxine Pfannkuch), Victoria University (Sharleen Forbes) and Otago University (John Harraway), involving a team of 33 people from around New Zealand, is now underway. The research is focused on developing inferential concepts via bootstrapping and randomization methods. The project is funded in part by the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (www.tlri.org.nz).

NZSA Conference, Auckland, 2011

The conference this year had a statistics education strand with a plenary talk by Wayne Stewart, Auckland University. Wayne demonstrated his innovative teaching approaches using puppets, songs and audience participation, which captivate and engage his students when learning Bayesian inference.



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NZSA

Education Committee

Since the last newsletter, we have met four times: in May, June, September and November.

The new NCEA achievement standards for the curriculum's Mathematics and Statistics area

Students at NCEA Level 1 (approximately Year 11) have just sat the first exam that uses the new standards. Level 2 follows next year, with steps into experimental design. Level 3 follows in 2013, with further steps into experimental design, and the very refreshing steps into resampling methods for inference.

One of our aims is to maintain or build links with the people in the Ministry of Education and the NZ Qualifications Authority who work on Mathematics and Statistics issues. In November, four of us (Chris Wild, Maxine Pfannkuch, Emma Mawby, and Mike Camden) visited NZQA, and discussed how we could best provide supportive feedback on the external assessments and exemplars of student work that they produce. We agreed on the importance to NZ of getting these assessments right, and that we would provide feedback.

We will be communicating our views on the recent first exam; which is at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/exams/2011/91037-exm-2011.pdf>, and on how the Scholarship qualification in statistics can be structured to function along with the incoming Level 3 standards.

You'll find the draft mathematics matrix of standards here: http://www.tki.org.nz/e/community/ncea/docs/maths_matrix_sep11.doc.

Freely available statistical software for schools

Use of GenStat for Teaching and Learning (GTL) is progressing. By the end of August 2011, 11 schools in the South Island were using GTL, also the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and the University of Otago. Trial requests have been received from 57 other New Zealand high schools as well as Auckland, Massey and Lincoln Universities.

The R-based system from University of Auckland staff, iNZight, is progressing. It has an improved and simplified installation system. It includes features that help students to visualise inferential concepts, and to carry out resampling methods. These features relate to the collaborative statistics education research project described by Maxine above. The authors report: 'Use of the iNZight program for analysing statistical data has just been made a whole lot easier. The software is now packaged in a form where it can be downloaded (or copied) and then used on

Windows machines without the user needing to have administrative privileges, because it now needs no formal installation'. See the downloads page at <http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~wild/iNZight/>.

NZ Association of Maths Teachers conference: Dunedin: July 2011

NZAMT's 12th biennial conference included two statistical plenaries, from Helen MacGillivray (Queensland University of Technology, and then President of IASE), and the committee's Pip Arnold. Among other things, Helen was keen for probability to be liberated from the trap of being used as an exercise in algebra and arithmetic. Her plenary was titled "Realisation of the learning riches in statistics". NZSA provided financial support for her visit. Pip's was on "What is the story? Being a data detective".

We noted that, more than ever, teachers are keen to have good sources of realistic data for their students to analyse.

NZAMT 13 will be in Wellington in October 2013, and is named "Absolutely Positively Mathematics and Statistics". It will be the first NZAMT conference with 'statistics' in its title.

Statistics in the primary sector

The MoE have commissioned a "consistency framework" to assist teachers in making overall teacher judgements (OTJs) for National Standards. This requires defining a number of "aspects" of maths and statistics. An "aspect" is a distinct area of mathematical thinking e.g. "Measurement" or "Multiplicative thinking". It also requires defining the progressions or key junctures in students' learning within the "aspects". We would like this to follow the key ideas that are in here: <http://www.nzmaths.co.nz/key-mathematical-ideas>.

Congratulations

John Harraway is now the President of the International Association for Statistical Education. We are honoured to have him on our committee.

The organisers of the 2011 NZSA conference gave statistical education a strong role. We thank them for this.

Staff from several universities and Statistics NZ have worked together to design the course: Special Topic – Official Statistics. It ran successfully in the last semester. We congratulate Sharleen and her team on this innovation, and on co-winning the ISI International Statistical Literacy Project's Best Cooperative Project in Statistical Literacy award. Details of the course are here: http://msor.victoria.ac.nz/Courses/ORST482_2011T2/CourseOutline.

Also, we'd like to congratulate our colleagues on

receiving the first of the new Best Paper Awards for Journal of Statistical Education papers:

Telling Data Stories: Essential Dialogues for Comparative Reasoning; by Maxine Pfannkuch, Matt Regan, Chris Wild and Nicholas J. Horton, March 2010. <http://www.amstat.org/publications/jse/v18n1/pfannkuch.pdf>

Conference Brief

For upcoming events in statistics and related fields, Australasia and worldwide, visit

www.statsoc.org.au/other-events.htm
www.conferencealerts.com/statistics.htm
www.kmining.com/info_conferences.html

International Statistical Ecology Conference

Sundvolden Hotel, Krokkleiva, Oslo

3-6 July 2012

<http://www.cees.uio.no/isec2012/>

Australian Statistical Conference

Adelaide, South Australia

9-12 July 2012

<http://www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/asc2012/index.html>

RC33 Eighth International Conference on Social Science Methodology

University of Sydney, New South Wales

9-13 July 2012

<http://conference.acspri.org.au/index.php/rc33/2012/index>

8th World Congress in Probability and Statistics

Istanbul, Turkey

9-14 July 2012

<http://www.worldcong2012.org>

International Biometric Conference

Kobe International Conference Center, Kobe, Japan

26-31 August 2012

<http://www.secretariat.ne.jp/ibc2012/index.html>

NZSA Conference 2012

University of Otago, Dunedin

29-30 November 2012

<http://www.maths.otago.ac.nz/nzsa2012/>

Australasian Applied Statistics Conference

4th-7th December 2012

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Queenstown

<http://aasc2012.com/>

2012 NZMRI/NZIMA Summer Workshop: Random Media and Random Walks

8 - 13 January 2012

Nelson

This workshop will consist mainly of 6-8 mini-courses (three 50-minute talks) presented by distinguished international speakers, on some of the many interesting topics in probability theory and statistical physics. The workshop may be of interest to mathematics PhD students in probability, statistical physics, analysis, and discrete mathematics.

There will also be an evening of seminars (and celebration, including dinner) in honour of Prof Peter Whittle, on the evening of January 7 or 8, 2012. The theme of the seminars will be Stochastic modelling in physics, geophysics and communications.

<http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~mholmes/workshop/>



Summer Workshops in Probability

23-27 January, 2012

University of Auckland

Part 1: New Zealand Probability Workshop
(Local organiser Mark Holmes)

Part 2: 2nd Australia and New Zealand Applied Probability Workshop

(Local organisers Jeff Hunter, Ilze Ziedins)

Organising committee: Nigel Bean, Mark Holmes, Jeff Hunter, Yoni Nazarathy, Joshua Ross, Peter Taylor, Ilze Ziedins.

The workshop will run for 5 days. There will be 2 days of probability theory ("NZ Probability Workshop") and 2 1/2 or 3 days of applied probability ("Australia and New Zealand Applied Probability Workshop").

Please contact Ilze Ziedins (i.ziedins@auckland.ac.nz) for further information or if you wish to be placed on the mailing list for this workshop.

New Zealand Social Statistics Network, summer programme, February 2012, Wellington

Places are still available for these courses being run in February 2012. The early bird closing date was Friday 16 December. Late enrolments will be accepted depending on course numbers and availability. Don't miss the opportunity to learn research skills in a small group with some of the best research methods teachers in Australasia. Discounts are negotiable for multiple bookings from a single agency. For more information and to enrol visit www.nzssn.org.nz

Local Scene

AgResearch

This has been a year of changes in our Statistics team at AgResearch. Fred Potter retired in April after 11.5 years at AgResearch. Fred's career started at the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research in Wales where he worked for 28 years, starting off as a plant breeder who very quickly became interested in analysing data and programming and later completed a Master's degree in statistics focussing on experimental design. In 1996 he moved to NZ to take up a Biometrician position with Crop & Food before moving to AgResearch.

Zaneta Park also left us mid-year for completely new challenges at the Ministry of Education. She had been with AgResearch for 10.5 years and her cheerful industry and particular expertise will be missed.

Barbara Dow has been based at DairyNZ, working for them for many years while remaining an employee of AgResearch and member of our Statistics team. That is, until recently. What's changed is that she is now employed by DairyNZ.

We have lost five staff in total over the past year, but gained some new ones. Nieves Felipe joined our Invermay campus in Mosgiel, but regrettably has had to resign due to family circumstances. Thus there is currently a vacancy at our Invermay campus.

The Grasslands (Palmerston North) campus welcomes to its statistics team Catherine Lloyd-West and Siva Ganesh from Massey University.

As well as staffing changes and challenges, changes within the company itself have taken place. A new "matrix" management structure has been put in place for the science part of the company, but there was no obvious place for the statistics and bioinformatics team, so it has been moved into "Shared Services". It is early days in the restructure, but we continue to hope and work for the best.

In the meantime, our team has had a presence at a number of conferences and workshops over the past while, including the GEOSTAT workshop in Canberra in April, Australasian Applied Statistics Conference (GenStat & ASReml) in Cairns and the NZSA conference. There was also be a contingent at the "Biometrics by the Blowholes" conference in Kiama, NSW.

John Koolaard

University of Waikato

We have had a busy semester with lots of different things going on.

We were delighted to welcome Chaitanya Joshi

(CJ) to our staff. CJ had been doing post doctoral research at Trinity College in Dublin with Prof John Haslett. He is interested in developing methods for computationally efficient inference and Bayesian modelling of complex systems.

In August, Murray, Bill, Steven and Lyn all attended and presented papers at the NZSA conference in Auckland.

We have had an active seminar series.

Professor Steve Reeves, (University of Waikato) presented the seminar “Probability and Non Determinism for finite automata” on 8 June 2011.

On 5 September 2011, Ben Stevenson (University of Auckland) presented a seminar – “Predicting daily fishing success: The assessment of lunar and indigenous fishing calendars”.

On 5 October 2011, Steven Miller presented the seminar “Reconstruction of a Demographic expansion from multiple sources of evidence”.

We have had the inaugural meeting of the Waikato R Users Group on 17 October 2011. We were fortunate to have Associate Professor Ross Ihaka (University of Auckland) attend the launch of WRUG and present a seminar titled “R functions – Things your mother didn’t tell you about”.

Merrilyn Goos, (University of Queensland), Mike Thomas (University of Auckland) and Sergiy Klymchuk (AUT) visited on 16 November 2011 to give a seminar “Transition from School to University Education in Mathematics: New Zealand and Australia Perspectives”.

Murray was the keynote speaker at the One Day Meeting of the Palmy Statisticians that was held on 28 October 2011 at the Institute of Fundamental Sciences at Massey University, Palmerston North. He presented the paper “Fitting Mixture Models: What’s so difficult?”.

Murray also presented the paper “Iterative methods in model-fitting and diagnostics” to the Statistics Department while he was there.

CJ visited Trinity College in late October to undertake more research with Prof Haslett.

Lyn visited Prof Kaye Basford at the University of Queensland in November to do research with her.

Congratulations go to Steven Miller and Bethwyn Littler who have recently got engaged.

Lyn Hunt

University of Auckland

After 17 years as the plain old Department of Statistics, 2011 has seen us reinvented as the Department of Statistics and Media Babes! First and foremost – check out our new statistics blog StatsChat at www.statschat.org.nz, established in June as a vehicle for public outreach and statistics education.

Hot topics range from the predictions of Richie McCow to the truth about earthquakes and the moon, and a cursory browse through the entertaining and excellent contributions to date will reveal why the blog has already attracted the attention of the press from MediaWatch to the NZ Herald’s Sideswipe. All contributions are welcome – the perfect opportunity to propel your statistical wit and wisdom into the blogosphere! Or enter the Statistic of the Week competition to win a \$20 iTunes voucher.

Meanwhile, it seems the national media just can’t leave us alone. David Scott is the media favourite for picking the rugby scores – “Statistician proves he can pick the winners” – while Andrew Balemi is the man for picking Lotto numbers: “Revealed – Your chances of winning the \$34 million jackpot!” (Evidently quite small on the basis that Andrew is still seen at work regularly.) Aiming to take the chance out of netball is PhD student Bobby Willcox, whose laptop can be seen pumping furiously on the sidelines while the Silver Ferns are playing: “Netball: Crunching numbers 4 NZ”. After all this exertion, it feels like it’s time to chill out and go fishing. Don’t worry about the phase of the moon, says Masters student Ben Stevenson, who has been working with Russell Millar on analysing the success rate of the Maori and lunar fishing calendars. Just pick a sunny day when you’ve got a bit of free time – you probably won’t catch much anyway, so there’s no point in getting cold and wet just for a 6% lunar surplus.

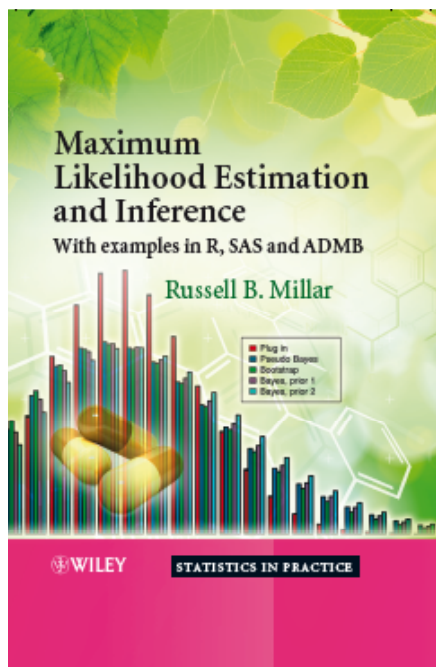
A warm welcome to Marie Fitch, who has joined the department as a Professional Teaching Fellow after several years at Massey Albany. Welcome to the team, Marie!

Congratulations to Ilze Ziedins, Nick Shears, and Kathy Ruggiero, who have each won prestigious and highly competitive research grants. Ilze’s \$465K Marsden grant on improving transport flow via “Control of equilibria in queueing networks with selfish routing” seems destined to sort out Auckland’s inconsiderate drivers once and for all. Ilze’s project was selected for special press release, and was the featured project for the NZ Herald’s entire coverage of this year’s Marsden awards. Nick Shears won a 5-year Rutherford Discovery Fellowship for “Maintaining healthy marine ecosystems under increased anthropogenic stress and a changing climate” - one of just ten fellowships awarded nationwide each year. Kathy Ruggiero’s scoop is an Emerging Researcher Award from the HRC: “Probing illness with a novel multi-omic time course statistical platform.” The department is very lucky to be host to such diverse and cutting-edge research projects.

Congratulations also to Russell Millar on the

publication of his book, “Maximum Likelihood Estimation and Inference: With Examples in R, SAS and ADMB”, published two weeks ago by Wiley. The word has it that the book’s contents are even better than the front cover – which is a work of art in itself. Definitely a new addition for the invaluable texts and frequent-access section of your personal library.

Our PhD students have been doing us proud

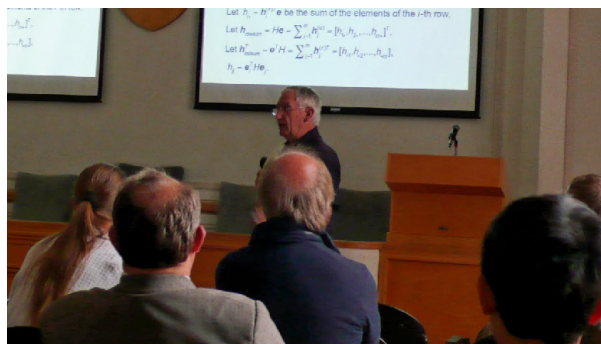


recently, with Jing Liu and Sam McKechnie scooping first and third prizes for the student presentations at the NZSA conference. Drs Jon Briggs and Asad Ali are our newest completed PhDs, each leaving the department with one more thesis and one more offspring than they arrived with. And on that subject, the surge of baby boys continues, ensuring that this newsletter correspondent STILL does not need to think up a new topic with which to close the local news contribution. Many congratulations to Stephane Guindon and Stephen Cope on the births of their respective sons Tom and Lance. Running total since 2000: now 27 boys and 6 girls and counting...

Rachel Fewster

Auckland University of Technology

Prof Jeffrey Hunter had two extensive academic tours of Europe. Following a visit in late June with Professor Simo Puntanen at the University of Tampere, Finland, he gave a talk titled “Markov chain properties of column sums of the transition matrix” to the 20th International Workshop on Matrices and Statistics at the University of Tartu, Estonia, and to PROBASTAT 2011 at Smolenice Castle, Slovak Republic. He was on the Program committees for



Jeff talking at the PROBASTAT 2011 meeting

both of the aforementioned conferences. His 70th birthday was honoured at PROBASTAT 2011 at the Conference Dinner and also through an inclusion in the Conference Publication “2011 Birthday Recognition Booklet” (which also featured the 80th birthdays of Professors Lubomir Kubacek and Gennadij Ososkov). In July he delivered an Invited Keynote speech (with a talk on “The role of Kemeny’s constant on properties of Markov chains”) at the MAT TRIAD 2011 Conference on Matrix Analysis and its Applications at the Instituto Politecnico de Tomar, Tomar, Portugal.



Jeff with his wife Hazel and Prof Simo Puntanen responding to the honouring of his 70th birthday at PROBASTAT 2011.

In September he returned to Europe as an invited speaker at MSMPRF 2011 (Markov & semi-Markov Processes & Related Fields 2011) at Porto Carras Grand Resort, Sithonia, Greece and delivered a talk titled “The role of Kemeny’s constant on properties of Markov chains”. At this conference he also organized a special invited session on Markov chains with contributions from Professor Stephen Kirkland (National Uni of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland), Professor Panos Vassilou (Aristotle Uni Thessaloniki, Greece), Prof Jose Palacois (Simon Bolivar Uni, Caracas, Venezuela), Professor Eugene Seneta (Uni Sydney) and Dr Konstanin Avratchenov (INRIA, France). Our jet setter, Jeff Hunter, is expected to keep travelling next year and continue researching properties of Markov chains.

A/Prof Paul Cowpertwait has been working on a research contract for the development of a stochastic

rainfall/temperature model for use in a decision support system for flood warning in the Basque Country (Spain). He visited Sener International who, along with the Basque Water Agency, are funding and coordinating the project, and also visited Sir David Cox (University of Oxford, UK) who was one of the early pioneers behind the mathematical methods that underpin the stochastic rainfall model.

Murray Black has been working on his PhD comparing academic learning in statistics using an inquiry approach over three distinct learning environments. He presented the research methodologies in education research at Deakin University and a seminar on assessing statistics in the Workplace at a Learning State Conference in Auckland. He has been a national assessor in Official Statistics for unit standards within the National Certificate of Official Statistics and also jointly presented a block seminar on sampling and inference using Official Statistics at the Victoria University, Wellington.

Dr Robin Hankin presented his Gaussian process work to the NZSA conference 2011 at the University of Auckland. He has appeared on TVNZ's "Close Up" and "Fair Go" current affairs programmes, discussing the statistics of a remarkable coincidence, and was interviewed live as a probability expert on RadioLive. He has also been quoted in The Herald on Sunday, as part of an interview discussing national Lotto statistics. Due to his friendly nature and public popularity, he is our media star!



Dr Robin Hankin on Fair Go, May 2011

Dr Guanghua Lian gave a talk titled "Consistent Modeling of SPX and VIX Options: Efficient evaluation issues in Gatheral's Three factor model" at the 55th annual meeting of the Australian Mathematical Society at the University of Wollongong, Australia. In December he will be visiting A/Prof Ken Sui, the School of Applied Finance and Actuarial Studies, Macquarie University, Australia to accept the invitation and attend the Quantitative Methods in Finance conference, Sydney, Australia.

Dr Kate Lee presented her work on the measure of

surprise for selecting the threshold selection problem associated with extreme modellings at O-Bayes 2011 workshop, Shanghai, China and NZSA conference 2011, the University of Auckland. Following the O-Bayes workshop, she visited Dr Scott Sisson and Dr Yanan Fan at UNSW, Australia.

Massey Manawatu

In the aftermath of the RWC, I've been tackled with the ball and now find myself putting the local news together. Thankfully there is actually something to contribute without having to lean too heavily on my colleagues for their contributions. I think I've been given the job for the unique leaning qualities I possess – height and weight, and a meaningful threat of accidentally walking into the non-contributors. Anyway here's the hap's.

Overseas travel dominates the more exciting elements of the group's doings. Steve Haslett and Geoff Jones went to Phnom Penh for three weeks in April, to work with the World Food Programme on small-area poverty estimation. They found a really good restaurant near their hotel run by a Cambodian woman who went to school in Palmerston North. Geoff went back in August to do some more work (and eating).

In late July, I was invited to go to the Czech Republic to teach blind students that R is the best software for doing statistics work as it can be used within minutes of installation. (This isn't true for many other software options you might be using!) The host university had recently acquired a Jesuit College in Telc which was very beautiful. The only major drawbacks were the fact that heavy stone walls are uncomfortable to bump into, and they contribute to particularly poor acoustics. You should appreciate that this made for interesting encounters among the 30 or so blind people on site.

Martin Hazelton recently managed to escape from Massey for a month, to take study leave overseas. Accompanied by his family, Martin's first stop was Los Angeles where he did some work on Brownian motion as he observed his boys progress around Disneyland. After a couple of days in the US, Martin & co flew over to the UK. Martin was based primarily at the University of Leeds, working with long-time collaborator David Watling on various statistical problems in transportation science. The work went well, and there was the added bonus of a trip further up north for Martin to watch his beloved Newcastle United play football. Rumour has it that it took two days for his voice to return having offered plenty of vocal support (along with the other 45,000 Newcastle supporters at the match).

After brief side trips to Cambridge, Oxford, Paris

and London (it's a hard life), Martin and family returned to New Zealand via a two day stop-over in Hong Kong. Martin gave a talk on "Statistical Inference for Transport Networks" to the Hong Kong Society for Transportation Studies.

He received great hospitality from Professor Hong Lo (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), including a tasty post-talk Chinese dinner (though neither Martin or his family were brave enough to try the chicken head on offer). All in all Martin reports that it was an enjoyable and productive trip – just not long enough!

On a truly local note, Ganes Ganesalingam has once again organized the Palmy Stats Forum, which is held annually here at Massey. Our invited guest speaker this year was Murray Jorgensen from Waikato. The day also included 12 contributed talks from a range of subject disciplines. Once you've been to an event or two like this, you start recalling when things first occur. For example, it's important to recall when the first mention of stool samples or food-borne bacteria are mentioned, and how close these are to meal breaks. About fifty people were present for some part of the day, and most talks had an audience exceeding thirty.

It hasn't all been fun and games for the Statistics group this year. Many readers will be aware that Chin-Diew Lai's wife Ai-Ing passed away in August. On behalf of Chin-Diew, I'd like to thank all those who sent their messages of goodwill and friendship.

One might start to wonder what is going on for our group, as another staff member decided to give up the academic lifestyle and go over to the other side (of State Highway 57 that is). Siva Ganesh has resigned his position and started at AgResearch. Ganesh took most of the second semester off to use up that pesky annual leave balance (we all get reminders about having excessive ones, and 10 days is considered excessive by some) before taking his new role. I'd like to think that Ganesh (and Alasdair before him) are irreplaceable, and so we thought did the university hierarchy; careful observers will know that we've been able to advertise for a new lecturer position and a chair in Statistical Genetics. A postdoc position with Raj Govindaraju has also been advertised recently. Hopefully these ads turn into next issue's new arrivals. Soon after starting this column, an email went out telling us that an appointment has been made for the position of lecturer.

Mark Bebbington has been filling in for Martin as subject leader over the last few months. He tells me that he's looking forward to Martin's return. Mark is also pleased to advise that after completing emendations, David Woods has now met the requirements for his PhD. We have a number of other

PhD candidates in their final stages so perhaps they'll be news next time I'm writing.

Jonathan Godfrey

Victoria University of Wellington

Our first news is about our new senior lecturer, Petros Hadjicostas, who joined us in late August 2011. Petros got his PhD from Carnegie Mellon and previously worked in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX, USA. We are very glad that Petros decided to move to the southern hemisphere. So far, the hills in Wellington are a big challenge for him!

The Third Wellington Workshop in Probability and Mathematical Statistics (WWPMS3) was held at Victoria University of Wellington on 28-29 November 2011. The whole workshop was dedicated to David Vere-Jones, to celebrate his 75th birthday. There were many speakers from both NZ and overseas – see <http://msor.victoria.ac.nz/Events/WWPMS2011/> for more details. The workshop was arranged by the Program Committee (Estate Khmaladze, David Vere-Jones and Ilze Ziedins) and the Organising Committee Co-Chairs (John Haywood and Ivy Liu). We anticipate a successful workshop and by the time the newsletter is published, that should be confirmed!

We congratulate Estate Khmaladze, who has been elected to a Fellowship in the Institute of Mathematical Statistics. This fellowship honours his outstanding research and professional contributions in the field of statistics and probability. As far as we know, Estate is only the second person who has received the honour while working in NZ since the creation of the IMS in 1935.

Shirley Pledger gave an inaugural professorial lecture on 21 June 2011. Victoria's inaugural lecture series is an opportunity for professors to give family, friends, colleagues and the wider community an insight into their research area. At the lecture, Shirley gave a talk on "How many animals are in the area? When counting doesn't work" in a way where only one mathematical formula was given. That tactic was appreciated by the large audience and the lecture was extremely successful.

We also congratulate Dr Eleni Matechou (a recent postdoc working with Shirley) who was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Statistics at Oxford University. She will be missed a lot by the whole group for her fun/warm character (and of course, her hard working attitude!). She will continue participating in a joint research project with Shirley Pledger, Richard Arnold and Ivy Liu.

During the last six months, the group hosted many

visitors. Several of them visited Estate Khmaladze, including Wolfgang Weil (KIT, Germany), Kais Hamza (Monash University), Hira Koul (Michigan State University, USA), Jiancang Zhuang (ISM, Japan), and Yoann Rives (an intern student from Telecom-SudParis, France). Maxim Finkelstein (University of the Free State, South Africa) visited Stefanka Chukova. Xihong Lin (Harvard) visited us as a MacLaurin Fellow of the NZIMA. We also welcome back Dr Yu Hayakawa (Waseda University), who is visiting us again for her current sabbatical.

The Victoria Statistics and Operations Research group contributed a session in the NZSA 2011 conference. Shirley Pledger, Eleni Matechou, Ivy Liu, and Thomas Suesse (previous PhD student of Ivy's) gave four talks in the session. They also celebrated Thomas being appointed to a lecturer position in the University of Wollongong. Dalice Sim also attended the conference and enjoyed catching up with her Auckland classmates for a very enjoyable reunion. Stefanka Chukova has participated in many overseas conferences. She was a programme chair of the International Conference on Quality, Reliability, Risk, Maintenance and Safety Engineering, held in Xian, China in July 2011. She was also a member of the organizing committee of the 37th Conference on Applications of Mathematics in Engineering and Economics.

In December, Estate Khmaladze will visit Keio University, Japan to give a short course (three 1.5 hour talks) in the Workshop on Asymptotic Methods in Data Science organised by Yuichi Hirose (Victoria) and Ritei Shibata (Keio) – see <http://www.stat.math.keio.ac.jp/workshop/Announce.htm>. Yuichi will also present a talk in that workshop. Estate will also visit Kyoto University on that trip. Both Shirley Pledger and Nokuthaba Sibanda will attend the International Biometric Society Australasian Region Conference (held in Kiama, NSW, Australia). Our PhD student Lisa Woods will also present a paper at the Biometric Society conference. Ivy Liu will attend the 2011 Taipei Symposium and 7th IASC-ARS. Mark Johnston is going to attend the 24th Australasian Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI2011), Perth.

Richard Arnold will be the election night statistician for TVNZ in the 2011 General Election on 26 November. It is the second General Election in a row where Richard has taken charge of the swingometer – but only metaphorically now (those were the days!).

Except for a short break when he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro (go Richard!), Richard Arnold was the local Course Coordinator for ORST 482 (Official Statistics), which won (jointly with an Ethiopian initiative) the ISI International Statistical Literacy

Project 2011 “Best Cooperative Project Award”. The International Statistical Literacy Project’s Best Cooperative Project Award in Statistical Literacy is given once every two years in recognition of outstanding, innovative, and influential statistical literacy projects that affect a broad segment of the general public and are fruit of the cooperation of different types of institutions (national statistical offices, schools, statistical societies, media, libraries etc.). Several academics from around New Zealand were involved in the Official Statistics course. Further details about the award are available at <http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~iase/islp/bestproject>.

We are expecting a few PhD students to join us soon. Estate Khmaladze will supervise Nguyen Thi Mai Thuong (from University of Hanoi) who has received a VUW Scholarship. Both Shirley Pledger and Richard Arnold will be supervising Daniel Martinez from Spain on a PhD in clustering using finite mixtures. Also from February 2012 Richard Arnold will have a new student Darcy Webber who will work on Bayesian spatial modelling in fisheries.

In June 2011 the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Operations Research signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Statistics New Zealand, to strengthen and maintain a partnership. This will promote official statistics and provide summer internships for MSOR statistics students.

Other than professional activities, Stefanka Chukova is now hiking in the Himalayas with her husband David, along with Ray Brownrigg and Royce Brown. There will be more news (and possibly some interesting photos!) to come, concerning this exciting trip.

John Haywood

Statistics Research Associates Limited

The main news from SRA is the seminar series to celebrate David Vere-Jones’s 75th year. The seminars are held at Waikanae Beach overlooking the sea. Because the venue is small, attendance is by invitation. Hopefully by the end of the series most people who would like to come will be given the opportunity. So far, the speakers have been: David Harte (4 May), Eugene Seneta (20 July), Jiancang Zhuang (27 July), Peter Smith (7 Sept), Len Cook (12 Oct), and Yoshihiko Ogata (26 Oct). Further details can be found on the SRA web site (www.statsresearch.co.nz), under “News and Events”.

We have had a number of visitors in 2011. Ritei Shibata from Keio University visited in February to work with Peter Thomson and also be part of the “Workshop on Current Research in Statistics and

Data Science” on 24 Feb and 2 March. This was a joint meeting between Victoria University, Keio University and SRA.

Pierre Ailliot visited NIWA and worked with Peter Thomson in February on rainfall models. Pierre first came to NZ in 2005 as a post-doc partially funded by the Hidden-Markov project under the auspices of the NZIMA. He now has a tenured position at Brest University in France. Pierre is visiting again in early 2012.

Eugene Seneta from the University of Sydney visited in July and gave a talk in the David Vere-Jones Seminar Series.

Jiancang Zhuang and Yosihiko Ogata from the Institute of Statistical Mathematics in Tokyo visited in July and October, respectively. They both gave talks in the David Vere-Jones Seminar Series, and also worked on current projects with David Harte and David Vere-Jones. The projects are on point process models for earthquake occurrence.

Valérie Monbet, from the University of Rennes 1, is currently (November) visiting SRA and NIWA for a fortnight. She is working on weather generation modelling.

Robert Davies went to the ISI in Dublin in August, and Peter Thomson is spending some of November and December at Keio University in Yokohama to work with Ritei Shibata. Alistair Gray continues to visit Canberra, most recently in November, in his role as a member of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Methodology Advisory Committee.

David Harte

Statistics New Zealand

There are now about 55 statisticians in the Statistical Methods part of Statistics New Zealand, and it looks like we are going to get a little bigger as we’ve just advertised for more Statistical Analysts to join SM. I can’t give an exact number as we seem to have people arriving just about every week from all over the globe, and there are people still leaving for overseas travel, other parts of Statistics New Zealand or other jobs, which contributes to measurement error.

The 21 statisticians in Christchurch have settled into their temporary home while our former home, Dollan House in the CBD, is being fixed. This is scheduled for completion April 2012. After 6 months of people working from a combination of home and various temporary offices it is nice to have everyone together for seminars and morning and afternoon tea discussions, as well as having colleagues available for statistical discussions. It’s at times like this that one appreciates being part of a large group of statisticians.

As a result of the earthquake the Population Census has been rescheduled to March 2013. At a

recent meeting on how we handled the earthquake and its effects on our survey, one thing of note was it took longer to collect data from Christchurch respondents. Not, as you would think, due to a reluctance to respond as our Christchurch response was excellent. Rather, respondents needed to talk about the effect the earthquake had on their household or business while providing their responses. Another thing worthy of note is that despite all that has happened almost all regular outputs were produced, albeit with delays of a week or two for some soon after the earthquake. All three centres where Statistics NZ is based contributed to this result.

Statistics New Zealand had 5 people attending the recent World Statistical Congress, the renamed International Statistical Institute’s biennial conference, in Dublin. For the first time all the ISI Awards were awarded at the Congress. Along with the already awarded 3rd prize to Kate Smaill from Statistics NZ in the IAOS Young Statistician section, Statistics NZ also won first equal prize in the International Statistical Literacy Program (ISLP) Cooperative Project Award for its Post-graduate programme in Official Statistics. While not news from Statistics New Zealand, Cashmere Primary School was placed 3rd in the under 15-year-old section of the ISLP Poster competition for their entry: “Can you predict the weather at midday by looking out the window in the morning?”. Christine Bycroft chaired invited session IPS59 on record linkage and imputed data, Andrew Hunter presented a paper on our experiences with data integration and John Bryant a paper on Bayesian approaches to combining data from different sources. Christine also attended her first International Association of Official Statistics committee meeting since being elected to the committee. After the WSC John went to the R Users conference and presented a talk on some work on population data using the facilities available in R. Emma Bentley went to Europe to attend the UNECE conference on statistical data editing where she presented 2 papers on our behalf. Emma also visited the ONS (the British equivalent of Statistics NZ) in exotic Newport. John Lopdell is off to Canada to present 2 papers at the annual Statistics Canada Methodology Symposium.

Olena Rodnyanskiy has recently returned from the Young Statisticians meeting in Australia and found it an enjoyable and enriching experience. Statistics NZ has been sending young statisticians to this meeting for many years and very rarely find other YS from NZ in attendance. I presume one advantage on our part is we can combine a YS conference attendance with a visit to the ABS (the Australian equivalent of Statistics NZ). Jamas Enright attended the HILDA

conference in Australia, which allowed him to compare Statistics NZ's longitudinal household survey, SOFIE, with the Australian equivalent. He also made a visit to ABS whilst in Australia.

We had 9 people attending the recent NZSA conference with 5 presentations, which seemed to go well, judging by the questions afterwards which showed the audience was interested and had taken in what was said. Also Statistical Methods had a presence at the NZ Association of Economists' conference, including a talk and contributing to a poster, which won the NZIER prize. We found it of interest how people use and abuse our data.

Walter Davis has just returned from teaching parts of the Survey Research Methods Programme (SRMP) run by the University of Wollongong's Centre for Statistical and Survey Methodology through the Sydney Business School. SRMP is a series of 6-week courses, primarily for working folks, resulting in a Graduate Certificate or Masters in Survey Research Methods. While in Sydney, he got to catch up with Robert Clark and Ray Chambers from the University of Wollongong. It seems he also did a session in applications of probability (aka poker).

Also of note was seeing in the Christchurch newspaper that one of our former summer students, Ben Malthus, is now working at Google's New York office.

And a final reminder that the Statistics New Zealand web site has a lot of useful data, and information about that data which is constantly being updated.

Richard Penny

University of Otago

It has been a busy time at Otago recently. In July we farewelled Jamie Sanderlin, who was a post-doc fellow in the Department with Prof Richard Barker for the last two years. Jamie left for the USDA Forest Service at Flagstaff, Arizona, USA.

John Harraway was elected President of the International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) in Dublin in August. John presented a paper at the IASE Satellite Conference on Statistics Education and Outreach at Malahide before the World Statistics Congress in Dublin.

John is also the University of Otago Census Advocate in the lead up to the National Census in early March 2013.

In October the Department welcomed the arrival of Matthew Parry, who graduated with a double honours degree in Mathematics and Physics from Otago and then completed a PhD from Brown

University. Matthew worked in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Cambridge before joining us.

Austina Clark

Dunedin School of Medicine, University of Otago

There are 10 biostatisticians working in the Dunedin School of Medicine. They are (in no particular order) Sheila Williams, Peter Herbison, Andrew Gray, Katrina Sharples, Susan Alber, Jose Garcia, Sophia Leon de la Barra, Gabrielle Davie, Ari Samaranayaka and Claire Cameron (me). I thought we had never put in a report on our activities to the NZSA Newsletter, but have just found out that we did once – sometime in the last 36 years.

Members of the group provide teaching and consulting (and, of course, are involved in research) in different proportions, primarily in the Health Sciences Division. It is hard to describe the range of methods and applications of statistics in the group, as it is so broad. Statistical interests include Bayesian statistics, causal inference, correlated data, capture-recapture, model selection, computational biology, longitudinal data analysis, power and sample size calculations, structural equation models, item-response, systematic reviews / meta-analysis, randomised controlled trials, lifecourse epidemiology, demographic studies and surveys. Application areas include injury prevention, nutrition, psychology, inflammation, cancer, infection, immunity, physical activity, paediatrics, incontinence, asthma, physiotherapy, cardiology, dentistry and pharmacy. If you want to know more about our work, please visit our website: <http://dnmeds.otago.ac.nz/departments/psm/index.html>.

News of the year is that Peter received his DSc from Otago University making it the second one in the group after Sheila received hers in 2003. He also attended the Cochrane Colloquium in Madrid where he delivered a couple of papers and is busy building a house for his retirement in Bannockburn. It is hard to speak of Peter's retirement, as much as we all want him to be happy. Katrina was promoted to Associate Professor, which is fantastic news. Less noteworthy, possibly, is that I started work here as a consulting biostatistician at the end of August – some of you out there may know me from previous incarnations.

It is my ambition to regularly report on this group of hitherto unseen (wrt NZSA) statisticians. Perhaps, next time I will attempt to provide a photo.

Claire Cameron

