



# The New Zealand Statistical Association Newsletter

Number 81

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# Welcome

by VANESSA CAVE  
NZSA Secretary

As our president, Ian Westbrooke, is enjoying a well-deserved holiday, I have the pleasure of providing the welcome on behalf of the NZSA committee. Ruminating over what to write has led me to dwell on my “association with our Association”- and what a rewarding relationship it is.

I was first properly introduced to the NZSA through my colleagues at AgResearch, where membership was part of the job (thanks Peter Johnstone, Harold Henderson, Neil Cox and Roger Littlejohn). A door to NZ’s statistical community was flung opened, and I’ve made wonderful friendships and have built a strong professional network. Stints on the committee and involvement in conference organisation have undoubtedly helped me become be part of the NZSA.

I wholeheartedly recommend volunteering for an NZSA role (committee member, conference convenor, local event organiser etc): you’ll meet lots of great people, have many inspiring conversations plus make an important contribution to NZ’s statistical community.

**Want to become more involved with the NZSA?**  
Send me an email! [vanessa.cave@agresearch.co.nz](mailto:vanessa.cave@agresearch.co.nz)



**Flashback.** My first NZSA newsletter, March 2004:  
<https://www.stats.org.nz/app/uploads/2017/09/news59.pdf>

([cliparts.zone/clipart/1514134](https://cliparts.zone/clipart/1514134))

Kia ora koutou,

While it feels like such a cliché to comment on how fast the year is going, June really did sneak up on me. With that in mind I would like to begin by acknowledging the sterling work of the contributors to this newsletter who have gathered and written up their stories in a much shorter time-frame than usual. This has also meant a slightly smaller newsletter than recent editions.

By the time you are reading this I should be in Kyoto at ICOTS-10. (See more on ICOTS-10 in the Statistics Education News [here](#).) I am looking forward to being inspired by others who are passionate about both statistics and teaching. Of course, I am also looking forward to visiting Japan for the first time!

The next newsletter is planned for January 2019 so if you have ideas or contributions for it please contact me, preferably before the Christmas break.

Ngā mihi,

Marie



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## From the NZSA executive

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### Puerto Rico Statistical Institute letter

The NZSA joined with more than 40 international scientific and professional organisations to ask the governor of Puerto Rico to rescind the proposed dissolution and privatization of Puerto Rico's

independent statistical agency.

You can find more information, a link to a copy of the letter and a full list of signatories [here](#).

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## Obituary

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Steve Kuzmicich (1931-2018)



Steve Kuzmicich (Photo from NZSA Newsletter  
Nov 1991)

Steve Kuzmicich contributed very widely to the New Zealand Statistics Association after joining in 1956. He served as Secretary-Treasurer of NZSA from 1959 to 1960 and as President from 1963 to 1965. He has contributed to statistics in New Zealand on the wider sphere, particularly as Government Statistician from 1984 to 1992, and has helped raise statistical awareness within the community. He was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the NZSA in 2005.

A chapter on Steve Kuzmicich is in *A History of Statistics in New Zealand*. See link at <https://www.stats.org.nz/nzsa-publications/>

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# Conferences

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## 2018 Joint NZSA and ORSNZ Conference

**Tuesday 27th November - Friday 30th November 2018**  
**Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand**

The New Zealand Statistical Association (NZSA) and the Operations Research Society of New Zealand (ORSNZ) are holding a joint conference hosted by Massey University at their Manawatu campus in 2018. This conference incorporates both the 69th Annual NZSA Conference and the 52nd annual ORSNZ Conference.

The conference presentations and other events will be held from Tuesday 27th November to Friday 30th November 2018. You should note that we have left a lot of time on the start and end days to allow the widest range of travel options for conference attendees.

### Key dates:

1 August 2018	Registration/abstracts open
1 October 2018	Abstract submission closes
1 November 2018	Registration closes (for speakers)

### Location

The conference will be held at Massey's Manawatu campus, Palmerston North. The conference is hosted by the Institute of Fundamental Sciences.

### Keynote Speakers

We are very pleased to advise the following plenary speakers have been confirmed:

- Associate Professor Ilze Ziedins,  
The University of Auckland
- Professor Jean Yang,  
The University of Sydney
- Professor Alan Welsh,  
The Australian National University

### Overview/Schedule of events

#### *Tuesday 27 November*

12:00 noon	Registration opens
2:00pm	Formal Welcome and Conference Opening
2:10pm to 5.20pm	Sessions start Teachers Day
5:30pm to 7:00pm	Informal social gathering for Young Statisticians

#### *Wednesday 28 November*

9:00am to 5:10pm	Sessions
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#### *Thursday 29 November*

9:00am to 5:10pm	Sessions
6.30 pm	Conference Dinner

#### *Friday 30 November*

10:00am	Sessions start Discussion panel
1:00pm	Conference closes

The conference webpage can be reached via the short URL: <http://www.massey.ac.nz/nzsa2018>. The website will be regularly updated so please look at it for the latest information, including accommodation options, speakers and the conference programme.

We look forward to seeing you all in November.

Jonathan Godfrey and Rina Parry  
Co-chairs: Conference Organising Committee

# Australasian Applied Statistics Conference 2018

3-7 Dec 2018

Millennium Hotel Rotorua

[aasc.org.au](http://aasc.org.au)

*Registration and Abstract Submission Opening Soon!*



The Australasian Applied Statistics Conference is an excellent opportunity to liaise with fellow statisticians within the agricultural, biological and environmental sciences and to keep abreast of the most recent developments in statistics within this context. Join us for AASC18 and pre-conference workshops, being held from 3rd - 7th December 2018 at the Millennium Hotel Rotorua.

The themes of AASC18 are big data analytics, reproducible research, history of ANOVA and REML, experimental design, statistical consultancy in the biosciences, and applied statistics. Our exciting group of invited speakers and workshop presenters will help explore these themes in various contexts. For more information can be found on the conference website: [aasc.org.au](http://aasc.org.au).

We look forward to welcoming you to Rotorua for AASC18.

David Baird (Chair), Chris Triggs (Treasurer), Vanessa Cave (Secretary)

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# Updates

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## R Users Groups

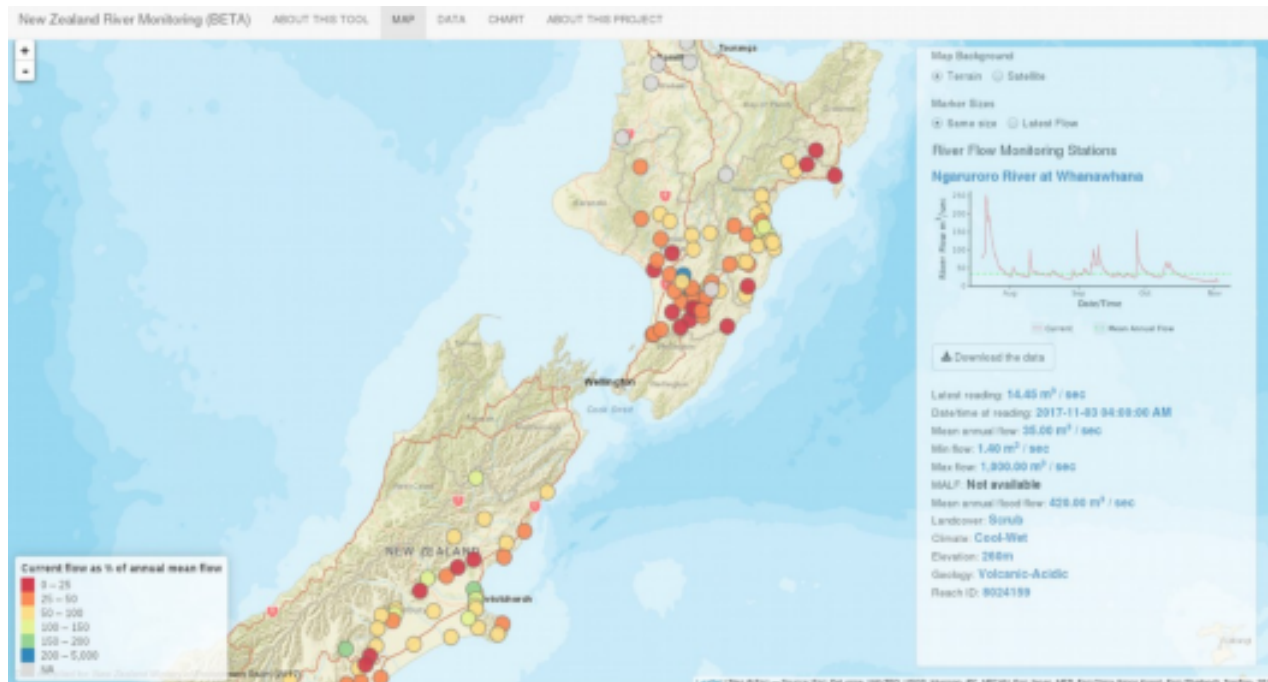
by SHIRLEY WU

Two meetings (including a talk from the Ihaka Lecture Series 2) were held in Auckland and one was held in Wellington during the first half of 2018. Most talks revolved around R Shiny:

### A Public NZ Shiny Server

A new Shiny server (<https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/>), which is free for use in New Zealand, was introduced by **Brent Wood** from NIWA and **Bruno P Kinoshita** to the R users groups during the first quarter. This server was deployed using funding from InternetNZ with the help of Brent, Bruno, other capable volunteers and the New Zealand Open Source Society (NZOSS). It provides a simple way for others to experiment with R Shiny and to deploy web based R applications. Brent and Bruno demonstrated two initial applications running on the server:

- A linked data proof of concept application by MfE and regional councils - [https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz\\_shiny\\_river\\_app/](https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz_shiny_river_app/)

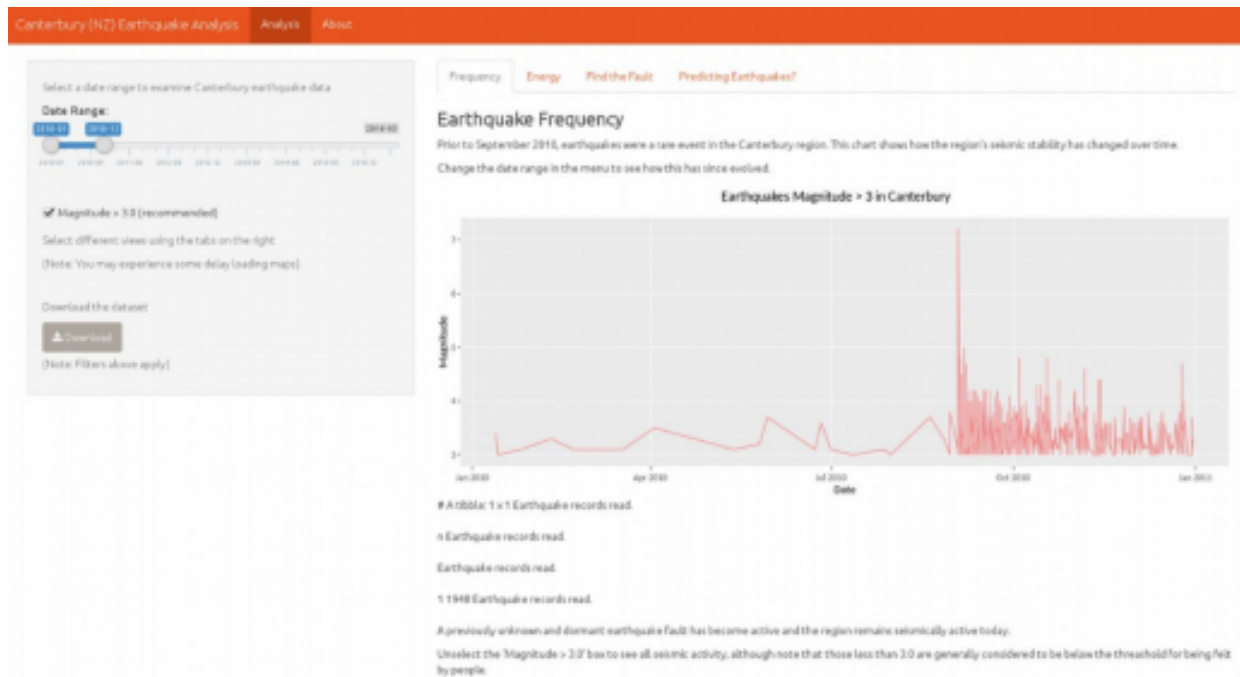


*The tool shows river monitoring sites on a map, coloured according to how the current flow rate compares with the average flow rate at that site.*

(Source: [https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz\\_shiny\\_river\\_app/](https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz_shiny_river_app/))



- A GNS earthquake data application - [https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz\\_example\\_earthquakes/](https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz_example_earthquakes/)



### *Analysis of Canterbury earthquake data*

(Source: : [https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz\\_example\\_earthquakes/](https://shiny.nzoss.org.nz/nz_example_earthquakes/))

## R Shiny Applications

**Dr Uli Muellner** from Epi-interactive, a Wellington based consultancy company in the human and animal health space, demonstrated a number of R Shiny projects that the company has worked on:

- TOOLS/savi - interactive teaching tools for epidemiological analysis (University of Minnesota)
- Vet Intel - capturing primary care data for the New Zealand equine community
- Epidemix - a multi-model application for teaching and visualising disease transmission (Royal Veterinary College, London)
- Annual Data Explorer - visualising data from the New Zealand health survey (Ministry of Health)

## R Shiny Knowledge Share

**Dr Stefan Schliebs** from AUT, who has been working with R Shiny for the last 3 years, shared his experience on application development, packages, data back-ends, deployment and security with the R community.



# Student & Early Career Statisticians Network

by LISA THOMASEN

This year the SECS Network hosted live screenings of the Ihaka lecture series in Palmerston North, Christchurch and Dunedin. The three talks were well received and there was a great opportunity for networking and nibbles prior to each talk.

Coming up later in the year, students at Massey University in Palmerston North are hosting the NZ Mathematics & Statistics Postgraduate conference, 17-20 November. This year the venue is El Rancho in Waikanae. The NZSA is sponsoring the conference and will award a travel scholarship to the student who give the best statistics talk during the conference. We hope that many of our student members will take advantage of the opportunity to attend this year. See [here](#) for more details or to register.

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# News from the Statistics Education Teams

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## Statistics Education News

by MAXINE PFANNKUCH

### Local News

#### International Data Science in School Project

In March **Chris Wild** attended the inaugural meeting of the International Data Science in Schools Project (IDSSP) in Los Angeles representing NZSA. The purpose of this international collaborative project is to scope, facilitate and transform data science education in the last two years of school, and to give teachers the skills they will need to teach it. In the Curriculum phase, an international Curriculum Team (CT) comprising computer scientists and statisticians from major professional associations, aided by an Advisory Group of computer scientists, statisticians, school teachers and curriculum experts and educators from Australia, Canada, England, Germany, New Zealand and the United States, is currently developing a curriculum for the student and teacher programs. This curriculum is planned to be completed before the middle of 2019. A further implementation phase is also planned but will be contingent on sufficient funding. There is more information at the project website, <http://www.idssp.org>.

#### People in statistics education research

Congratulations to **Rhys Jones** for successfully defending his PhD at Cardiff University in April. His PhD was focused on the problem of getting social science students to engage with quantitative ideas. He designed and trialled an intervention, collaboratively with teachers across many curriculum areas, to engage social science school students in statistics and then assessed its impact using a quasi-experimental design (see: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/111418/>).

**Stephanie Budgett** gave a seminar at the University of Glasgow on *Visualising Chance*:

*Learning probability through modelling* and two presentations at Glasgow University's Annual Teachers' Workshop (run for Scottish teachers who teach Advanced Higher Statistics) on *Statistics in the NZ Curriculum*, and *Visualising Probability*.

**Anna Fergusson** has again been invited to present workshops at the American Statistical Association's Teachers' Workshops as part of the Joint Statistical Meeting in July 2018 in Vancouver.

**Rachel Passmore** has enrolled in a PhD in statistics education.

In June 2018 **Pip Arnold** presented a seminar to the Wellington Mathematics Association on *Introduction to posing investigative questions and to describing shape*.

**Maxine Pfannkuch** obtained a three-week Visiting Scholar Award to Tasmania University, where she will do three presentations and a workshop.

Stephanie and Maxine along with **Dani Ben-Zvi** (Haifa University) are Guest Editors of a special issue on "Innovations in statistical modelling to connect data, chance and context" for the journal *ZDM Mathematics Education* that will be published at the end of 2018.

#### CensusAtSchool Project

The CensusAtSchool website is undergoing a new look to make it easier for teachers to navigate and to signal to teachers the essential resource material for teaching and learning a particular curriculum topic. **Chris Wild** and **Rachel Cunliffe** are co-directors of the project and **Atakohu Middleton** writes press releases. **Anne Patel** is responsible for the teaching resources on the website. See: [www.censusatschool.org.nz](http://www.censusatschool.org.nz)

## FutureLearn MOOC - Data to Insight: An Introduction to Data Analysis

Chris Wild, with the assistance of Mike Forster, again ran this eight-week course from March to May 2018. The course is centered on Chris Wild's innovative software *iNZight*.

## Stats Chat Blog ([www.statschat.org.nz](http://www.statschat.org.nz))

Subscribe to Stats Chat to find out Thomas Lumley's latest musings on media statements. Stats Chat was launched by the Department of Statistics, Auckland University, in 2011 and is continuing to have a good hit rate (about 200,000 page-views per year, the majority of the traffic being from NZ). Thomas Lumley and David Scott, University of Auckland, are the main contributors.

## International News

The Tenth International Conference on Teaching Statistics (ICOTS-10), 8-13 July 2018 in Kyoto, Japan. Many New Zealanders are presenting papers at this conference and Chris, Pip, and Stephanie are Topic Convenors. Chris Wild is also a keynote speaker. See: <http://icots.info/10/>

World Statistics Congress 2019, 18-23 July in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) is organizing Invited Paper Sessions for this conference (see <http://www.isi2019.org/>)

The 11th International Research Forum on Statistical Reasoning, Thinking and Literacy will be held 14-20 July 2019 in Los Angeles, USA. The theme of the Forum is *New ways of interacting with data, context and chance in statistical modelling processes* (see <http://srtl.info>).

## NZSA Education Committee

by MIKE CAMDEN

### Education conversations: January to June 2018

#### *Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga*

On 23 March the Government launched its *Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga*.

The hub for this is at

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/>.

We hope that lots of you statisticians out there take a look and contribute your voices to the conversation.

One of the topics is the future of NCEA. We entered the Conversation nice and early, on 19 March, with our statement: Topics for NCEA Review from the NZSA Education Committee. See [here](#). It was well received. (NCEA = National Certificate of Educational Achievement.)

The basics of what we said contain much of our thinking about statistical teaching and assessment in this country:

*We'd like to see statistics in schools evolving towards the vision for it in The NZ Curriculum, informed by the current rapid developments in software and pedagogy, and informed by the changes in the world of data. We'd like the assessment system to be a positive part of this evolution. (It has been doing its best.)*

*The ways in which today's students will be able to and will need to use statistical skills is changing fast. We'd like the assessment system to be flexible and able to deal with change.*

*Assessment in this form of statistics is new to us all, and NZ is ahead of the crowd, internationally. All the players will need plenty of support: written resources and professional development. This is for teachers, moderators, examiners, and their supporters. All these people need clear guidelines. This improves fairness for students, and avoids frustration for*

teachers.

*The content knowledge required to teach and assess the New Zealand Curriculum for Statistics is still new and challenging, and it takes time to build confidence in understanding the key concepts. There are also new technologies, methods and ways of thinking about data.*

*The NCEA system should respond to issues identified through the external moderation process for assessment by providing professional development for TEACHING not just assessment, including:*

- *development of teacher content knowledge and conceptual knowledge*
- *development of teacher pedagogical content knowledge*
- *development of learning pathways and progressions.*

You can have your say on NCEA [here](#).

### **Literacy for University Entrance**

We also entered the conversation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) on the University Entrance (UE) Literacy List. That's the list of Achievement Standards that students can use to demonstrate literacy. The current version does have two statistical standards that involve reading, reasoning, or writing. Our statement is *Literacy for University Entrance: Views from NZSA Education Committee*. It also lives on CensusAtSchool, see [here](#). In summary we said:

*In the light of:*

- *student difficulties in meeting UE literacy requirements,*
- *the large amount of UE literacy-relevant work often done at present for the statistics*

*standards, especially the internals,*

- *and the large number of students who attempt NCEA Level 3 Statistics Achievement Standards,*

*we would like to see a solution where more statistical standards count for UE literacy.*

### **We're also interested in other conversations**

- Establishing an online statistics teaching journal for New Zealand. The first issue is likely to be on initial explorations in variation.
- The Ministry's Digital Technology Hangarau Matihiko. See its Technology Online newsletter at <http://technology.tki.org.nz/>.
- The definition of 'survey' in school documents
- New links with the Royal Statistical Society's Education and Statistical Literacy Committee, via Rhys Jones
- The International Data Science in Schools project: [www.idssp.org/pages/about.html](http://www.idssp.org/pages/about.html)
- NCEA external assessments (the November exams)
- The Statistics Teachers' Days around the country in November, including the one attached to the NZSA conference at Massey Palmerston North (Tue 27 Nov).

A conversation with us?

If you'd like a conversation with us, try our new email address: [nzsaedcom@gmail.com](mailto:nzsaedcom@gmail.com).

Thanks to Website Administrator, Catherine, our improved webpage is:

[www.stats.org.nz/education-committee-nzsa/](http://www.stats.org.nz/education-committee-nzsa/).

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# Local News

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## Statistics at ...

### AgResearch Statistics Group

by MARYANN STAINCLIFFE

The last 6 months at AgResearch have been busy with a farewell for **Siva Ganesh** and new arrivals **Peter Green** and **Jie Kang**.

At the beginning of the year **Jie Kang** joined us as a PhD student. In 2017, he graduated BSc(Hons) in statistics from the University of Otago and in 2018 he was awarded the Teagasc Walsh Fellowship. His main supervisors are **Ken Dodds** (AgResearch) and **Phillip Wilcox** (Otago).

In April we gathered for our annual team get-together in Lincoln. This was a great time to connect with each other, with the highlight being a team dinner hosted by **Alasdair Noble** and his family. The main theme for the gathering was our response to “big data” and the types of data we expect in Agriculture as we move into the digital agriculture space.

At the beginning of May **Peter Green** joined the team. For his first two months he is based at Ruakura, Hamilton, being mentored by Harold Henderson, before joining the statistics team at Grasslands, Palmerston North. Peter was awarded a PhD in statistics in 2016 from the University of Otago, and has a background in mathematics,

computer science and economics. His research interests include statistical computing, climate reconstructions, and mathematical biology.

At the end of May **Siva Ganesh** retired after 6.5 years at AgResearch Grasslands and moved to his wife Jenny’s home village of Hirwaun in South Wales. He will also be much closer to his siblings who are all in the East coast of North America. Ganesh grew up in Sri Lanka, before earning his bachelor’s degree in mathematical statistics at Jaffna University in the north of Sri Lanka. He then received a scholarship to study for his master’s degree at the University of Reading in England, and went on to complete his PhD in multivariate statistics at Reading, with **Wojtek Krzanowski** as his supervisor. Ganesh was a lecturer at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia for 3.5 years, before moving to Massey University in Palmerston North in mid-1991. Ganesh will be very much missed by his former colleagues and students, and we wish him well for his retirement on the other side of the world.

Over the next few months we have more team movements with farewells and welcomes that we will cover in the next update.



*Annual Team get together at Lincoln in April 2018.*

*Team members from left: front row: Vanessa Cave, Maryann Staincliffe, Esther Meenken, Siva Ganesh, Catherine Cameron, Chikako van Koten; second row: Ruy Jauregui Sandoval, Shen-Yen Hea, Harold Henderson, Nauman Maqbool, Catherine McKenzie; third row: Rachael Ashby, Timothy Bilton, Ken Dodds, Paul Maclean, Dongwen Luo, Alasdair Noble Rudiger Brauning. Absent: Peter Green, Peter Johnstone, Aurelie Laugraud, Martin Upsdell.*



In the past six months, the department has moved from the School of Public Health and Psychosocial Studies to the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences. This strategic placement has the department reporting to the Associate Dean for International Research and Enterprise, and supporting research staff and postgraduate students across a wide range of disciplines in health and applied sciences.

Senior staff in the department have been involved in several successful funding rounds. **Alain Vandal** was involved in two teams securing a total of \$450,000 from Health Research Council for Feasibility Studies and Clinical Research Training Fellowships as part of his dual role with Ko Awatea, Counties Manukau District Health Board. **Priya Parmar** was involved in a successful Health Research Council Project application for \$1.2 million with the National Institute for Stroke

and Applied Neurosciences. The department has also been a successful recipient of a \$165,000 fund from the Ministry of Health to assess the Substance Use and Mental Health component of the 2017 New Zealand Health Survey. This application was led by **Nick Garrett** and supported by **Alain Vandal** and **Robert Borotkanics**. To support this project, the department has hired three interns; **Thibault Eudes** from the Universite de Bretagne-Sud and **Stephane Janicot**, a former student from ENSAI - France. **Brice Valentin Kok Shun**, a current student with AUT's School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences, also joins us in a part-time position. **Rose Sisk** will be departing at the end of June to begin a PhD in the UK. Rose joined the department as an intern in 2016 before becoming a full-time Research Officer supporting many research projects within the department. We wish Rose well for her future studies.



Since our last newsletter we have had a very busy and rewarding period at UC.

Not only has **Jennifer Brown** received the Campbell Award for her lifetime of contribution to statistics, she was also awarded a Senior Fellowship to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) of the UK. The HEA champions teaching excellence in the UK and in other countries.



**Daniel Gerhard** has been honoured by receiving the Emerging Researcher Award for significant contributions on theoretical developments in methodology for dose response and hierarchical modelling, including his upcoming book on “Dose-Response Analysis with R” with Ritz, Streibig and Jensen.



**Mike Steel** has become a Distinguished Fellow of the International Society for Computational Biology (ISCB) for his “outstanding contributions to mathematical and computational phylogenetics, and for service to the academic evolutionary biology research community.” The ISCB is a large international body that runs leading bioinformatics conferences and is active in mainstream journals such as Bioinformatics.

As reported in the NZSA2017 conference report in the [previous Newsletter](#), **Losana Vatu** and **Sarah Sonal** both received honourable mentions in the student prizes. **Rodelyn Avila** won the second prize at the Young Statisticians Conference (YSC2017) Video Competition, designed for the early career researchers who are unable to attend the conference in person. The video entry is available from [YouTube](#).

Well done Jennifer, Daniel, Mike, Losana, Sarah and Rodelyn!

**Varvara Vetrova** was recently awarded an MBIE Smart Ideas grant (with **Michael Cree**, **Eibe Frank**, **Jerry Cooper** and **Brent Martin**) to use deep learning algorithms for image classification of pest plants and insects. The goal is to develop technology to enable users, like farmers, who need to identify unexpected and unknown plants or insects, via upload of a photo for realtime classification. See more [here](#) or on [YouTube](#).

On the teaching side of things, the highly successful Masters in Applied Data Science has grown in popularity, with our first cohort graduating in autumn 2018. The newly formed Data Science major, offered for the first time in 2018, is also looking to be popular with budding BSc students.

On the personal side, **Blair Robertson** has welcomed his second daughter (Sadie Lee) into the world, congratulations!

We have recently been joined by **Dr Heyang (Thomas) Li** as a fixed term Lecturer in Statistics and Data Science. Thomas finished his PhD at the Australian National University where he

researched a range of image processing algorithms focussing on X-ray CT. He has also worked on bespoke algorithm research at Monash University and other organisations in Australia and has won numerous prizes and awards. His current research projects include Graphical Processing Unit (GPU)

accelerated image classification/segmentation, phylogenetic trees, image processing and classification algorithms. Thomas just won an NVIDIA grant to provide GPU's for computing resources in his research.

## Plant and Food Research

by DUNCAN HEDDERLEY

We have two new members of the team: **Bridget Armstrong**, working part-time at our Lincoln site while completing her Masters at University of Canterbury; and **Catherine McKenzie** (from AgResearch), who will be starting in July at our Te Puke site.

Helping scientists manage their data better has been a theme for us for the last year. **Ruth Butler**, **Linley Jesson**, **Andrew McLachlan** and **Maryam Alavi** have been travelling about, doing a lot of seminars and hands-on training about Tidy Data principles and Excel at our various sites. **Carmel Woods** has recently switched to a

follow-up project, establishing standards for other forms of data, and training 'data stewards' among the scientists to help researchers implement them.

Another theme has been **Peter Jaksons**, **Linley Jesson** and **Patrick Connolly** forming a Data Applications group, to look at data automation and pipelines. One of their first projects has been helping implement the APSIM crop modelling simulation tool in a massively parallel computing context.

Amidst all that, **Andrew McLachlan** still managed to take a month off, tangoing and sight-seeing in Argentina.

## Statistics Research Associates

by ROBERT DAVIES

We celebrated the birthday of **David Vere-Jones** and the visit of **Valerie Isham** with lunch at Waimea Cafe at Waikanae. Valerie is a professor at University College, London and was visiting New Zealand universities as the NZ Maths Society's Forder lecturer.

*The photo opposite is Valerie and David*



## Interesting happenings at UoA

*New data portal a “complete game-changer”:* The Department of Statistics has gained access to a world-leading government data project that is a huge advance for academics studying New Zealanders’ well-being, says **Andrew Sporle**.

**Crunching the numbers to combat child poverty:** An estimated 12 percent of New Zealand children are living in material hardship. Aiming to change that are researchers **Dr Barry Milne**, Andrew Sporle and their colleagues. Details [here](#).

Thirty years ago, scientists with 400 human blood samples might have measured five or 10 things about each one. Now, with those same 400 samples, they can measure 200, 2000 or even 20,000 things - but that high dimension brings risks, statistically speaking. That’s where **Dr Beatrix Jones**, focuses her attention. See [here](#) for more.

## Ihaka Lecture Series

The department was delighted with a second Ihaka Lecture Series, which focused on data visualisation and featured experts **Dianne Cook** (*Myth-busting and apophenia in data visualisation: is what you see really there?*), **Paul Murrell** (*Making colour accessible*) and **Alberto Cairo** (*Visual trumpery: How charts lie and how they make us smarter*). The theme for next year’s Ihaka Lecture Series is machine learning.



*Dianne*



*Paul*



*Andrew*



*Beatrix*



*Alberto*

## New faces

Four new staff members joined us at the beginning of the new academic year: **Ms Emma Wilson**, Professional Teaching Fellow; **Dr Shanika Wickramasuriya**, Lecturer; **Dr Beatrix Jones**, Senior Lecturer; and **Dr Simon Harris**, Associate Professor. In May, **Dr Azam Asanjarani** joined as a lecturer after completing a postdoc at the University of Melbourne.

## Rising up the ranks

The University of Auckland has been ranked in the top 50 worldwide for Statistics and Operations Research, according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2018. Read more [here](#).

*(With thanks to Atakohu Middleton for allowing me to extensively plagiarise the last 3 department newsletters she wrote at the beginning of 2018!! )*

## University of Otago: Biostatistics Unit

by ANDREW GRAY

Since the last report, temperatures in Dunedin have plummeted while excitement in the still freshly formed Biostatistics Unit has risen. This is likely to be simply correlation, with the more plausible causative factors being Director Associate Professor **Robin Turner**'s leadership and sense of fun in the new unit and **Dr Ella Iosua**'s return from parental leave. The creation of the new unit back in November last year, part of the Dunedin School of Medicine Dean's Department, has not required us to shift offices from the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, which given the boxes and piles of documents in some of our offices is just as well.

Additional good news arrived with the announcement of HRC project funding this year, with three of the Unit's biostatisticians (**Dr Claire Cameron**, **Andrew Gray**, and **Dr Ari Samaranayaka**) being named investigators on

successful grant applications.

**Robin** and **Andrew**, with help from **Ella**, have been members of a working group looking at teaching statistics in engaging ways to first year students. **Claire** has been working with **Chuen Yen Hong** (Department of Mathematics and Statistics) to run Preventive and Social Medicine's HASC413 (Biostatistics) paper, with some special appearances by **Robin**, while **Dr Jimmy Zeng** contributed remotely while on his study leave. **Robin** has also been busy giving seminars and lectures about her own research and the new unit around the University and even down in Invercargill, with help from Ella and Ari. **Ari** has continued to offer his very popular and successful Stata workshops, with help from Claire.

Unfortunately, we also had to say goodbye for now to **Dr Michel de Lange** who was here while Ella was on maternity leave and wish him all the best.

## University of Waikato

by CHAITANYA JOSHI

**Steven Miller** was pleasantly surprised to be presented with a Distinguished Research Award from the Institute for Global Business Research after his colleague in the School of Management and Marketing, Associate Professor

**Roger Brooksbank**, presented their paper at a recent conference in New Orleans. **Lyn Hunt** is looking forward to her study leave starting in July. **Chaitanya Joshi** has been busy with baby duties after the birth of second daughter Mira in March.