



From the President, Mario D'Antuono

A belated but the warmest of greetings to all members of the region for the New Year, and may it be a safe and prosperous one. Special thanks to Graham Hepworth who has now stepped into the more salubrious position of Vice-President and hopefully can relax a little



after his term as Numero Uno!

The year is already upon us and behind the scenes the committees have been busy with organizing the next regional conference in Kiama, New South Wales for December 2011. A preliminary

flyer appears with this newsletter in the mailout. We hope that you will find the time to come to the meeting and enjoy the location and of course the excellent invited speakers that have agreed to come and share their knowledge and friendship, and not forgetting the valuable and important contributions from the membership at large.

Some of our members were lucky enough to journey to the IBC in Florianópolis, Brazil in

December 2010 and a report from Rod Ball and Sally Galbraith will give a NZ and Aussie perspective respectively. The new Vice-President elected at the meeting is Clarice Demétrio from ESALQ (Escola Superior de Agricultura "Luiz de Queiroz"), University of São Paulo, Brazil who will take up her term as IBS President when Kaye Basford finishes at the end of 2011. Many of you who attended the Coffs Harbour 2007 meeting may remember Clarice as that bubbly and charming person who visited us, whilst also doing joint research with Chris 'Samba' Brien.

On a sad note, Roger Littlejohn passed away earlier this month and a tribute to Roger is presented by David Baird.

Many thanks to all those members who have paid their subscriptions for this year, and a gentle reminder to those who have not yet paid, can you please attend to this as soon as possible. New members are most welcome. See the website for application forms.

The details of the current regional council appear in this newsletter and the region's website which I ask you to check regularly for the latest news especially on the forthcoming conference.

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Australasian Region - council

In 2011, the regional council comprises

President: Mario D'Antuono (Department of Agriculture and Food, WA)

Vice-president: Graham Hepworth (University of Melbourne)

Secretary: Patrick Graham (University of Otago)

Treasurer: Warren Müller (CSIRO)

Newsletter correspondent: Duncan Hedderley (Plant & Food Research)

Regional website manager: Hans Hockey (Biometrics Matters)

IBS President: Kaye Basford (University of Queensland)

IBS Representative Council Members - David Baird (VSN Limited) and Alan Welsh (Australian National University)



Biometrics by the Blowholes

**The International Biometric Society
Australasian Region Conference**

**The Sebel Harbourside Hotel
Kiama, New South Wales
December 4-8, 2011**

The committee is pleased to announce that Kiama in New South Wales (about 90 minutes south of Sydney by car) will be the location for the next regional conference. As I understand, Kiama is home of the largest blowhole in the world (Big Blowhole) and has a second blowhole in the area (Little Blowhole).

Special thanks to Philip McCloud as the chairman of the local organizing committee (LOC), and his committee of Sally Galbraith, Gillian Heller, Hans Hockey, Emma Knight, Ian Marschner and Warren Muller for all their hard work and in selecting the venue at the [Sebel Harbourside Hotel](#) in Kiama.

The Scientific programme committee (SPC) is chaired by Ian Marschner and has on its committee Kaye Basford, David Baird and James Curran. I am also on both committees.

A preliminary 1-page flyer appears with this newsletter. Please print it and **PUT IT ON YOUR NOTICEBOARDS** to remind you!

Thank you!

More details will appear regularly on the region's website at

<http://www.biometrics.org.au/conferences.html>

Report on IBC2010 by Rod Ball (edited by 'O Presidente' – Portuguese for The President!)

The International Biometrics Conference (IBC) was held in Florianópolis, Brazil, in December 2010 and amongst the NZ attendees were David Baird (VSN, formerly AgResearch), Esther Meenken (Plant and Food), Richard Barker (U. Otago), Kevin Chang (U. Auckland), Dongwen Luo (AgResearch) and Said Shahtahmasebi (WINTEC).

There were 989 contributed abstracts, and 62 invited abstracts, covering a range of statistical application and methodology areas, including experimental design, genomics, bioinformatics, high dimensional data and Bayesian methods. With up to 5 concurrent sessions, it was not possible to attend even all the genomics or genetics interest sessions.

The organisers kept us busy with buses arriving to take us from the hotels to the conference venue as early as 7am. This made it difficult to get over jet lag especially after lunch in the darkened lecture rooms.



There were some interesting conference tours: Esther, Said, Mario and I were on Tour 8 (the only one not full) because we didn't book in advance. This turned out to be the best (we

think) - a boat cruise to the fortaleza (island forts) in the Florianópolis bay, which is very large, with lunch at a beach restaurant on another island. Some of the people had swims at the beach and from the boat later when it stopped in the middle of the bay! (Esther and Said were daring whilst Mario had a beer or two on the boat).

The forts were built to stop the Spanish, but this was not successful. The story was that when the Spanish came, the Portuguese fled. This might have been smart particularly because they hadn't even been paid for 14 months. Later, the queen of Portugal went to Spain and negotiated a swap for some land further south.

Also on the boat were Robert Elston (Cleveland), inventor of the 'peeling' algorithm, uncle of David Elston (BioSS, Scotland) and Jean Louis Foulley (France).

There was a large number of creditable contributions from the local region including talks and posters, particularly applied work. They are however, short of qualified statisticians to teach in universities in Brazil, and are even hiring engineers to teach statistics, according to one Brazilian professor I met. If interested you would have to learn Portuguese!

I was somewhat disappointed in the numbers of European and North American delegates which seemed lower than the last IBC I attended (Australia 2004). Perhaps it was because of too much snow some of them couldn't make it.

Report on IBC2010 by Sally Galbraith (Picture by 'O Presidente')

After an unscheduled overnight stop in São Paulo, during which I was fortunate to benefit from fellow Aussie Chris Brien's (The other SAMBA Dancer!) excellent Portuguese language skills, we arrived on the beautiful island of Florianópolis (known as Floripa to the locals) on Sunday 5 December.

The conference kicked off with a welcome reception on Sunday evening highlighting Brazilian food and folklore (the latter I think involving a cow, but I was too far up the back to catch most of the action).

On Monday the conference was formally opened by Andrew Mead, after which the very dense schedule of parallel invited and contributed sessions began. Some highlights of the day (for me) included the sessions on "Breakthroughs in longitudinal data" and "Genomic data integration using sparse matrix decomposition methods" (unfortunately on at the same time, so I could only go to half the talks in each session). In the afternoon I attended the "Genomics" and "Experimental Design in Clinical Trials" contributed sessions, where my talks were scheduled. Very interesting sessions (very relieved to have talks over on the first day).

On Tuesday I was asked to chair the 8.15am session on Experimental Design. Despite the early hour and an embarrassing lack of knowledge in this area, I found the talks very interesting (and the speakers very cooperative in keeping to time).

Other highlights of the scientific program over the next few days (obviously biased to own interests), included a talk on recursively partitioned mixture models for array-based genetic data, a talk describing the difficulty of identifying gene expression patterns for chronic fatigue-type diseases, and a very interesting invited session on missing data in clinical trials.

The social program included the traditional mid-conference day off. Rashly, I had chosen the

one "for those looking for more contact with nature" and that certainly proved to be the case. Fortunately the breathtaking spectacle as the jungle fell away to reveal a pristine deserted beach was worth the trek through the dense jungle. After enough time to swim and sunburn, we trekked back to a delicious lunch.

On the way back I think I heard David Baird explaining the intricacies of reverse cycle air conditioning to a couple of fascinated American colleagues, but I may have been hallucinating at that stage. Hats off to the two people who attempted (and in fact completed) the hike wearing thongs! (the footwear). At least they didn't have to contend with customs on return to Australia. (I now know what happens to your



footwear when you declare them). Despite some hiccups with the bus transport, the conference dinner was a spectacle of Brazilian dancing, food and

importantly, cocktails.

As usual, the opportunity to socialise and network with other conference delegates was a privilege. Other Aussies at the conference were Kim-Anh LeCao (U. Queensland), Kaye Basford (U. Queensland and IBS President), Chris Brien (U. South Australia), Stephen Bush (U. Technology, Sydney), Mario D'Antuono ('O Presidente'), Hideyasu Shimatsu (Geoscience Australia), Matthew Ritchie (WEHI, Melbourne), Veronica Rodriguez (ABARE-BRS, Canberra), Warren Muller (CSIRO, Canberra), and Emlyn Williams (ANU, Canberra).

Tribute to Roger Littlejohn by David Baird



It is with great sadness that I inform the readers of Roger Littlejohn's passing (March 6, 2011) after a brave battle with melanoma at the young age of 56. Roger worked as a biometrician for AgResearch at the

Invermay Research Centre (Dunedin, NZ) for nearly 30 years, and was an expert in time series and point processes, with over 200 papers and also contributed many procedures to the GenStat procedure library. Roger was a very practical and creative statistician finding

innovative solutions to analyse animal behavioural studies and hormone profile studies, amongst the wide range of applications and research areas he was involved in. He was a regular attendee at Biometrics and GenStat conferences. He contributed generously to our profession as president, webmaster and newsletter editor of the NZSA. I will miss his enthusiasm, enquiring mind, and his jovial and dependable friendship. He leaves his wife Annette and two school aged children, Jeremy and Tabitha.

Tributes to Roger have been and can be posted on <http://stats.org.nz>

[President: The Australasian Region of the Society has also expressed its sincere condolences to the family on behalf of the committee and all of its members. This has been posted to the above site.]

Other news

Members of the region are also involved in two other conferences this year:

i) Australasian Applied Statistics Conference (GenStat/ASREML) in Palm Cove, Queensland (July 12-15, 2011). Please see their conference website <http://aasc2011.science.qld.gov.au> for full details.

ii) New Zealand Statistical Association Conference at the University of Auckland 28 - 31 August, 2011. Please see their conference website www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/nzsa2011/ for more details.

Best wishes to all involved and for a successful and rewarding conference.

Acknowledgements

This newsletter was devised by Mario D'Antuono with special contributions from various members. The content was reviewed by members of the council and LOC/SPC. Thank you to all for your support and revisions.

Special thanks to Hans Hockey on improving the flyer on the 3x3 square matrix of my collage of topics that tried to give an impression of the specialities of the invited speakers.

Feedback

All comments and suggestion are most welcome. Please forward any feedback on the newsletter to Mario D'Antuono.

Note: Some minor corrections made to online version - Thanks to Harold Henderson. March 18, 2011.

Note: Link to Kiama 20011 conference on page 2 amended. March 25, 2011.

Note: Tony Pettitt has resigned from IBS Council. Amended April 2, 2011.
