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Editeurs responsables/Verantwoordelijke uitgevers :
Sophie Vanbelle, Service de Statistique, Institut de Mathématique (B37)
Université de Liège, 4000 Liège
Herbert Thijs, Center for Statistics, Hasselt University
Agoralaan - building D, 3590 Diepenbeek

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Website of the Society

www.sbs-bvs.be

B-Stat News editor

Sophie Vanbelle : sophie.vanbelle@ulg.ac.be
Herbert Thijs: herbert.thijs@uhasselt.be

Webmaster

Laurence Seidel : laurence.seidel@ulg.ac.be

Editorial

Don't we all know it … time flies!! Having been elected president of the Belgian Statistical Society, I wrote my first editorial in B-Stat News in May 2008. The current issue of B-Stat News is already the last one under my presidency. Indeed, new elections are on the agenda of the general assembly meeting that will take place during the 18th annual meeting of our society (October, 13/14-15, 2010).

This year we meet in Spa. Thomas Bruss, the scientific committee and the organizing committee prepared a nice scientific program. The venue is Domaine Sol Cress in the attractive city of Spa. So 'being there and taking part' is the best decision to make!!

It is with pleasure that I look back on the three years of my presidency. We had nice annual meetings in Namur (2008) and Lommel (2009) and the upcoming meeting in Spa looks promising. Besides the annual meetings, our society supported a lot of statistical/stochastic events (workshops, conferences, short courses,…) organized by our members at the different universities and companies.

Let me share with you two personal reasons why I am particularly happy with this specific number of B-Stat News.

The first one is that in this issue I can offer our members the result of a long conversation (in 2009) with Prof. em. Jef Teugels, the current president of the International Statistical Institute. At the time I was a mathematics student in Leuven, he was one of my 'young' professors. From him I learned the foundations of probability and measure theory (using difficult but excellent books like 'Introduction to measure and probability' by Kingman and Taylor (1966) and 'A course in probability theory' by Chung (1968)). It was nice to have an afternoon long conversation with him resulting in a long interview, containing a lot of interesting facts and at the same time a number of interesting ideas for further discussion about stochastics, science and society. You can read the interview in this bulletin.

The second reason is that in this issue we include the first announcement of the International Symposium on Recent Advances in Statistics and Probability. This symposium will take place at Hasselt University (May, 19-20, 2011) and it will be organized on the occasion of the retirement (at the end of the academic year 2010 – 2011) of Prof. Noël Veraverbeke (one of my PhD supervisors in the period 1974-1978). We are very happy to announce already the scientific program of that meeting. Further details

(also about the social program) will follow, but please be sure to block these dates in your agenda!!

I would like to thank all the society's board members for their contributions during the different board meetings. Allow me to mention one name specifically: thank you Gentiane, you did a great job. Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the society, because they are the society!!

I wish the society all the best for the future.

Paul Janssen
President SBS-BVS
August 31, 2010

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BELGIAN STATISTICIANS

with Jozef (Jef) Teugels

First recollection, primary and secondary school

Paul: Jef, tell us a bit about your childhood and your school time.
Jef: I was born in Londerzeel, but in 1942 we moved to Kontich, close to Mortsel. My first recollection goes back to the war year 1943. In a bombardment our house, where the cellar was the hiding place, got seriously damaged. My primary education started in the community school, where I stayed for five years. I then moved to Sint Lievens College in Antwerp. The school, founded by Lieven Gevaert (of the Agfa-Gevaert company) was, at that time, one of the few schools that focused on teaching in Dutch. Making the Flemish people aware of the possibilities was crucial in the educational philosophy of the school. The excellent teachers of that school have had an influential impact on my education. In the middle of my secondary school period, I followed Latin and Greek. I got distracted by many other things including youth movement, girls, music, … I redid the fourth year due to problematic results in Greek and mathematics. In the one but last year (poësis) the geometry teacher convinced me to take my studies more seriously. I gave up my first dream to become a composer and followed the advice of my father: 'first a diploma, music comes later'. By the time I finished secondary school, I managed to be back in the group of better students.

Paul: How did you decide to move from Latin and Greek, your main subjects in secondary school, to higher education in mathematics and physics?
Jef: During the last year of secondary school we went to Averbode to spend some days in seclusion. The man that guided us during these days asked me

about my future plans. When I told him about my plan to take an education in music, he said: 'Sorry my boy, but to survive in music you should have started a long time ago. So, is there anything else you are confident about?' He also convinced me that philosophy, which was my second choice (I was studying Sartre at that time), was not the most obvious choice if one wanted to make a living. I finally told him that I was not bad at mathematics. So his advice was: 'Why don't you take mathematics?'. Although it sounds like this was my third choice, I did feel comfortable with my choice because I did like the analytical way of thinking as well as the sense of invention which are both typical for mathematics.

Studies in Leuven

Paul: Having made that choice, you arrived in Leuven.
Jef: No, since coming from the Greek-Latin program, I had to first do an additional year before I was allowed to enroll in the studies in mathematics. In the Sint Jan Berchmanscollege in Antwerp, I followed – together with a group of students, who prepared for the entrance exam for engineering – a preparatory year. Then the 'big step' to Leuven followed. The first two years I combined mathematics and physics.

Paul: What was the program in mathematics? Was it mainly pure mathematics or was there already room for applied courses?
Jef: Very few courses were geared to students in mathematics, because most courses were also taken by students in physics and engineering students. Only one course on groups and matrices was a course separate for the students in mathematics. But most of the material that we studied in analysis, geometry and algebra had a focus on applying methods to practical problems.

Bridging Leuven and Purdue

Paul: At what time in your study period came your interest for stochastics?
Jef: After the second year, I went to Prof. Florin to ask whether I could do a 'licence' (master) thesis under his supervision. He advised me to work with Marcel Neuts, who was one of the former students of Florin and who was back in Belgium, after studying at Stanford with Samuel Karlin, to serve in the army. After the second year I started reading 'Mathematical Methods of Statistics' by Harald Cramer, hard to read but a 'wow' book.
During a number of months, I had many conversations with Marcel Neuts related to my reading and, when he went back to Purdue, he gave me a subject on multivariate discrete distributions for my thesis. He promised me

to find an assistantship in Purdue to work there on my PhD thesis. So this is the reason that we went to Purdue. But first I did my military service in Belgium; I was lucky to have a chief, with an engineering background, that needed numerical methods. So I got a lot of freedom to study and to spend time in Leuven to gather the scientific literature that was needed to solve the problems he was working on.

Paul: How unusual was it at that time to go for a PhD?
Jef: It was unusual to go for a PhD. At that time no assistantships for mathematics existed in Leuven, all of the practical sessions were given by teachers from secondary schools. The first time that there were positions for teaching assistants in mathematics in Leuven was, when I returned from the USA, in 1967. Even grants from the National Science Foundations for PhD studies in mathematics were very atypical at that time.

Paul: So at that time the idea that there should be a link between education and research was not there?
Jef: Not at all. But let me go back to studying abroad. Many students that were with me in the second license in mathematics and physics went into academia (at that time the university life in Flanders started to bloom, so there were many opportunities in academia), but hardly any one finished his/her studies abroad. Also for our families it was very uncommon to go and study in the USA. After my military service I got married and we went to the States by boat, which was cheaper than flying. So the family thought that this was quite an adventure for such a young couple.

Paul: So this was a kind of a 'love boat'?
Jef: Yes, because we left three days after our marriage.

Paul: How different was the American university system from the Belgian one and how did that influence, once you were back in Leuven, your way of teaching and doing research?
Jef: The main difference is that you start in one of the programs, where you take three to four courses per trimester. For each course you get homework weekly and each course had two or three examinations besides the final examination. It was very, very hard and I worked like a devil. In Leuven we were used to repeat and to reproduce, except for the optional courses where they expected more from us. But the difference between the two systems was huge. After the course work, I did my qualification exam (eight topics!!) that gave me 'the ticket' needed to start the PhD work. They really check whether you have the background needed for an academic career. Once in the PhD program a very nice thing was that the variety of courses that you could take in that program was very wide. At the time I was studying there more than one hundred courses were offered. If I compare the

course in probability that I took at Purdue with the 'rolling dices' and 'ball and sac' problems we learned in Leuven, these were at a completely different scientific level. For the PhD I used semi Markov methodology for problems in queuing theory, where I could make some nice contributions.

Bridging Purdue and Leuven

Paul: After that period in Purdue, you came back to Leuven.
Jef: This was not obvious, because I got a large number of offers for positions in the USA. At the end, Rita and I decided not to open the envelopes anymore. I also got, via Florin, an offer from Leuven to become his 'associate professor' (monthly salary of approximately 500 Euro in 1967). The University of Tennessee made me an offer that was many times this amount. But we decided to come back, because we were convinced we needed to return to Flanders to help improve higher education, especially in probability and statistics.

Paul: So, you were the first professor in Leuven, teaching stochastics?
Jef: That's correct. I was the first professor talking about sigma-algebras.

Paul: What about the French speaking universities?
Jef: At the UCL there was Ballieu, an excellent mathematician teaching measure theory. And at the ULB there was a group with a good international reputation around Jean Teghem.

Paul: Why did 'stochastics' find its place in the higher education only in the late sixties? If you compare with the Netherlands it looks like we missed the train that started soon after World War II.
Jef: It is indeed true that – at the end of the sixties - the difference in 'stochastics' expertise between Flanders and the Netherlands was enormous. Also the expertise in the French speaking part – in spite of the fact that there were excellent people in probability in France – was rather limited. Maybe we should give this question to an historian with interest in the history of mathematics.

Leuven and research

Paul: The first years in Leuven must have been pioneering years?
Jef: The first two years were very hard. There was no spirit nor tradition of research. The year that I arrived was also the first year that Leuven appointed assistants in mathematics: Herman Callaert and Lea Vermeire. Herman Callaert came from astronomy and started research in stochastic

processes under my supervision, Lea Vermeire started research in geometry under the supervision of Lieven Vanhecke.

Paul: When did the situation with respect to the research environment change?
Jef: After two years, the situation became cumbersome. There was no counterpart for scientific discussions on the material that I developed for my PhD thesis and the ideas – that should result in papers – were evaporating. But in 1969 I went on vacation to Budapest. I arranged a visit to Alfred Renyi and I told him how desperate I was. Renyi promised me to talk to David Kendall, who was at that time heading the Statistical Laboratory in Cambridge and to arrange a visit so that I could get in contact with his group. He also mentioned the magnificent library at Cambridge University. On February 1, 1970 I received from Budapest a letter announcing the death of Renyi. So I was even more desperate and decided to write to Kendall myself telling him the story. However, no reply came. But in March, John Kingman, at that time a student of Kendall, came to Brussels to give lectures at the ULB. Since I generalized to the semi-Markov setting some Markov theory results by Kingman, I decided to attend these lectures. Before he started his presentations, he asked: 'Is Teugels in de audience, because after the lectures I want to have a discussion with him?'. Kingman told me that Kendall would send a letter. One month later I received that letter on a Friday and the next Monday I took the boat to Cambridge, surprising Kendall with my quick action. I stayed in Cambridge for a month. During this fantastic stay in Cambridge, I came across a PhD thesis on regular variation by Nick Bingham, also a student of Kendall. So the next day when I asked Kendall about him, he said that Bingham was working at Westfield College in London. Kendall said: 'Just call him to make an appointment and get out.'. Our first meeting was a big success, it was clear that collaboration was natural. And this was the real start of the research career and at the same time the end of a desperate period … a story that I often tell to postdoctoral researchers when they don't believe in their own possibilities!!

Paul: But, Jef, at that time there was the Centre for Operational Research and Econometrics (CORE) at Leuven. What was the impact on research from CORE?
Jef: CORE was created in the late sixties by econometric researchers from UCL, but also the KULeuven supported CORE. When the French speaking group was moved out from Leuven in 1968, CORE still stayed for an extra number of years and I was able to join the institute on a part-time basis for four years. This was indeed an institute with an excellent and international research environment. Although the research focus was on economics, they did have of course a number of excellent researchers in mathematics.

Paul: Was CORE the first example of a group of researchers working in stochastics?
Jef: I think stochastics grew step by step; there is no point in time that – suddenly – stochastics was there. Two things that helped in the growth of stochastic methodology (probability and statistics) were, first, that I became chairman of the newly created Department of Mathematics at the KULeuven in 1969, which gave me the opportunity to have a voice in the policy and, second, that there was and still is the multiplicative effect of my PhD students supervising their PhD students, etc.

Where are we now

Paul: Jef, you can look back at a career of 40 years. Where are we now?
Jef: I'm happy to see that the flag has been taken over by other people and other institutions and that the quality is impeccable. I think that, when I look at the group of PhD students that I supervised, I can say that I had at least four of five students that I consider better than myself, but I always tried to give whatever I could give. Allow me to say something nice about myself: 'I always tried to find out what a person was hoping to achieve and if I could help him/her do so then I would.'.
I'm also very pleased when I see the large variety of topics covered in the PhD dissertations that I supervised. Also important for me was to make sure that the quality of the PhD work was high.

Paul: In recent years we see a lot of activities, almost a move, from classical probability theory and stochastic processes towards applied statistics, biostatistics, …What is your opinion about that?
Jef: That's good. I'm very pleased with that. But good applications require a solid mathematical background. Poor background results in poor applied research. So, I will always defend pure research. Moreover statistics is by nature applied. Good statistics will come from interesting applied problems.

Paul: Elaborating on this issue: we started with the Annals of Mathematical Statistics, this one journal has been split into the Annals of Statistics and the Annals of Probability and now they even added the Annals of Applied Statistics and the Annals of Applied Probability. Is this a natural process?
Jef: I'm not sure that I like this process. I still believe that statistics is one kind of science. Since the basic question is always the same: trying to understand reality by only looking at a part of it and how to do that. This is a difference between stochastics and mathematics. Mathematics is very satisfying but it does not necessarily refer to reality.

Paul: Some people claim that in statistics and probability there is a lack of innovation. Is this a reasonable criticism?
Jef: If one starts from a certain area and one makes an 'epsilon change' in the assumptions of an existing result and then gets out what one expects, this is not really innovative, mainly because you do not start from reality. On the other hand people that work with real life data are facing hard problems. But most often they only apply the methods that they have learned themselves. Moreover, the gap between well developed theory and the genuine application is sometimes very wide. It might therefore be good that basic researchers are willing to listen to researchers dealing with applications to clearly understand what they want and what is driving them. I love interfaces between two or three different disciplines, where some of the researchers have to be very clear in specifying the type of questions they would like to be answered while the others have to think about how they can bring in the appropriate methodology to solve the problems. Such communication is a fruitful exercise for both parties.

Back to the students

Paul: Jef, I remember from the time that I was your student (1971-1974) that, compared to the most of the other professors, your style was different. Your office door was open to the students. Did you want to promote the American way?
Jef: Yes, what I really like is the open-mindedness from both sides. As a professor you should try to find out in what areas the student is interested in. As a professor you should try to get insight in his/her way of thinking.

Paul: But can you expect this open mindedness from all type of students that take statistics? I think there is a big difference in say students in sociology taking statistics and students in mathematics taking statistics.
Jef: The main problem is that most students in sociology don't see the reason to go through this. The first two years that I taught statistics for sociology students, I considered that as a big challenge. I also enjoyed the discussions with the professors in sociology on how their research could benefit from statistics. These discussions were a win-win situation for both parties.
But, I sympathize with students who claim that statistics is a difficult topic. This is another reason why you should start from real life problems. But statistical thinking remains difficult since you never know for sure what reality is all about.

Statistical societies

Paul: Let us move to another topic: societies. You did play a prominent role in a number of professional societies, how did you get involved in this?
Jef: In 1971 I received a phone call from Wim Cohen, who was a leading researcher in queuing theory. He asked me to organize a meeting on Stochastic Processes and their Applications in Leuven. Given the enthusiastic support by Jacques Dreze from CORE, we organized a nice meeting in 1972 with 35 invited one hour talks and no parallel sessions. This turned out to be the best way to get to know the best researchers in stochastic processes at that moment and, indeed, the conference gave a good boost to stochastics in Flanders. The day before the conference started the organizing committee did feel the need to create a committee to organize conferences on stochastic processes and they asked me to be the chair. David Kendall, at that time president of the International Association for Statistics in the Physical Sciences (started in 1969 by Jerzy Neyman) provided the umbrella. His proposal was to reshape this section of the ISI into a new society: the Bernoulli Society and this happed in 1975. The Journal of Stochastic Processes and its Applications also originated around the same time and was quickly connected with the society. I became the first scientific secretary of the Bernoulli Society (1975-1985), later I was president-elect (1993-1995) and president (1995-1997).

The Belgian Statistical Society: reborn in 1991

Paul: Looking back at the role you played in different societies, what do you consider as your most important achievements?
Jef: As I already explained, the creation of the Bernoulli Society has had and still has an important impact. But I was also very pleased that they involved me in the renaissance of the Belgian Statistical Society (BSS). Inspired by an idea of Marc Hallin, a group of Belgian statisticians came up with the idea to start a Belgian Statistical Society. During the first meeting it was found out that there was already a Belgian Statistical Society, which collapsed due to some friction between the Flemish and French speaking people. So it was very nice that we could reshape this society into the lively society that we have now. I'm very happy to see the view of the society towards the applied areas and I hope that links to more applied fields will be made in the future. This can be done by giving the platform to speakers active in different '-metries' during the annual conferences of BSS. The revitalized society also resulted in a new synergy between statisticians from the Flemish and French speaking communities. It was my pleasure to serve as president of the BSS in the period 1991-1993.

President of the International Statistical Institute

Paul: Jef, you recently became president of the ISI. First of all, congratulations! Can you tell us a bit about new ideas that you hope to develop during your term as president.
Jef: A first ambition is related to the role of the national statistical societies. They should get the role they deserve. What I mean is that the national societies should provide the influx for the ISI. That is at least my idea. But what I see is that national societies do not have a resonance board in the ISI, this is a drawback. Indeed the national societies should be the fishing pools for international societies such as ISI. This issue has been on the agenda of the ISI meeting in Durban (2009) and we will see whether it is possible to create something like a federation (probably grouped in regions) of national statistical societies. A second ambition is related to less developed regions in the world. Take for example Africa with 53 African countries that are members of the United Nations. Many of the African countries do have a national statistical society. First of all, we hardly know about their existence. Moreover, by supporting collaboration of these societies within the region (but also within a bigger federation) would give them international recognition from which they surely could benefit. This is of course a complex issue, for example it is very expensive for these people to move around, but ISI should try, through contacts with the local statisticians and with international sponsors to find ways to support scientific capacity building. Moreover an African national society that is linked to an international society such as ISI will locally give respect to the profession and will contribute to the recognition of the profession.

Statistics as a scientific discipline

Paul: Let's go back to statistics, more precisely to statistics as a methodology to support scientific disciplines.
Jef: Every scientific discipline needs the right language to describe the phenomena that are studied. For physics it is well accepted that mathematics is the language to communicate. For certain parts of biology this is also the case. Statistics is such a language as well, it supports specific scientific domains in psychology, sociology, life sciences, astronomy, economy... Compared to 50 years ago, this is quite an achievement. And this is not the end, the use of statistics in scientific studies related to literature or music starts to be better accepted, also the role of statistics in forensic research or environmental studies is nowadays natural. It brings us back to a topic that we already discussed earlier in this conversation: interdisciplinary collaboration! Let me give a nice example. During the ISI conference in Dublin in 2011 there will be one day devoted to one single topic: 'water'!!

That day, different statistical sub disciplines such as extreme value theory (dam construction), hydrology (stochastic processes), environmetrics, official statistics (having figures on water is crucial), econometrics (business related aspects of water resources) will contribute to the ISI view on 'water'. The results will be collected in a 'white paper'. It is a nice example showing the role of statistics as a key tool supporting a variety of scientific disciplines. In future conferences maybe focus can be on other important topics like 'pollution' and 'energy'. It can show how rich statistics is in its contributions to sound policy making.

Mathematical statistics, applied statistics and simulation.

Paul: Most of your research contributions are of a methodological nature. Nowadays, looking at statistical contributions I sometimes get the impression that simulation studies serve as a substitute for theorems and proofs. How do you see this trend?
Jef: Simulations are a good thing to do. Given the available computer power, simulations can give a quick insight in finding out whether there is a good chance for what we believe to be true. But I still would like to see the proof, which is basically what a researcher should do. There are good reasons for that. First, a scientific result is supported by the appropriate logical deduction, i.e. the proof. Second, stating a theorem also includes a precise formulation of the underlying assumptions. The assumptions show you the limitations of the result. My conclusion is that simulations can provide support and help; and that it is important for statisticians to take part in, for example, the high performance computing project that we are setting up at this moment at an interuniversity level in Flanders. Once we have found out by simulations what is probably valid, it is good to sit back and try to find the methodological support for the simulation findings; in that sense simulations are similar to heuristic programming.

Impact factors and h-indices

Paul: Impact factors and h-indices are used all over the place. Is this a meaningful way to go?
Jef: The idea is all right. When the Institute for Statistical Information started with this, it was clearly a hole in the market. It works, because the decision makers need numbers and if they don't see numbers they don't know what to do. But the way these numbers are made up scare many mathematicians. Related to that, I would like to mention that, at the time I was president of the National Committee of Mathematics (Belgium) I wrote a document, co-authored by Adhemar Bultheel, where we tried to grasp the

feeling of mathematicians and statisticians on the use of impact factors. For both ways of measuring it needs a clear understanding how one should look at the information for the scientific group under consideration, so it takes a while before we understand how to use the available information in a correct way.

Paul: Maybe it is better to ask a scientist for his/her five best papers?
Jef: This is a rough question. What is 'best'? What is 'best' for me, is what I like the most, it does not mean the paper that has had the most number of citations.

Paul: My interpretation for 'best' is 'breakthrough'.
Jef: Your suggestion points at another possibility to look at scientific outcome. Compared to the h-index it seems like an extreme of the other side of the 'measuring spectrum'. But, like the h-index, it also fits into the decision making process. Maybe it is not a good thing that decision makers don't (dare to) take the time to make decisions by hard thinking based on more uncertain information. They seem to feel more comfortable with the numbers.

Editorial work

Paul: Since the beginning of your career (1972) up to today, you do editorial work – at different levels - for a number of important journals and encyclopedias. Being the editor-in-chief of the Encyclopedia of Actuarial Science must have been a hard job. It seems that you like this, why?
Jef: It is part of my inclination to be of service to people. Dealing with the administrative part of editorial work is not always pleasant, but it needs to be done. The main concern is to deliver quality. Let me demonstrate this by telling a nice experience from the early nineties. Wiley asked me to do something about one of their journals in stochastics that was at that time of poor quality. After ten years of hard work I handed over the journal to the International Society for Business and Industrial Statistics who made it its flagship journal. I left the editorial board leaving behind a much better journal with an excellent editorial board. Such a result is something to be proud off. The other thing is the encyclopedia, which was an interesting experience. The challenge is to get over 500 noses pointing in the same direction. You do not need to be an expert in all subfields to do a good job, measuring quality is the main issue. I learned most about quality assessment in the 25-year period that I served as a member of two scientific selection commissions of the National Science Foundation.

Books

Paul: You wrote a number of books and monographs. Most of them are in keeping with what I expected: renewal processes, regular variation, extreme values, insurance mathematics. But there are also a few surprising titles. Let me mention one: Campanae Lovaniensis: Inventaris van Beiaarden en Klokken in Groot-Leuven (Inventory of Carillons and Bells in Groot-Leuven) – co-authored with Twan Bearda and Jacques Sergeys (2008).
Jef: This carillon business is rather personal. In the mid nineties an engineer interested in bells came to me with the following question: 'For two identical steel pipes of 50 centimeters the acoustical sound is the same. If you put one of the two in the rain for a day, then the tonal structure will change. How can you measure that?'. A number of master students worked on this topic. Bells already had my interest since they are beautiful artifacts with a lot of history. So the link from the pipes to the bells was easy and natural for me. Moreover when my daughter studied in Chicago, she started to play the carillon at the University of Chicago, one of the largest carillons in the States having 72 bells. This gave of course a special extra impetus to my interest in carillons. So we brought aspects of pipes, bells and related statistical data together … an interesting experience leading to the book. We even designed a chart for a bell. At the moment the data collected are used for further statistical analysis by colleagues at the University of Stellenbosch.

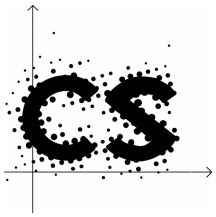
An advice for doctoral students

Paul: Historical awareness is important, also for scientists. Should PhD students in statistics take a compulsory course in the history of probability and statistics? Is this maybe a role for a doctoral school?
Jef: I think this is a bit too stringent. A doctoral student should know that what he is doing does have a place in history; the topic he is dealing with comes from somewhere. So questions such as when did it start, how did it develop, what has been done before, why did it proceed in a certain direction, what are we heading for, what are the objects, … should be addressed. In that sense – getting a feel for the whole picture – history is important. But making a course in history compulsory is a (small) bridge too far. But crucial is that any doctoral dissertation contains a historical setting of the problem studied so that the research is not isolated. The history of the thinking about the problem is maybe more important that the historical facts. My message for doctoral students is to enjoy what they do. It maybe good that they are evaluated once in a while. Not as a punishment, but as a stimulus to continue or to redirect their capacities in the best possible way, so that they get the best recognition for what they are doing. Statistics is a

beautiful area to do research. Looking back I can say that statistics is close to my heart. And now as president of the International Statistical Institute I see a more complete scope of the subject. It is a very pleasant life.

The end

Paul: Jef, I'm very grateful that you accepted the invitation for this interview. I thank you for this long and very open conversation and for sharing all these past and present experiences with the members of the Belgian Statistical Society.



CONTINUING EDUCATION

courses on Statistics

To meet the needs of users of statistical methods, the Center for Statistics of Ghent University, in co-operation with the Institute for Continuing Education in Science (ICES), organises a series of courses on statistics each year. Our goal is to provide insight in the basics of statistical research. Practical sessions on PC allow participants to obtain this through hands-on experience. Our courses are aimed at professionals and students with an academic training, who wish to refresh their knowledge, keep it up to date or discover new areas of research. The program is designed to offer very specific knowledge and skills through separate modules. The Center for Statistics has a long-standing successful tradition in organizing statistics courses cut to size of the active professional.

The 2010-2011 program consists of the following 8 modules:

M1: Introduction to SPSS
M2: Introductory Statistics. Basics of Statistical Inference
M3: Analysis of Variance
M4: Causal Mediation Analysis
M5: Applied Linear Regression
M6: Design and Analysis of Clinical Trials
M7: Multilevel Analysis for Grouped and Longitudinal Data
M8: Multiple Testing for Genomic Analysis

Please watch our website www.ipvw-ices.UGent.be for other short courses on specialized topics that will be announced during the course of the year.

Students and personnel employed in the government, the non-profit and social-profit sector can participate at a considerably reduced registration fee. The Flemish Community regards continuing training as an important aspect in its economic policy. Again this year professionals are granted financial support through the government's introduction of training vouchers. More information about this stimulating initiative can be found on the ICES-website, and on the website of the VDAB, www.vdab.be/opleidingscheques.

In addition, several of the modules can lead to obtaining a certificate of Ghent University upon succeeding in the exam. These modules can therefore be incorporated as a course in a Ph.D. training.

Detailed information about these and other courses, is available at our website. If you would like to be kept informed personally please send us your co-ordinates by mail.

Ghent University – ICES, Krijgslaan 281 S3, 9000 Ghent, Belgium
Tel. +32 (0)9 264 44 26
Fax +32 (0)9 264 85 90
E-mail: ipvw.ices@UGent.be
www.ipvw-ices.UGent.be

TEACHING

Short courses

At the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (K.U.Leuven), statistics is applied in a wide range of applications. This statistical know-how has been concentrated since 1989 at the interfaculty Leuven Statistics Research Centre. Next to consulting, we regularly offer short-term training courses, which are open for professionals as well as students.

The LStat is a training center recognised by the Flemish Region. So if you use training vouchers of the Flemish government, you can reduce the cost of your professional education by 50%. The courses give you a professional statistical solution alongside a thorough statistical understanding of the applied technique. Brochures can be obtained by simple mail to info@lstat.kuleuven.be or downloaded on the website.

- **Statistical courses** An overview of the short courses (in Dutch or in English) can be found on the website.

- **A-la-Carte courses**
  Besides the established course offers, the Leuven Statistics Research Centre also supplies courses and training which is tailored to specific needs within your organisation. The advantages are legion:

    - Suited for your specific domain and concrete problems
    - Courses and training is explained with examples from you business environment
    - With use of the statistical software available at your site
    - The pace of the course is decided by you
    - The courses are given on the spot (as well in Belgium as abroad, in Dutch or in English)

These courses and training require a different offer. Contact: An Carbonez.

18TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN STATISTICAL SOCIETY

Spa, (13) 14-15 October 2010

The preliminary program of the next meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society (BSS 2010) is now available on the conference web-site: http://www.sbs-bvs.be/

Wednesday 13th October (Young Statisticians Afternoon)

13h30 Registration and welcome

14h00 Contributed talks young statisticians

- Teshome Birhanu (UH) *Doubly robust multiple imputation*
- El Maâti Allaoui (ULB) *Robust cross-checking estimators for the two parameter Weibull distribution*
- Germain Van Bever (ULB) *TBA*
- Maik Schwarz (UCL) *Adaptive estimation by model selection in a Gaussian sequence model*

15h30 Break

15h50 Contributed talks young statisticians

- Yves Dominicy (ULB) *The method of simulated quantiles*
- Tim De Craecker (UGent) *Causal powers and actual causation in the sufficient cause framework*
- Cédric Taverne (UCL) *How to reinforce the stated preference methods using the potential of computer based questionnaires ?*

- Jingky P. Lozano (Göttingen) *A generalized method for analyzing genetic main effects and epistasis among candidate genes using parent-offspring trios*

17h20 Break

17h40 Quetelet Session

19h00 Dinner

Thursday, 14th October

8h30 Registration

9h30 Welcome

9h40 Invited talk by Prof. Simon Tavaré (University of Cambridge)
Accounting for interactions among covariates in regression problems: methods and examples from genome-wide association studies

10h30 Break

10h50 Contributed talks

Quetelet

- Bernard Francq (UCL) *How to accept the equivalence of two measurement methods? Comparison and improvements of the Bland and Altmans approach and errors-in-variables regression*

- Joris Menten (ITM/KUL) *Estimation of intervention effects from ELISA data without explicit cut-offs using a bayesian hidden Markov approach*

- Tom Loeys (UGent) *A joint modeling approach for reaction time and accuracy in psycholinguistic experiments*

Methodology

- Jan Johannes (UCL) *Functional linear instrumental Regression*

- Kukatharmini Tharmaratnam (KUL) *Robust model selection for additive penalized regression splines models*

- Christel Ruwet (ULg) *Robustness in ordinal regression*

12h05 Lunch

14h00 Invited talk by Prof. Winfried Stute (JLU Giessen)
Shot noise effects in Economics: Financial an statistical aspects

14h50 Contributed talks

Biostatistics

- Jozefien Buyze (UGent) *An instrumental variables approach for the performance of health care centers in terms of a survival outcome*

- David Magis (ULg) *Identification of differential item functioning by logistic regression: application to intellectual disability data*

- Anyiawung Forcheh (KUL) *A Meta-analytic approach for the analysis of Illumina data*

Methodology

- Koen Mahieu (KUL) *Robust forecasting of nonstationary time series*

- Christopher Bruffaerts (ULB) *The robustness of the unconditional hyperbolic α-quantile estimator of efficiency*

- Marjolein Crabbe (KUL) *A comparison of twostage segmentation methods for choice-based conjoint data: A simulation study*

16h05 Break

16h35 Posters

17h35 Break

18h00 General meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society

19h00 Dinner

Friday, 15th October

9h00 Invited talk by Prof. Goran Peskir (University of Manchester)
A Duality Principle for the Legendre Transform and Nash Equilibrium

9h50 Contributed talks

Stochastic processes

- Tetyana Kadankova (VUB) *Two-sided exit problems for several classes of stochastic processes*

- Julien Hunt (UCL) *Minimal entropy martingale measure in a semi-Markov regime switching Cox-Ross-Rubinstein model*

Methodology

- Ruth Nysen (UH) *Testing goodness-of-fit of parametric models for censored data*

- Jean-Marc Freyermuth (UCL) *Spectral density estimation with tree structured wavelets*

10h40 Break

11h10 Contributed talks

Biostatistics

- Maarten Bekaert (UGent) *On model selection in causal inference*

- Thomas Neyens (UH) *A generalized Poisson-Gamma model for spatially overdispersed data*

Methodology

- Maarten Jansen (ULB) *L_0 penalized criteria for variable selection under sparsity*

- Kalliopi Mylona (UA) *Penalized least squares for models with correlated responses*

12h00 Lunch.

13h00 Invited talk by Prof. Els Goetghebeur (UGent)
The hopes and hazards with instrumental variables for causal inference from observational data

14h00 Social program

Posters

- Vishva Danthurebandara (KUL) *Sequential choice designs to estimate the distribution of willingness-to-pay*

- Dina Vanpaemel (KUL) *A deterministic algorithm for multivariate S-estimators of location and scatter*

- Rachida El Mehdi (UCL) *Stochastic frontier analysis with copulas and application to Moroccan municipalities*

- Jan De Neve (UGent) *Semiparametric regression models for $P[Y \leq Y']$*

- Achmad Efendi (KUL/UH) *Pseudo-likelihood estimation for a combined Gamma frailty and normal random-effects model for repeated, overdispersed time-to-event data*

- Mohammed Rida Soumali (UCL) *Study of the influence function in partially linear regression*

- Rudolf Schenk (UCL) *On rate optimal local estimation in functional linear model*

- Geraldine Laurent (ULg) *Introduction of the asymptotic study of the estimation of the error distribution in right censored and selection biased regression models*

- Dean Barron (Twobluecats.coms) *Kolmogoroff-Smirnoff with a twist, theory and data analysis*

- Mohamad Bolbolian Ghalibaf (Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran) *Aspects of dependence in Cuadras-Auge family*

- M. Roozbeh (Mashhad, Iran) *Bayesian semiparametric regression*

- Hassan Pazira (Teheran) *A new statistic for detecting outliers in exponential case*

- Hakim Bekrizadeh (University of Ilam, Iran) *Economic and social factors affecting decline in academic achievement by providing a statistical model*

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SBS-BVS

Spa, 14 October 2010

The SBS-BVS annual General Assembly will take place at the Domaine Sol Cress (Spa), on Thursday 14 October 2010 at 18:00 hours. The election of new Board members is one of the points on the agenda.

The General Assembly is organised during the annual meeting of the Society, but you are all cordially invited to attend.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON RECENT ADVANCES IN STATISTICS AND PROBABILITY

Hasselt, 19-20 May 2011

At the end of the academic year 2010-2011 Noël Veraverbeke will retire. At that occasion an international symposium will be organized to thank him for his professional contributions within and outside the Center for Statistics at Hasselt University.

Scientific Programme

The main scientific themes of the symposium are survival analysis, nonparametric methods, and probability and stochastic processes. For each of the three sessions we have a key note speaker and three invited speakers. We are also very pleased to have Anastasios Tsiatis as special invited speaker in our session on survival analysis.

Survival analysis

Special invited speaker:
Anastasios Tsiatis (North Carolina State University, USA – Princess Lilian Foundation visiting professor)
The synergy trial: accounting for treatment discontinuation.

Key note speaker:
Ricardo Cao (University of La Coruna, Spain)
Statistical tools for credit risk via censored data analysis

Invited speakers:
Ingrid Van Keilegom (UCLouvain, Belgium)
The copula-graphic estimator of the survival function under dependent censoring with unknown copula

Michael Kulich (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)
Estimating disease incidence from cross-sectional biomarker data

Luc Duchateau (UGent, Belgium)
Frailty shares and correlates, copula divides and unites

Nonparametric methods

Key note speaker:
Wenceslao Manteiga (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
General views of the goodness-of-fit tests for statistical models. Applications in finance and environmental problems

Invited speakers:
Jan Swanepoel (North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa)
Another look at bootstrap confidence intervals

Irène Gijbels (KULeuven, Belgium)
Smoothing, local likelihood and semiparametric estimation of copulas

Marek Omelka (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)
Nonparametric estimation of a conditional copula and association measures

Probability and stochastic processes

Key note speaker:
Paul Embrechts (ETH, Zürich, Switzerland)
Quantitative risk management and the financial crisis

Invited speakers:
Tetyana Kadankova (VUB, Brussels, Belgium)
First passage and first exit problems in context of finance and queuing theory

Jef Teugels (KULeuven, Belgium)
Change point analysis of extreme values

Nick Bingham (Imperial College, London, UK)
Topological regular variation

FORTHCOMING STATISTICAL EVENTS

Septembre 12-16, 2010 –University of Antwerp, Belgium, European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics **(***ENBIS10)*,
More information: http://www.enbis.org/index

Septembre 17-18, 2010 –Lodz, Poland, *European Society for Patient Adherence, Compliance and Persistence (ESPACOMP)*,
More information: www.ESPACOMP.eu

Septembre 10, 2010 –Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, *Deuxi ème colloque francophone international sur l'enseignement de la statistique (CFIES2010)*,
More information: http://cfies2010.ulb.ac.be

Septembre 27, 2010 –Vienna, Austria, *1 joint DIA/EMA workshop on Statistical Methodology in Clinical R&D*,
More information:
http://www.diahome.org/DIAHome/Education/FindEducationalOffering.aspx?productID=22706&eventType=Meeting

Septembre 27-28, 2010 –Lyon, France, *Non-clinical Statistics Conference 2010*,
More information: http://www.biopharma2009-sfds.fr/NCSC2010/

December 5-10, 2010 –Santa Catarina, Brazil, XXVth International Biometric Conference ,
More information: www.ibc-floripa-2010.org

December 12-17, 2010 –Eindhoven, The Netherlands, Workshop on Combinatorics and Analysis in Spatial Probability,
More information: http://www.esf.org/activities/esf-conferences/details/2010/confdetail348.html?conf=348&year=2010

April 11-13 2011 –Bordeaux, France, Third International Biometrics Society (IBS) Channel Network Conference ,
More information: http://www.ibs-channel-bordeaux2011.fr

We would like to publish in this *Newsletter* any statistical matter such as :

- information about universities, institutes (1 to 3 pages);
- lists of recent publications and technical reports;
- abstracts of recent PhD theses;
- news of members;
- forthcoming statistical events and announcements;
- short papers about teaching methods in statistics, statistics in the industry, official statistics, etc.

Suggestions are welcome: please, contact us.

Suitable information for the next issue, prepared as (**LA)TEX or WORD FILES**, should reach the editors of the Newsletter **BEFORE December 31, 2010**, preferable by e-mail to:

sophie.vanbelle@ulg.ac.be or herbert.thijs@uhasselt.be

Any change of job, address, phone number,... ?

Please notify the Secretary of the Society:

Gentiane Haesbroeck:
Université de Liège
Institut de mathématique
Sart Tilman B37
B-4000 Liège
g.haesbroeck@ulg.ac.be