

## Editorial

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This edition of the Statistical Journal is dedicated to Dr Frank Nolan, who was recently our Editor-in-Chief. A summary of his career and contribution follows this editorial.

This edition contains the final set of articles reviewed under Frank's stewardship. He no doubt took a special interest in the articles on statistical training and census quality, though Frank's interest in statistics was broad, and it is fitting that this edition covers a wide range of subjects. Including the winners of the Young Statisticians' Prize was something Frank was keen to do, and we include here the winners of the 2011 prize, awarded at the World Statistics Congress in Dublin in that year.

The paper by *Forbes* et al. will be of particular interest to leaders of statistical offices and those who support statistical training. The paper proposes a definition of the conceptual thinking skills needed by statistical producers, based on the need to translate ideas relevant to policy issues into variables that can be directly measured. Without a basic understanding of concepts, the authors argue, statisticians cannot fully understand the statistics they produce or be able to communicate them to others.

Hoekstra et al. have written a fascinating paper describing experimental work done by Statistics Netherlands to collect data from websites using internet robots. The possibilities are exciting, in terms of the mass of data that could be collected and the speed of collection, but the paper highlights issues around re-development costs needed to keep pace with changing web designs. As the paper points out, other organisations apart from NSIs can do this work and NSIs will want to reflect on how far they want to embrace this innovative approach.

Business statisticians will want to look at the paper by *Marske*, which shows how the US Census Bureau increased the response rate and timeliness of its five-yearly economic census by embarking on a communications campaign which targeted low-responding industries. Processing improvements and an innovative

approach to managing respondent relations helped the US meet its response targets.

Quality is also the theme of the *Baffour and Valente* paper – specifically census quality: a timely paper coming just after many countries have published census results, and when many are considering alternatives to the traditional census. The paper presents a useful evaluation of quality for different census methodologies using the well-accepted quality framework.

The winner of third place in the Young Statisticians prize, *Smaill*, continues the theme of understanding and managing response in business surveys. It outlines an important study of the retail trade survey in New Zealand, looking at the effect of previous response patterns on the likelihood of continuing response. It enables some suggestions to be made about possible response management strategies for the groups identified.

The second prize winner, *Conn*, argues that there is a significant opportunity for NSIs to take the lead in data integration; building on their data holdings, their expertise in the technique and the trust placed in them. NSIs are well placed to co-ordinate statistical integration across government, developing best practice guides based on statistical principles. The paper sees this as a key opportunity to help NSIs meet the increasing demands for more detailed statistics and analysis.

In the first prize winning paper, *Höninger* describes work done in Germany to try to resolve the issue of providing remote access for researchers while protecting data security. The solution here is a system of parallel processing with the analyst working on an anonymised data set while the original dataset is analysed in the background. The difference between the two sets of results gives a measure of confidence in the anonymised set.

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**DR FRANK NOLAN****1953–2012****An appreciation**

Frank was Editor-in-Chief of the *Statistical Journal of the IAOS* from 1 January 2011 until he died unexpectedly on 16 October 2012.

Frank Nolan was an international statistician. He began his career in New Zealand and ended it in the UK. He covered opposite ends of the globe, and that global reach gave him an approach to his statistics that was broad, open and challenging.

Born in New Zealand in 1953, Frank graduated from Canterbury University in 1979 with a PhD in Mathematics, having previously gained his BSc and MSc at the Victoria University of Wellington. In 1980 he began working in Statistics New Zealand as a Research Officer in Statistical Methods Division, later becoming Senior Research Officer, and subsequently Manager of the Mathematical Statistics Branch from 1988 to 1992. He made a great mark there, both lifting the managerial practices of the division, and ensuring the overall robustness of the statistical advice that underpinned New Zealand's official statistics.

He became a member of the New Zealand Mathematical Society in 1980 and the New Zealand Statistical Association in 1986.

Frank moved to the UK with his family and joined the Office for National Statistics in August 2002. At the ONS, Frank held a number of Deputy Director posts initially managing Quality and Risk Management Division and more latterly concerned with methodology of social statistics, and then the 2011 census. For a brief period he was temporarily promoted to be ONS

Director of Methodology. His last post at the ONS was as Deputy Director for Population Methodology and Statistical Infrastructure. Frank was elected as a member of the ISI in 1999, and became a member of both the IAOS and the IASS in 1992, and a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society in 2002. He was elected to the RSS Council in 2011.

Frank did not have a long list of publications, but he did have a large influence on the statistics, organisations and people he worked with. He was in charge of the 2001 Census in New Zealand, which gave him a good fund of experience (and hair-raising stories), and perhaps his largest contribution to the ONS was in managing the statistical research preparations for the 2011 Census. He had a keen eye for the weak points in an argument, and an almost mystical ability to see how research possibilities could provide the evidence for a decision. He was also involved in the first stages of the UK Beyond 2011 program and had ideas about alternatives to Census taking.

Frank was also a mentor – both individually and as a whole to the organisations he worked with. He would encourage people to develop themselves, acted as a sounding board, and took particular delight when those he worked with made contributions to the wider statistical community.

Frank continually looked for new challenges and for ways in which he could further serve the statistical community. After some years of reviewing papers for the *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, Frank became its Editor in Chief. He became involved in the RSS Centre for Statistical Education. He forged strong links with academic institutions, working with Southampton University to develop the MSc in Official Statistics, on which he taught for many years.