

Editorial



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It is my great pleasure to invite you to explore this special edition of the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics. This edition commemorates the very professional and engaging 2012 IAOS conference, “Getting Our Messages Across”, held in the beautiful city of Kiev, Ukraine, September 2012.

Getting our messages across requires trust, a message and an audience. Our audience need to trust us and what we say. It requires skills – communication skills, statistical skills and storytelling skills. New information media platforms and tools are now available – the web, online analysis facilities, ipods, wikis and blogs – as are new information sources, including third party sources and ‘big data’. We need to enhance access to our information, and to understand our market, use our market and promote what we do. Relationships with customers need to be built, and feedback from them monitored. But perhaps more importantly, relationships need to be built and maintained with other professionals in this increasingly rich and diverse information market. These themes permeated throughout the two day 2012 IAOS conference.

The articles chosen in this special edition come from across the globe – from Qatar, the United Kingdom,

Italy and Japan, to Malaysia in the Tropics and Australia and New Zealand in the South. They address the five key themes and important topics of the Conference: literacy, storytelling, new information media, accessibility, and new information sources. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have, and that they encourage you to get your message across.

1. Statistical Literacy

Statistical Literacy was the focus of theme one of the 2012 IAOS conference, a theme organised by Ms Lidia Bratanova, Director of Statistics at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Eleven papers in total were presented at the conference, including four invited papers. Two of the contributed papers appear in this special edition of the journal.

From Qatar, Ms. Wadha Al-Jabor and Ms. Pinar Ucar contribute a paper on *Qatar Statistics Authority’s Initiatives to Develop Statistical Literacy in Qatar*. From Australia, Mr Robert Letheby presents a paper entitled *Statistical Literacy: Bringing Concepts to Life – Recent Experiences of the Australian Bureau of Statistics*. Both papers present ideas for bringing statistical literacy to life, and creating a culture where statistical literacy is valued as a skill.

In summarising the presentations and discussions held during the conference, Lidia highlighted the close relationship between statistical literacy and trust in statistics. She outlined a four point plan for statistical literacy: think first about raising awareness about our business of official statistics, especially with decision makers and opinion leaders including politicians and journalists; second, develop strategic partnerships to improve the information flow between producers and users and to facilitate the development of statistical literacy projects; third, improve training; and finally, evaluate whether what we are doing is effective in advancing official statistics.

2. Statistical storytelling

Statistical storytelling was the focus of the second theme, organised by Mr Shigeru Kawasaki (then President-elect and now President of the IAOS). Seven papers were presented, and in this special edition we have an excellent article from Italy on *Noi Italy* by Ms. Valeria De Martino, Ms. Stefania Rossetti and Ms. Daniela Rossi that explores new approaches for effective e-dissemination of statistics in order to tell stories.

Shigeru summarised the presentations and discussions on the statistical story telling theme by talking about various aspects of statistical story telling including timeliness, transparency and consistency of formats, the importance of metadata and statistics, and the importance of geospatial. He encouraged National Statistical Institutes to make use of experts and hold regular events, such as seminars, to get stories across. In this age of infographics, he encouraged more use of multi-disciplinary teams including specialists from cognitive science, geography and IT. Shigeru made special mention of the *Noi Italy* product in his concluding remarks, which is another reason why it is great to see it included in this special edition.

3. New information media

New Information Media was the focus of theme three, organised by Mr Graham Baker from Statistics New Zealand. Nine papers were presented on this theme, and true to its name, included a video presentation. In this special edition of the journal, I am pleased to include two invited papers and two contributed papers.

From New Zealand, Mr Robert Chiu shares his perspectives in “*Psst, What’s the Gossip?*” and Mr Alan Smith OBE from the United Kingdom shares his perspectives in *Data Visualisation and Beyond: A Multi-disciplinary Approach to Promote User Engagement with Official Statistics*. Contributions have also been included from Australia (myself and my co-author, Mr Serhat Turut) on *Measuring What Matters: Can National Statistical Organisations Embrace Social Media?*, and from Malaysia (Mr Ramasamy Ramachandran) on *The Increasing Role of the Third Sector in Official Statistical Collation: The National Information Technology Association of Malaysia’s Experience*.

The importance of using a multi-disciplinary approach to produce engaging and rich content and context was the main message coming from the New In-

formation Media sessions held in Kiev. Content needs to be interesting and related to every-day life, and be more interactive. Forming strategic partnerships to syndicate content, as highlighted by Alan Smith’s paper, was highlighted by Graham as an innovation worthy of wider consideration.

4. Enhancing access to information

Enhancing Access to Information was the focus of theme four, organised by Ms Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikowski, Economist and Director at Destatis, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany. Nine papers were presented, including a contribution from Mr Richard Laux and Ms. Catherine Barham entitled *Can’t see the wood for the trees? Using statistical frameworks to draw the bigger picture*. Read more in this special edition.

In summarising, Sibylle highlighted the importance of building trust and consensus between National Statistical Institutes, Data Archives, and researchers, and that the concept of ‘data without boundaries’ has the potential to undo silos and therefore enhance access to information. Sibylle also had a key message to all of us – National Statistical Offices must cooperate, not compete, to get our messages across.

5. Marketing, promotion and customer focus

Marketing, Promotion and Customer Focus was the focus of theme five, organised by Dr Alberto Ortega Venzor from the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics of Mexico. Nine papers were presented at the Conference, including a very interesting contributed paper by Mr. Naoki Makita, Mr. Masakazu Kimura, Mr. Masayuki Terada, Mr. Motonari Kobayashi and Mr Yuki Oyabu entitled *Can mobile phone network data be used to estimate small area population? A comparison from Japan*. This paper presented the findings of a study undertaken in Japan into the use of mobile phone data for estimating populations. In this age of ‘big data’, the presentation gave the audience much to think about and I am very pleased to be able to include it in this special edition to reach a wider audience.

In summarising theme five, Dr Venzor highlighted three main points. Analysis is knowledge, synthesis is wisdom, and the importance of moving from products to markets. He encouraged us to think about what our markets are, and to tailor our products and service offerings to those markets.

6. Panel discussions

Panel discussions were a key feature of the Kiev Conference, and were an opportunity to hear from distinguished speakers as well as engage in a lively discussion and debate. All up there were four panel sessions.

The first panel session was on “*Is social media a ‘fad’ or ‘must have’ in the statistical tool kit of NSI’s*”, and was organised by the then President of the IAOS, Mr Stephen Penneck. The audience heard from Mr Vadim Isakov (Statistics Division, UNECE), Mr Daniel O’Donnell (Destatis, the Federal Statistics Office of Germany) and Mr Senne Jansen (Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics).

A panel comprising Ms Marie Bohata (Deputy Director General, Eurostat), Mr Brian Graf (US Bureau of Labour Studies), Ms Margarita Guerrero (Director, Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific) and Dr Edward J Spar (Executive Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (CO-PAFS)) discussed “*Is the demand for disseminating more timely, relevant and accessible statistics changing international statistics?*” organised by Mr Pieter Everaers (then Eurostat), Dr Haishan Fu (Statistics Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) and Ms Angela Me (Chief, Statistics and Survey Division, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

Ms Nancy Gordon from the US Census Bureau organised a discussion on “*Is the open data movement a threat or an opportunity for NSI’s?*” and the audience heard from Ms Wendy Thomas (Population Center, University of Minnesota, US), Ms Heli Mikkela (Director of information services at Statistics Finland), Mr Eve Powell-Griner (Confidentiality Officer, National Center for Health Statistics), and Ms Paola Turbao (senior lecturer in economic sociology at the University of Greenwich, London, and a research associate at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris).

“*How competitive are NSI’s in the production and dissemination of statistics?*”, organised by Mr Pieter Everaers, was the fourth panel session with speakers Mr. Artur Satora (Spokesman for the President of the Central Statistics Office of Poland), Mr. Priit Potisepp (Director General of Statistics Estonia) and Ms Mariana Kotzeva (Adviser Hors Classe to the Director General, Eurostat).

7. Plenary sessions

Plenary sessions play an important role in Conferences – bringing everyone together to hear from speakers on topics of key relevance to the overall conference theme. In Kiev, we were not disappointed. Three excellent plenary sessions were organised.

Mr Aurel Schubert and Mr Per Nymand-Andersen opened proceedings with a very engaging plenary session on *Trust in Official Statistics*. I invite you to read Per’s contribution in this special edition called Safeguarding trust in statistics and the new statistical voice.

Following Per’s presentation, Professor Dr. Moritz Hunzinger spoke on communicating statistics using facts and figures to build continuous trust in our societies and Mr Marcus Schindler enlightened the audience with a presentation entitled *Statistics – Lightning houses in a dark and stormy sea of crises*.

Day one concluded with the second plenary session on *Statistical Ethics*, chaired by Mr Stephen Penneck and stimulated with a presentation by Mr Hallgrimur Snorrason.

For the third and final plenary session, Dr Siu-Ming Tam, Chair of the 2012 IAOS Program Committee invited the five theme organisers to share the outcomes and learnings from each of the thematic sessions and these outcomes are summarised in this editorial.

8. Regional and urban statistics

In addition to the main themes of the conference, the Standing Committee on Regional and Urban Statistics (SCORUS) organised five sessions and a total of sixteen papers were presented. These sessions covered *Location-Based Information For Decision Support: Emerging Systems and Strategies* (organised by Dr Paul Cheung, then Director of the United Nations Statistics Division), *City Networks for a cooperative development, communication and application of statistical information* (organised by Ms Teodora Brandmuller from Eurostat); *Cooperation across the hierarchical levels of official statistics – the example of statistics on the urban economy* (organised by Dr Derek Bond, University of Ulster at Coleraine, U.K); *Housing statistics on regions and urban areas from the perspective of competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainability*; and *Facilitating cooperation among regional statisticians through a common language* (organised by Ms Andrea Scheller, head of the European Free Trade Association Statistics Office).

9. Young statisticians prize

The winners of the 2012 IAOS Young Statisticians Prize gathered on day two of the Conference to present their winning papers. Congratulations again to the winners: Mr Miquel Salinas from UNESCO who won first prize for his paper, *Exploratory Analysis of the Patterns of Missing Data in the US Education Database*. Mr Duncan Elliot, Mr Joseph Winton and Mr Robert O'Neill from the United Kingdom who won second prize with their paper, *Elementary Aggregate Indices and Lower Level Substitution Bias*, and Mr Samuel Spencer from Australia who won third prize with his paper *A Case Against the Skip Statement*. The winning and second placed papers can be found in the Statistical Journal of the IAOS 29:1 2013.

10. Concluding remarks

I would like to pay a special tribute to Mr Oleksandr Osaulenko, Chair of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, for hosting the 2012 IAOS Conference and for providing a wonderful opportunity for over 400 statisticians and participants from 25 countries to

engage and enjoy the wonders of Keiv. We were treated to excellent hospitality, a beautiful city, and very special attention.

Dr Siu-Ming Tam from the Australian Bureau of Statistics led an active program committee who put together a program rich with plenary sessions, panel sessions, parallel sessions, and poster sessions. Over 60 invited and contributed presentations were given, not counting the plenary, panel and poster sessions.

I am also very grateful for the five theme organisers for putting together a rich and diverse program for the Conference. This special edition of the Statistical Journal draws on each of these themes.

Of course there were many more papers and presentations than could be included in this edition of the Statistical Journal of the IAOS. All of the conference papers are at <http://isi.cbs.nl/iaos/conferences/2012KievPapers.htm/>.

I hope you enjoy this Special Edition.

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