

## Editorial

---

In keeping with the now established IAOS Statistical Journal tradition, we again start off the current issue with an interview. This time the interviewee is Ola Awad from Palestine, the current President of the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS).



There have been 11 issues of this Journal produced under my watch as your Editor-in-Chief. This will be my 12<sup>th</sup> and last, as my three year term is ending. In June, Dr. Kirsten West (who has been in charge of the Journal interviews), will be taking over as Editor-in-Chief.

During my three year term I got to know four past or future IAOS Presidents, each from a different part of the world: Steve Penneck from Britain (whom I worked for first), Shigeru Kawasaki from Japan (whom I worked with longest), Ola Awad from Palestine (who is in the middle of her term), and Mario Palma from Mexico (who is already very involved with the Association's work and will be the next IAOS President after Ola's term ends).

What a treat they all were. Each had a unique leadership style, which helped me grow professionally and personally. Shigeru was interviewed last year, so you can see what I mean. That interview remains completely open and worth a look, if you missed it earlier.

Ola, whom you will read about in this issue, comes from a challenging part of the world; but, nonetheless, has been a real dynamo when it came to her stewardship of our Association. Her efforts in support of World Statistics Day, last October are just one such example of her energetic service. The celebration she hosted in Ramallah, Palestine, can be found at <http://middleeast-business.com/palestine-welcomes/>.

Steve has been interviewed. You will soon see, if you did not meet him, what I mean about his warmth and strength. That interview will be in a later issue of the Journal. What a great mentor he was for me and remains. Mario's interview is still in prospect. I will look forward to it and hope you all will too.

### *More about my Time as Editor-in-Chief*

I began my editorship in the summer of 2013, after the untimely death from a heart attack of the previous editor. Taking over his job was very time consuming, more than I anticipated, as I was to learn at the end of 2013, when too I had a health "hiccup."

Obviously, I survived my health scare. But I learned some hard lessons about delegation and overreach. I was supposed to be doing a second edition of a Springer book, **Data Quality and Record Linkage Techniques** (co-authored with Tom Herzog and Bill Winkler). I had to set that task aside after I collapsed from exhaustion. It was just way too much. After all I am no longer young.

Now, I plan to return to the second edition, as my editorship is ending. I hope I have learned enough to repay my co-authors for the long delay. The new target for the book is December 2016. I may even ask Kirsten if she will publish a "teaser."

Anyway, having learned my lesson, I sought the help of many others, notably adding an Editorial Assistant, Greta Cherry; and a much expanded Editorial Board. Our wonderful IOS Press publishers were crucial too, particularly, our Technical Editor, Kim Willems and our News Letter editor, Saskia van Wijngaarden. Anyway, we all worked together in 2014 and 2015 to remake the Journal into what it is now – a good Journal verging at times on very good.

### Regula Falsi (Method of False Positions)

Making change, no matter how worthy one's goals are, almost always carries with the risk of making matters worse. But if the changes are modest in magnitude, then usually mistakes, if caught early, can be small too. In the survey world, where I come from, we call this "responsive or adaptive design." And, at least metaphorically, that has been the Journal's approach in my time on the job.

So what changes were made? And what worked? What is still underway and promising? What had to be abandoned? Let me mention eight examples, focusing on the positives:

1. My whole first issue in the summer of 2013 was a set of interviews, mostly of Internationally-known and highly regarded Official Statisticians that my students had done when I was teaching. Well, after a short pause, we began, thanks to Dr. West, to make an interview a regular feature in each issue. Dr. West even enlarged the idea to add conversations, not full interviews. This too has been done occasionally and my hope will grow.
2. We were fortunate to continue the long practice of special supplements. My third issue was one that I inherited. But, going forward, we modified this to limit the publication of special topics to be just part of an issue, not a whole publication. The papers this March on Synthetic Data, found at the end of this issue, are good examples. (For more, see the Vilhuber, Abowd and Reiter paper, entitled *Synthetic establishment microdata around the world*.)
3. The competition to find good papers to publish is intense, unrelenting, and fierce. We have had our share of them. Still, the need to turn good presentations into good papers is an area where more work by us is needed to increase the supply, especially from IAOS members. That is why we have pushed to get a workshop for presenters and authors. Our first full test of this idea will come in December when there is such a Workshop in Abu Dhabi.
4. The need to add tips to editors and paper submitters is another area, where we are experimenting. For example, the article in this issue by Kenett and Shmueli is worth a look. We sought the wise counsel of a large ransom sample of our Journal editors. A sampling of their comments follow the Kenett-Shmueli paper.
5. We are sharing this exchange now, as it is in keeping with the continuous improvement/Kaisen cultural ideas we learned from Shigeru, when he was our President. But there are other editing ideas we have been examining. Paul Ross (paul.f.ross@q.com) gave us a paper that has considerable merit, for example, even though not yet published. Our editors felt at this point that his ideas were a "Bridge Too Far."
6. We widened the definition of Official Statistics to include articles, not adequately covered elsewhere. The human rights articles by members of International Statistics without Borders (SwB) group would be examples (see the Nepal article in the September issue, for an instance.)
7. Articles on Indigenous issues have become a regular feature, including the paper entitled, *Statistics on indigenous peoples: International effort needed*, found in this March issue by Madden, et al. We expect to see more in the future. For example we are planning on a UN paper that is still in internal review that should appear later.
8. Well, we have now covered all but two of the papers in the current issue. These last two are the articles by Hackl and Chipperfield et al. Both deal directly or indirectly with aspects of the Big Data Revolution. (Remember that we featured that Revolution last year.) Both articles address how to "satisfice" the goal of more information; and, yet, have adequate privacy protection for individuals; or, for businesses, commercial safeguards.

That was why, given that we also have a special segment on Synthetic Data here, we are titling the whole issue *Disclosure Protection in a (Big) Data Dense World*.

#### *Outreach Efforts to Enlarge our Community*

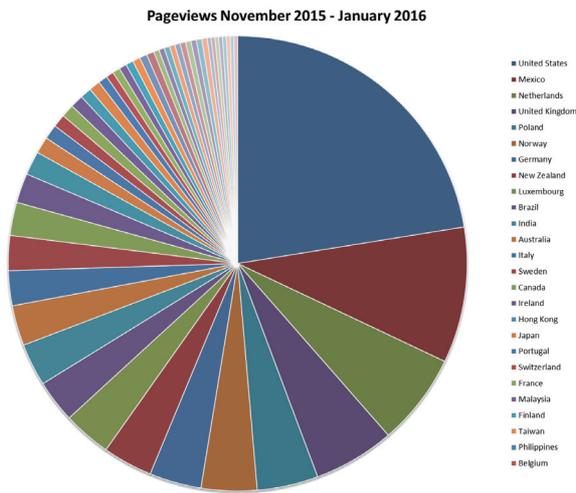
Efforts have been made, especially in the last year to widen the readership of the Journal. When we started this campaign the publisher had about 2,000 email addresses that they sent Journal News Releases to, as each issue came out. The number has now risen to about 9,000. We have segmented the potential members into three groups. And, then, we send out a tailored News Release to each group.

Right now the News Releases, emphasizing different aspects, go to IAOS and some other ISI members (about 1000+ emails) plus members of Statistics without Borders (about 2000+ emails). The remainder

(about 6,000+) go to individuals thought to have general statistical interests.

Of course, as part of our marketing we keep track of who opens the releases and what they look at (we call these “hits”) and what they download. The number of hits is increasing slowly, rising to about 20% cumulatively. Most of these hits occur, with the June issue which is completely open or with the interviews, which are always open. Efforts following Ola’s initiative to increase IAOS membership may lead to more access eventually; but, so far, her ideas are mainly strategic and have not been acted on fully.

Still, it is worth noting that we do roughly track not only hits by continent but also, with less precision, the country where the email address originated. We even have regional editors by continent. See the accompanying pie chart.



Europe, not surprisingly dominates, with North America in second place, then Asia and Oceania (Australia, etc.) come next. Quite far back are Africa and South America. More outreach is definitively needed for these last two.

The fact that the Journal is in English might be a barrier for many. Hence, we have an experiment with our sister ISI Association (IAES) to publish an occasional paper simultaneously in Spanish and English and, hence, in part escape the Journal’s language silo.

*Where Are We Now*

Journals, like other human institutions, arguably have many, many goals. Permit me to pick out one of these where progress has been made; but where much more is needed. This is the goal the Journal has of increasing “Technology Transfer.”

Most other statistical journals are doing parts of this job now. But bringing the new statistical tools/insights that we have as a profession to the Official Statistical World is our charge in a special way.

To make change requires more than just the invention of a new approach. It requires the integration of that new idea into existing paradigms. Deming would call this applying “systems thinking.” Legacy computer systems; or, worse, just plain out-of-date ideas are major barriers to innovation.

And when resources are very tight the margin for failure is so small that often change has to be very slowly or even is nonexistent. However, human beings are always making small changes, advertently or inadvertently. Sharing (benchmarking) the changes that were found to have worked well in one place can reduce the cost for the next guy somewhere else – maybe enough, so she or he can adopt/adapt that success and apply it, lowering the cost of that change by decreasing the risk of failure.

Allow me one last word please? The job you gave me has been fun. Thanks to all, editors, reviewers, authors, and to family and friends who put up with my slow learning curve. But in the end I did learn a lot!!! Many, many thanks!!! Rest assured I will follow future issues of the Journal in hopes of learning more.