

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

International Biometric Society – British and Irish Region

Welcome to the Summer 2020 issue of the newsletter of the British and Irish Region of the IBS. We continue with our biannual newsletter, here in its new form.

In this issue, we are introducing a new feature putting a spotlight on our members; who they are, what they do and why they are a BIR member.

If you have any items or news you would like to share with the society in future newsletters or would like to contribute to next issue's member spotlight, please email kirsty.hassall@rothamsted.ac.uk

President's Corner - Ruth King

There can be no doubt that 2020 will be a memorable year (and we are only in June). However, I would like to start my report with a focus on the recent outrageous and brutal killing of George Floyd in the US that has sparked moral outrage and demonstrations internationally. I take this opportunity to affirm that racism and discrimination have no part in the BIR (or any other part of society) and that we should treat all with the same level of respect and dignity we expect to receive. This is a responsibility for all of us.

It is also impossible not to mention the global COVID-19 pandemic that has affected everyone – and everyone will be dealing with many different challenges from physical and mental health issues (their own or loved ones), additional caring responsibilities as well as simply adapting to “normal” day-to-day activities. Many individuals in the region are actively engaged with COVID-19 activities and research – and it is great to see the regional community be able to be part of the response to this health crisis (which I expect will continue for many years to come).

As we now enter the summer months, the usual “conference season” has changed unrecognisably to that of last year. The International Biometric Conference has recently announced that this will move on-line, which provides new opportunities for engaging with the



One Year Ago: 7th Channel Network Conference, July 2019

Upcoming Events

Advances in Statistical Genomics

Details to follow

Advances in the Analysis of Survival Data

Details to follow

AGM and Presidential address

Details to follow

“The 2018 International Biometric Conference in Barcelona introduced me to the international network of applied statisticians and the important work we do around the world.”

-Dr John Addy

conference, particularly those who were unable to attend in person. Locally we had to cancel the planned meeting in the spring – “Advances in Statistical Genomics” - but we are reorganising this to be held as a virtual meeting later this summer. With the current on-going situation, we are actively planning further virtual meetings – and I think now is an opportunity for us to think about our community and different ways that we can engage and support each other in future years. As always – suggestions to the regional committee are very welcome!

Secretary's Corner - Rachel McCrea

I think it is fair to say this was not the secretary's report I envisaged writing a few months ago! Although work and life in general has been turned upside down in the midst of this pandemic it is heartening to see so many biometricians come together to try and make a difference. This collegiality is echoed within the BIR committee. One of my final visitors before the UK was locked down was our very own committee chair Ruth, and as well as spending a little time talking about research we also attended a very productive BIR committee meeting.

Rest assured that all practical matters of the BIR are continuing remotely, although at least in my case, often ably “assisted” by young children! I would like to thank everyone who responded to our call for new committee members, we will be in touch in the coming months to report our nominations for the Autumn AGM.

I hope you and your families and friends stay well and I look forward to seeing you remotely, and when allowed, in person again soon.

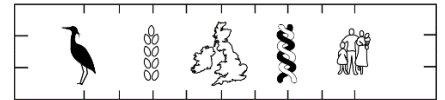
Meeting reports - Kirsty Hassall

Covid-19 has affected all aspects of life, be it from the way we do our supermarket shop, to the emergence of quarantine cocktails. Unfortunately social distancing rules have also meant a break in our regular face-to-face meetings. However, we are working hard to re-organize our planned events to be held virtually with updates to follow in the usual manner.

Infographic Competition - Daniel Farewell

When the BIR committee first mooted the idea of a competition that would highlight excellent infographics, we had no idea that infographics would be very much in the public eye in 2020.

To remind you: at our AGM in November we will be announcing the winner of the BIR Infographic of the Year competition. Entries will be accepted until as close to the AGM as we can leave it while still giving us time to judge the entries!



Regional News

Nominations for Regional Officer roles open

Contact Rachel McCrea
R.S.McCrea@kent.ac.uk by
30th June 2020



International News

José Pinheiro to be new President-Elect of the IBS

Launch of new IBS website

<https://www.biometricsociety.org>

IBC 2020 moves online

<https://www.ibc2020.org>

IBC 2022 to be held in Riga, Latvia July 10-15

To submit an entry, simply email Daniel Farewell (farewelld@cardiff.ac.uk) with either a link pointing to an infographic on the web, or an attached image containing the infographic itself.

The infographic *does not* need to be one you yourself have created! We will be awarding two prizes to recognise the winning infographic: one to the creator of the graphic, and the other to the person who submitted it. Both creator and submitter will receive a year's free membership of the BIR. The top two runners-up will also be similarly rewarded in pairs: both creators and submitters will be given free registration at a regional scientific event of their choice. No, this does not include the Channel Network or International Biometric Conferences: sorry!

What is an infographic? Well, since the criteria on which our panel of experts in infographicology will be basing their decisions (importance, informativeness, innovation and infotainment) are somewhat vague, we leave it to the notoriously excellent discretion of our BIR newsletter readership to decide if their entries are an infographic. If in doubt, it probably is one.

To give you a flavour for what we are after, the BIR committee have highlighted the following infographics as being interesting or intelligent:

<https://static01.nyt.com/images/2020/03/22/science/11SCI-VIRUS-CURVE1/11SCI-VIRUS-TRACKER1-mediumSquareAt3X.jpg>

<https://twitter.com/RamsThemes/status/1240617665422667777>

<https://prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information/are-you-at-risk/infographic-what-is-my-risk>

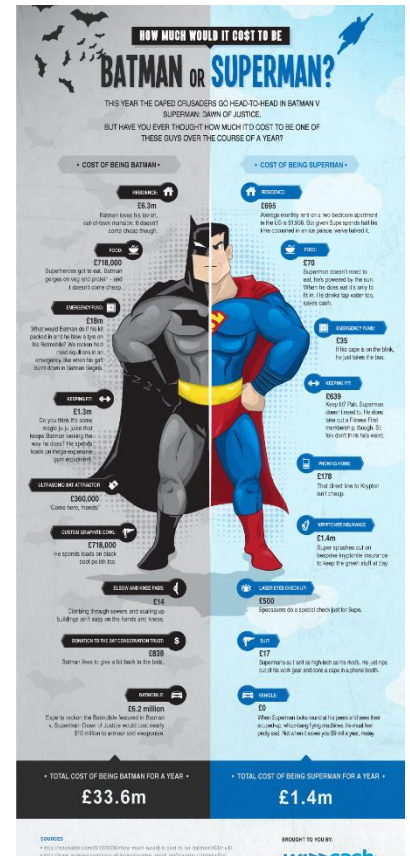
Launch of the new IBS website

The International Biometric Office (IBO) have announced the launch of the new IBS website <https://www.biometricsociety.org>. Please take a look and investigate the news and features from the IBS along with the new IBS Members Community, an online community designed to connect members from across the globe. To join the IBS Members Community:

1. Go to <https://www.biometricsociety.org>, and login using your existing credentials.
2. Visit your profile and update your personal information.
3. Click 'Community' in the main navigation, then select 'All Communities'. Members will see a brand-new 'IBS Members Community' to join (you MUST be logged in to see this option).
4. After you join the community, be sure to click on the group Settings and customize Email Notifications, so that you only receive the information you want.
5. Now, take the final step... post an update or topic!

The IBO welcome feedback and comments about the new website, email ibs@biometricsociety.org

Infographic Inspiration!



Taken from: <https://visual.ly/community/infographic/animals/how-much-would-it-cost-be-batman-or-superman>

Update of the new BIR website - Daniel Farewell

Progress continues on the development of our new regional website. As you may remember, the BIR is part of an exciting pilot project that will soon allow regions of the IBS to maintain microsites within the extensive infrastructure developed to support the new IBS website. Existing content from our old site has largely been migrated to the new microsite, and the membership management component is also now live.

The remaining challenges to solve include establishing the administrative capabilities to handle registration at regional society events and determining the most secure and convenient way of receiving online payments. While these are not inconsiderable tasks, the IBO are working hard to deliver a site that will be of great value to our region for years to come, and perhaps more importantly will offer newer or smaller regions an excellent foundation around which to grow their community and activities.

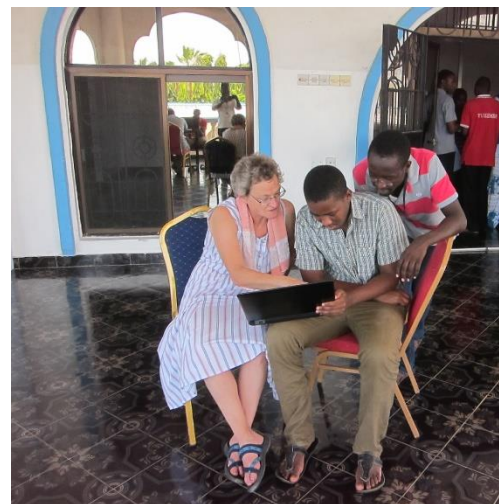
Member Spotlight—Professor Jane Hutton

I was blessed to grow up with life in all its fullness. South African wildlife and landscapes have so much varied beauty. My mother worked with local people to establish organic vegetable gardens in Soweto, to address problems of malnutrition. There were many arguments about differences between people, and the role of nature, nurture and politics.

I was always going to have a career in mathematics, which I loved from an early age. This naturally lead to statistics interacting with living things: biometry. I left engineering to my brothers. For my master's dissertation, I hoped to study animal populations, but instead did a very interesting medical project which included studying treatments for premature babies. My PhD was in environmental statistics, modelling the flow of water in dry rivers. As I got a job in medical statistics, I have mainly worked in that area. To think through questions about what causes disease and use of personal data, I wrote some article about ethics. Research on survival of people with cerebral palsy resulted in my becoming an expert witness.

It is interesting to see how different disciplines collect and evaluate evidence. My master's study of premature babies and my interest in ethics turned out to be relevant in a legal case. Biometry has provided me with opportunities to interact with many disciplines which relate to my childhood enthusiasms. Another privilege of academic career is international travel and collaboration.

My time is now divided between research, expert witness work, service on grant awarding bodies and committees and a little teaching. As I've acquired more responsibilities, I have had less time to teach, and mainly supervise dissertation students. It is a pity seniority tends to take one away from lectures and tutorials, and the challenge



of explaining ideas and answering the questions of energetic and enthusiastic young colleagues. However, one special teaching stream is working at the African Institutes of Mathematical Sciences, which have students from all over Africa in a glorious multinational, multicultural, multi-faith collaboration.

I really appreciate BIR and IBS, which allows me to see something of statistics in agriculture, ecology, climate, and to learn approaches which help me in health care research, and to keep meeting people who share my interest in mixing statistics into life.

Member spotlight—Dr John Addy

I am a Postdoctoral Training Fellow in the Malaria Immunology Laboratory at the Francis Crick Institute. My current focus is understanding the human immune response to the malaria parasite using large epidemiological and RNA sequence datasets. I also research the development of sampling methodologies to account for confounding spatial effects and to better understand the development of immunity to infectious diseases.

Prior to my post-doctoral work, I completed my PhD in the Applied Statistics group at Rothamsted Research. Funded by the Lawes Agricultural Trust, I studied the effects of climate change on crop production using historical data from the Rothamsted Long-Term Experiments. My subsequent publications have indicated that historical datasets provide insight into the impacts of climate change on crop production.

The IBS has provided me an environment to meet other statisticians and share ideas about data analysis. These meetings have proved vital to me as an early-career statistician, providing insight into a career in the application of statistics in agricultural, medical or ecological research. I have enjoyed attending meetings at local, regional and international levels. The 2018 International Biometric Conference in Barcelona introduced me to the international network of applied statisticians and the important work we do around the world.

Upcoming meetings

The "Advances on Statistical Genomics" meeting of the British and Irish Region (BIR) of the International Biometric Society (IBS), initially scheduled to be held on April 8th, was cancelled due to Covid-19. We plan to hold the meeting virtually later this summer. More details about speakers and registration will follow soon.



Credit: Michael Bowles | The Francis Crick Institute