

Regional Newsletter, December 2013



President's corner

SIMON THOMPSON

The label Biometrics includes a large number of areas, many of which have expanded considerably in the last 20 years. Apart from the perhaps more traditional areas of medical and agricultural statistics, one should now include statistical aspects of genetics, genomics, ecology, biology and environmental sciences, to mention just a few. Clearly the British and Irish Region (BIR) cannot hope to 'cover' all these areas effectively.

Members will not necessarily look to the BIR to provide up-to-date meetings in their own areas of special interest. For example, in my own area of medical statistics, I know of specialised UK-based meetings on statistical methods in clinical trials, epidemiological methods, causal analysis, and methods in meta-analysis, amongst others. Such specialised meetings may well be people's first choice when deciding what to attend or what to contribute to. As the world of Biometrics becomes more diverse and subdivided into specialties, where should BIR as an organisation focus its efforts?

I think the answer must be to concentrate on more generic methods or concepts, which have applications across a range of areas. We are attempting to do this. Examples of past BIR meetings of this type include those on GLMs and their extensions (November 2012), a meeting on [software interoperability](#) (November 2013, described herein), and in the future a meeting on [Big Data](#) (September 2014, described herein). These topics were chosen through BIR committee discussions, but of course we would welcome other ideas from members for suitable generic and/or topical issues.

The international bi-annual conference ([IBC27](#), July 2014 in Florence, described herein) is an occasion where, in one place, a wide variety of methods and applications across the full range Biometrics are presented and discussed. It is therefore an opportunity to discover how recent developments outside your own specialised area may be useful in your own work. So I encourage you to attend the IBC, in particular, as well as the other BIR meetings planned, as described in this newsletter, and look forward to welcoming you there.

Secretary's corner

SUE WELHAM

This is my first report as regional secretary, and I would like to thank the outgoing secretary, James Carpenter, for helping me to learn the role, and to wish him luck in his new role as Secretary-Treasurer of the IBS, starting in January.



Sue Welham is the new secretary for the British and Irish Region of the IBS.

With the next IBC approaching, a call for nominations for honours has been made. The Society makes several awards, including Honorary life Membership (to recognize long-term major contributions to the IBS), the Rob Kempton Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Biometry in the Developing World, and the Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Development of the IBS. The deadline for these awards is 1 February 2014 and we can nominate individuals from our own or from other regions (details at <http://tinyurl.com/ibshonours>). If you would like to suggest individuals whose contributions to the IBS could be recognized in this way then please let me know.

For those who haven't visited the regional website recently, video for presentations at our [meeting on the Cox model](#) are now available, as well as slides from all of our other meetings, including the Channel Network Con-



ference. We intend to make more video and audio material available for future meetings. This material is only available to members (so remember your password!) and makes our meetings accessible to all of our members, even those unable to attend in person. Finally, the committee recently discussed whether online voting for committee positions would be preferable to voting in person at the AGM. We do not currently have the technology to do this, so are keen to establish whether members think it would encourage more participation in either standing for positions or voting. If you have an opinion, or would consider standing for the committee next year, please [email me](#).

Bursaries for IBC 2014: soon to be made available



As in the past, the BIR will be offering at least four bursaries of up to £300 each for career-young biometricians to attend the IBC 2014 conference in Florence. We are currently in discussion with the Fisher Memorial Trust with regard to further funding. More details of how to apply for a bursary will be released shortly, via the [BIR website](#) and mailing list, so watch this space!

Upcoming PSI events

PETER COLMAN

BIR members may like to take note of a number of upcoming PSI (Statisticians in the Pharmaceutical Industry) events that may be of interest:

- 4–5 February 2014: Introduction to Pharmacokinetics & Bioequivalence
- 25–26 February 2014: Practical Bayesian Analysis Course

More details are available at <http://tinyurl.com/eventspsi>.

Meeting on Species Distribution Modelling

DIANA COLE

On 9 October 2013 the British and Irish region held a joint meeting with the Environmental Statistics Section of the Royal Statistical Society and the Computational Ecology Special Interest Group of the British Ecological Society on Species Distribution Modelling (SDM) at Charles Darwin House in London. There were four invited speakers: Richard Pearson (UCL, London), Colin Beale (University of York), Mark Brewer (Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland), and Greg McInerny (University of Oxford / Microsoft). The day started with an excellent workshop on “Best practice in SDM”, where the four invited speakers and two of the organisers, Matthew Smith (Microsoft) and Alison Johnston (British Trust for Ornithology), were asked to recommend essential pieces of advice as to what constitutes good practice in SDM.



The distribution of deer, leopards and ants were among the subjects presented as posters at the recent RSS-BIR-BES meeting on Species Distribution Modelling.

Following this, each speaker gave a 45 minute presentation; Richard Pearson spoke on “Some contrasting examples of SDM applications in the study of evolution, ecology and conservation”, Colin Beale gave some insight on the “Emerging issues in SDM”, Mark Brewer talked on “Climate Envelopes for SDM” and the day was rounded off with Greg McInerny talking on “New quantitative methods for SDM and making them relevant to users”. The meeting ended with a group discussion.

There were also a number of excellent Posters presented during the lunch break with various practical applications of SDMs including work on deer, leopards and ants. BIR members can access all the presentations by visiting <http://bir.biometricsociety.org/events/sdm>.



Issues in Clinical Trials meeting and the 2014 Bradford-Hill Lecture

MICHAEL SWEETING

The BIR in conjunction with the RSS Medical Section and PSI are pleased to announce a half-day meeting on Issues in Clinical Trials, to be held on Wednesday 4 June at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Details are still being finalised but the meeting will start at 1.45pm with a range of distinguished speakers including Professor Peter Armitage, Sir Iain Chalmers, Professor Stephen Senn, and Professor David Spiegelhalter. The annual Bradford Hill Lecture will then be presented by Professor Stuart Pocock at 5.00pm, which will be followed with a drinks reception. This is guaranteed to be a great day, so be sure to make a note of the date. Registration details will be released in due course.

IBC 2014, 6-11 July, Florence: Call for Contributed Papers



There is still time to submit abstracts for contributed oral and poster presentations to be presented at IBC 2014. These can be submitted online until 16 December 2013 inclusive. Submissions are welcome in all areas of biometry and an indicative list of areas is given in the full Call for Papers, see the IBC2014 website.

All submitted abstracts will be reviewed by the scientific committee for the conference, and presenting authors will be informed of the status of their abstract (oral session, poster session, rejection) by 3 March 2014. Regis-

tration for the conference opens on 8 January 2014, with an early-bird deadline of 31 March 2014.

Following on from the success of the awards made at the last three IBCs, the IBS will again be awarding prizes for the Best Student Oral Presentation(s) and the Best Poster Presentation(s).

Full details are available on the IBC 2014 website at <http://www.ibs-italy.info>.

IBS Young Statistician Showcase Awards

JOHN HINDE

As one of the new initiatives to promote IBS activities among young statisticians, the IBS Executive Committee has set aside funds to encourage their participation in the next IBC 2014 to be held in Florence, Italy. Five grants consisting of \$3000 will provide travel and accommodation expenses for five young statisticians. Grant awardees will give an oral presentation based on their research work in a specific session of the conference called "Young Statistician Showcase".

Applicants should meet the following criteria:

- Applicants should be registered for a graduate or postgraduate degree and be younger than 35 years at the end of 2013 to be eligible to apply. Graduates with one of these degrees in 2011 or 2012 are also eligible.
- Papers submitted must be no longer than 4 pages and must contain original work that has not yet been published, has not been the subject of any other award, and is predominantly the student's own work. The student applicant has to be the leading author of the paper.
- Results of particular studies apply only if the analysis has methodological implications or shows a novel and interesting application of statistics to clinical, epidemiological, or biological data.
- Only one paper per student will be accepted.
- Applicants should be student members of the International Biometric Society.

All those interested in applying should submit their papers by 10 January 2014. Full details can be found on the IBS local organising committee website at <http://tinyurl.com/showcaseibs>.



Subscriptions Due!

MARK BREWER

Your Membership of the International Biometric Society, British and Irish Region is now due for renewal. The fees for 2014 remain unchanged:

- Full Member: £40
- Retired Member: £20
- Biometrics and the Biometric Bulletin: £7 extra
- JABES and the Biometric Bulletin: £7 extra
- JABES, Biometrics and the Biometric Bulletin: £14 extra
- Student Member: Free

If you are a full or retired Member, there are several ways that you can pay for your membership for next year.

- Paypal: Go to <https://biometricsociety.org.uk/amember/signup> to pay your membership fees;
- Standing order: If you have set up a standing order your membership renewal is automatic each year. If you would like to set up a standing order please [contact Mark Brewer](#);
- Cheque: If you pay by cheque, please send the form attached the end of this newsletter with your cheque to Mark Brewer (address is on the form).

If you are a student member your membership renewal is automatic until the end date of your course. If the end date of your course has changed please [inform Diana Cole](#). Please advertise the society widely amongst your colleagues! Any new members can join the society by visiting <http://bir.biometricsociety.org/membership>.

BIR Sponsors IBS Travel Awards Fund for IBC 2014

MARK BREWER

The IBS Travel Awards Fund provides financial assistance for IBS members from developing countries to attend International Biometric Conferences. Since 2011, the IBS has matched all contributions to the fund made by its regions; this enabled ten awards to be made for the IBC in Kobe in 2012. The British and Irish Region is keen to support this initiative, and has made a donation of US\$2,000 to the Travel Awards Fund for the next IBC in Florence in July 2014 (see flyer at <http://tinyurl.com/ibcitaly>).

Meeting on the theme of “Big Data”

VINCENT PLAGNOL



The BIR will hold a meeting on the theme of “Big Data” on 17 September 2014 in London. The aim is to bring together a set of researchers with applied and/or theoretical work in large scale dataset analysis. The meeting will try to highlight links and shared methodological challenges across different research areas. The four confirmed speakers for the afternoon are: Thore Graepel (Microsoft Research; analysis of data from social media, in particular “Facebook likes”), Jaakko Peltonen (Aalto University, Finland; large dataset visualisation and interactive search), Thomas Thorne (University of Edinburgh; analysis of large scale genomics datasets) and Finn Lindgren (University of Bath; statistical methods for very large datasets). More details will follow as we get closer to the event.

Meeting on Statistical Software Interoperability

MICHAEL SWEETING



The four speakers on statistical software interoperability: (L-R) William Browne, Ian Cox, Darren Murray and Mike Smith.

On 14 November at the RSS headquarters in London, the BIR hosted an afternoon meeting on Statistical Software Interoperability in conjunction with the Statistical Computing Section of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS). Preceded by the AGM, the meeting featured four presentations from leading figures in computational statistics giving talks on new developments that involve interop-



erability between statistical software packages. William Browne (University of Bristol) started the meeting with “What, why, when and how? The Stat-JR experience”; a thought-provoking tour of various attempts in the past to create interoperability between statistical software and the development of a Model Exchange engine using the Stat-JR software environment. Ian Cox (JMP Marketing Manager, SAS) then gave an eloquent talk on “The interoperability of statistical software in a commercial setting: some personal experiences and observations”, where Ian presented the statistical discovery software JMP; a software product within SAS. After the break Darren Murray (VSN International) talked about “GenStat and ASReml as components of the statistical toolkit” and the day was rounded off with Mike Smith (Pfizer) giving a fascinating insight in “An adventure of running BUGS from other software packages”. As always, BIR members can access all the presentations from the BIR website by visiting <http://bir.biometricsociety.org/events/interop>.

Statistical Analysis of Multi-Outcome Data Workshop

MICHAEL SWEETING

The second workshop on the Statistical Analysis of Multi-Outcome Data will be held in Cambridge, UK on 30 June – 1 July 2014 and is a satellite meeting to the IBC 2014 conference in Florence being held a week later. The work-

shop will bring together international researchers in statistics and biostatistics. The topics of the workshop are intended to be broad and cover

- Joint longitudinal and time-to-event models
- Two-stage models
- Landmarking
- Multiple biomarker and survival models
- Novel approaches to modelling longitudinal / survival data
- Causal inference for survival with time-dependent co-variates
- Competing risks
- Recurrent events and survival
- Informative observation times



The second workshop on Statistical Analysis of Multi-Outcome Data will take place in Cambridge.

The workshop is structured as a series of invited talks, but abstracts are welcome from anyone who would like to present a poster at the meeting. For more information please visit <http://www.phpc.cam.ac.uk/events/home/>.





International Biometric Society, British and Irish Region

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP for (name)

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY: Please check

FULL member (Annual Subscription 40 pounds sterling) Full benefits of the Society including electronic subscription to Biometrics, Journal of Agricultural, Biological, and Environmental Statistics (JABES) and the Biometric Bulletin, voting privileges and the right to hold elective office.

RETIRED member (Annual Subscription 20 pounds sterling) All the rights of Full Membership. The retired category is open to anyone who has been a member for at least 10 years, and who is no longer in paid employment (working less than 0.2FTE).

Members have the options of receiving paper copies of the journals. Please check if applicable:

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Biometrics, JABES and
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You can renew your subscription online at <http://bir.biometricsociety.org/membership> (see foot of page). If this is not possible, then please send this form with a cheque made payable to 'BIOMETRIC SOCIETY' to Mark Brewer (Treasurer), BioSS Office, The James Hutton Institute, Craigiebuckler, ABERDEEN, AB15 8QH.

If you would prefer to pay by standing order or bank transfer, please contact Mark at M.Brewer@bioess.ac.uk for details. Note that with online membership renewal, payment can be made via PayPal (but please note you do not in fact need a PayPal account – just a debit or credit card).