



Australasian Region

# Newsletter

Issue 3  
March 2008

## From the President, Melissa Dobbie



Not surprisingly, 2007 was a huge "IBS" year for me, taking on the role of President of the region and with that, dealing with a host of responsibilities and activities our region undertakes. The biggest of these was organising the regional conference in Coffs Harbour in December 2007. I received some very positive feedback from delegates but thanks go to all of those whom attended, contributed and helped make it such a worthwhile and successful conference. I'm especially grateful to the conference committees for their hard work and fine organising. The conference abstracts have recently been made available on-line (linked from [www.biometrics.org.au/conf](http://www.biometrics.org.au/conf)) and you can also view some photos taken by delegates (access instructions provided). Also Kevin Wang wrote an article about his experiences at the conference for the Biometric Bulletin, which I have reproduced here. This may particularly appeal to student & early-career biometrician members to read. At the conference we held our Biennial General Meeting, during which the regional council for 2008 and beyond was voted in. I'd particularly like to welcome to the council President-elect Graham Hepworth (Uni of Melbourne) & Secretary Patrick Graham (University of Otago, Christchurch). I look forward to working more closely with you both over the coming year. Meanwhile, hope all members have a very happy & successful 2008!

## Australasian region council for 2008

As voted in at the Biennial General Meeting (which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007 in Coffs Harbour), the regional council for 2008 comprises:

**President:** Melissa Dobbie (CSIRO)

**President-elect:** Graham Hepworth (Uni of Melbourne)

**Secretary:** Patrick Graham (University of Otago, NZ)

**Treasurer:** Warren Müller (CSIRO)

**Assistant Treasurer:** Brian Niven (University of Otago, NZ)

**Regional representatives to IBS councils:** Tony Pettitt (QUT) and Alan Welsh (ANU)

**Newsletter correspondent:** Duncan Hedderley (AgResearch, NZ)

**Website manager:** Kevin Ko-Kang Wang (ANU)

Contact details for each member can be found on the regional website.



## **Biometrics by the Beach - a young statistician's perspective**

By Kevin Wang, Australian National University

*(Note - this will also appear in the next issue of the SSAI Newsletter with pictures)*

"Biometrics by the Beach" is one of the best conferences I have attended. Hosted at Coffs Harbour, NSW, nobody could complain about the lack of activities to do outside the conference sessions. A frequentist by training, I was never exposed to Bayesian statistics nor did I believe in it. In fact, I had always believed that it belongs to the Dark Side of Statistics. However, after attending Prof Kerrie Mengersen's short course, I think I have been converted to the Dark Side! I was very impressed by some of the stuff that Bayesians can do, when they are not possible in a frequentist's world. I particularly enjoyed the Young Statisticians' Dinner, it was certainly one of my favourite experiences in the week! I would like to thank Dr Melissa Dobbie and the Australasian Region for sponsoring the drinks at the dinner, and Daniel Burrell for helping with organising the event. About 15 "young statisticians" attended the dinner and we all had a wonderful time sharing our research work, in an informal and relaxing atmosphere. Of course, being a student, I cannot forget to mention the conference dinner. The Pet Porpoise Pool was a great venue for the dinner, and everyone enjoyed the performance of seals and dolphins. We were all welcomed with a kiss by a seal, which I will never forget as it was my first kiss! It was almost as interesting as hearing about Dr Dave Warton's "special relationship" with his eigenvectors. Having finished my presentation before the dinner, I was able to relax and enjoy the food, with a few sips of wine every now and then. Finally, I would like to thank Melissa and the rest of the organising committee members for organizing one of the best conferences I have ever attended. I would also like to thank the Australasian Region for sponsoring me with the conference registration and [registration to] the short course on Introductory Bayes.

"Biometry, the active pursuit of biological knowledge by quantitative methods." - R.A. Fisher, 1947

(See <http://www.tibs.org/> for details of this quote)

## Regional website: [www.biometrics.org.au](http://www.biometrics.org.au)

New to the website since the last newsletter .....

- ❖ a link to an article Sue Wilson wrote about the history of our region (<http://www.biometrics.org.au/about.html#history>)
- ❖ links to potentially relevant local conferences/workshops of interest to our members (<http://www.biometrics.org.au/conferences.html>)

**Coming soon!** - a link to relevant regional documentation including our by-laws, the minutes of the 2007 BGM held in Coffs Harbour, and the 2007 President's report presented at the BGM in Coffs Harbour. Also, a list of previous winners of regional awards.

If you haven't had a chance yet, make sure you check out our regional website sometime. And of course, if you have any suggestions for improvements or comments, then we would welcome your feedback (email [Melissa.Dobbie@csiro.au](mailto:Melissa.Dobbie@csiro.au) and [webmaster@biometrics.org.au](mailto:webmaster@biometrics.org.au) ).

## IBC2008 travel award winner



Daniel Pagendam, a PhD student from the University of Queensland, will be heading to Dublin in July 2008 as a result of being the successful applicant of the IBS Australasian Region travel award. Whilst all four applications were of a high calibre, Daniel's application caught the judges eye as being worthy of support. He plans to present a talk (or poster) on "Optimal sampling of the S-I-S epidemic" at the conference (where S-I-S is a model describing an individual's transition from susceptible to infective to susceptible states).

## Biometrics conference wrap-up

1. The conference attracted 90 delegates whom presented 8 invited talks, 39 contributed talks and 13 posters. In addition we had a very informative "Meet the editors" session organised by Jeff Wood.
2. The final conference program of abstracts for invited and contributed talks is available from <http://www.biometrics.org.au/conf/Biometrics2007ProgramBook.pdf> . Note that it is 7 Mb in size!
3. The slides for invited and contributed talks will be uploaded to the conference website in the near future (when we arrange for more memory space!) In the meantime, if you would like access to the slides for a particular talk, please email me for these directly.
4. Some folk who attended the conference have made their photos available on the conference website - see <http://www.biometrics.org.au/conf/gallery/> . If you would like to upload some photos, please email me for instructions.