

## June 2009: Report from the Ad-Hoc Committee on Membership

*The creation of this committee reflects interest in increasing our societal focus on ensuring growth of the membership. The committee will embark on discussions about strategies for consolidating and expanding the membership, including obvious specifics such as initiating membership drives, while also raising the profile of the need for a permanent focus on membership. The Committee will also focus on expanding the appreciation of "what ISBA does for the members". In connection with the latter, the Committee reports to the Board will present ideas for further discussion by the Board for activities and services that ISBA may consider developing to enrich the "member services" and hence the membership appeal.*

This report summarizes our discussions to date on several specific topics. We have had broader discussions about additional topics but focus on these to begin to define specific action-items that we believe will have more immediate impact on raising the interest in membership of ISBA. A synopsis for publication in the upcoming (June/July 09) issue of the Bulletin is appended.

1. Membership cost when compared to other statistical associations. We have discussed this and conclude that the cost of membership is not a barrier, and that in fact membership dues are low compared to most other societies. An exceptional point relates to student membership (below).

*Actions recommended:* None

2. Identify the types/areas of activity involving people using and developing *Bayesian Statistics* (including other societies/organizations and their members) that ISBA may be disconnected from and where directed approaches and advertizing may be productive. For example, how visible is ISBA among the computer scientists and others who are members or regular participants in the AI/UAI conferences and societies? ISBA members linked to these groups could be helpful in promoting ISBA.

*Actions recommended:* Ensure an ISBA flyer is distributed/visible at many such meetings, and perhaps Board members could be nominated to take specific steps in connection with particular subgroups. This committee has the responsibility for the flyer and will begin this outreach process once that is created (see item 7 below).

3. Maybe have a less expensive membership for PhD students if paid in batches of, say, 4 years. If the annual fee is \$10, for instance, then the 4 year fee could be \$30 (or even \$20). IMS is also currently still offering free membership to students, so that is for consideration too on a year-by-year basis. However, a longer-term reduced student membership makes more sense. Further, an ISBA flyer should be prominent in many graduate departments around the world, and sent (presumably electronically) to members and department heads on an annual basis, to aid in recruiting student members.

*Actions recommended:* (a) The Board should consider a 4 year membership for students, at a reduced rate. (b) An ISBA flyer will aid in attracting student members (see item 7 below).

4. The ISBA World Meeting is now biennial (and after 2010 will be the major meeting as Valencia is ending) in even numbered years. We could use the odd years to promote membership initiatives through existing meetings, such as BISP which happens biennially in Italy or Spain. Local chapters might consider organizing their national meetings also in the odd years. For example, the Bayesian meeting of the Brazilian chapter of ISBA (the ISBrA) could be moved to odd numbered years from its current even year calendar. Another meeting is MCMSki for which the same might be suggested.

The various ISBA supported meetings should be key opportunities to raise visibility and membership, via discounted registration fees for existing members, and in some cases by offering discounted memberships.

*Actions recommended:* The ISBA Program Council and Chairs of International Local Chapters should be charged with considering the scheduling of the major ISBA supported/endorsed meetings in odd numbered years, and ensuring that sponsorship of these (and other) meetings carries benefits for existing ISBA members such as discounted registrations. All supported meetings should visibly and actively publicize ISBA and the benefits of membership (see items 6,7 and 8 below).

5. Survey those who were members and decided to leave. This is closely related to points 1 and 2.

*Actions recommended:* The Board might consider how best to survey past members who are no longer members. If this is viewed as desirable, one or more members of this committee could be nominated and charged to follow-up.

6. Create a research webpage where review papers, relatively simple and clean code, presentations and other material could be shared and downloaded for free. Similar to the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) web pages. This would be restricted access, available only to members.

*Actions recommended:* None as yet. This committee is continuing to discuss this set of ideas. Who would be responsible for coordinating such development is an open question, and interacts with other ongoing questions the Board must address in the general maintenance and development of the main ISBA web site to the benefit of the membership.

7. Creation of an ISBA flyer. This flyer (pdf to be emailed broadly via membership, other organizations ISBA links to, broader email list maintained by ISBA, statistical and allied departments around the world, etc.) would be electronic, and should contain permanent information high-lighting benefits of ISBA membership, linking to the ISBA web site and some nice "visuals". It could also contain year-to-year (maybe semester-to-semester or even quarter-to-quarter) information on the other side highlighting some major events. By events, we mean major awards, a new book, a new webpage, ISBA related meetings, etc., with selection of items decided by the Board (or this committee, as designated by the Board). See earlier comments about how the flyer would be, or could be, used.

*Actions recommended:* This committee has the responsibility to develop proactive membership development plans, and this is one key one that this committee will take up immediately. In the coming months a subgroup of committee members will draft an initial flyer suitable for electronic distribution, and iterate with the Board in its design prior to finalizing the flyer for initial implementation.

8. Clearer articulation of membership benefits, and development of new benefits. Specific, evident benefits of membership include any services provided through the web site or via email (information flows, bulletins etc.) and these are as yet undeveloped.
  - (a) The Bulletin and Bayesian Analysis journal are currently free and available to anyone; this may change and is a consideration this committee will review over the coming months.
  - (b) ISBA supported meetings should have a standardized process of reduced registration for existing ISBA members – a key and evident benefit – and to the extent possible (depending on meetings) ISBA arranged or coordinated sessions of talks/posters restricted to ISBA members.
  - (c) The World Meetings: ISBA membership should be an eligibility requirement to present a talk, poster or other formal presentation activity at World Meetings. We understand that this will be established for talks and posters, as well as tutorial presentations, at the upcoming ISBA 10 in Spain in 2010, and this seems wise. This is a distinct and important member benefit. The same should apply to ISBA regional meetings (though we are not so clear on these, as they seem to be more closely linked to meetings of Local Chapters these days). Expand PR for ISBA travel awards for student and junior members only.
  - (d) Potential connections with other societies that involved reduced membership fees for those societies based on ISBA membership.
  - (e) The ISBA Web site. Already mentioned above, this is currently underused and a major development of the web site for communication and provision of access to member-only information, networking, etc., could be very beneficial to the society and aid in expanding membership.

*Actions recommended:* The ISBA Executives and Board should develop broader discussions with other societies about collaborative membership sign-up with discounts for parallel sign-up. More formalized benefits of membership in connection with both ISBA World and Regional Meetings, and all supported meetings, should be regularized.

**Respectfully submitted to the ISBA Board, June 2009**

David Dunson  
Sylvia Frühwirth-Schnatter  
Lurdes Inoue  
Brunero Liseo  
Hedibert Lopes (Committee Chair)  
David van Dyk