

THE ISBA BULLETIN



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The official bulletin of the International Society for Bayesian Analysis

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Sylvia Frühwirth-Schnatter -
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Dear ISBA Member, I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy in these trying times. Let me share with you recent news concerning our society. From mid June to mid July, the first season of Junior Bayes Beyond the Borders (JB^3), an online seminar series jointly organized by the j-ISBA Section and the BayesLab@Bocconi, took place. This very successful seminar featured presentations by the five 2019 Savage Award Finalists. Many thanks to Daniele Durante and Giacomo Zanella for their initiative. I am looking forward to the more activities of JB^3 in this direction, in particular the Bayesian Young Statisticians Meeting which will be held virtually on November 17-18, 2020 and future seasons of the JB^3 webinar.

The Savage Award Finalists presented also at the Savage Award Session at the JSM 2020 Meeting which, of course, was held virtually. The session was closed with the announcement of the winners. In the category Theory & Methods, the 2019 Savage Award goes to Christian Anderson Naesseth and honorable mentions go to Espen Bernton and Francois-Xavier Briol. In the category Applied Methodology, the 2019 Savage Award goes to Alejandra Avalos-Pacheco and an honorable mention goes to Lindsay Berry. Congratulations to all awardees.

The most important agenda regarding ISBA at this time of the year are the upcoming elections. The ISBA Nominating Committee (Past-President Raquel Prado as Chair, Catherine Forbes, Alejandro Jara, Fan Li, Brunero Liseo, Manuel Mendoza, Xinyi Xu) has nominated Judith Rousseau

and Sudipto Banerjee as two outstanding candidates for the office of President-Elect. The committee has also been busy contacting members and finalizing the list of new candidates for the ISBA Board: Julyan Arbel, Veronica Berrocal, Cathy W.S. Chen, David Dahl, Ju Hee Lee, Fabrizia Mealli, Jouchi Nakajima and Mario Perruggia. The ISBA Sections have also selected and nominated their candidates. Details about the elections and further information about individual candidates are available on our Website: <https://bayesian.org/nominees/>. I am grateful and delighted that so many excellent candidates are running for these positions. More news concerning ISBA governance: since July 2020, Rosangela Loschi from the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil serves as a new member for the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. This important committee drafts and reviews proposed Bylaws for ISBA and its Sections. After five years of dedicated service, Alicia Carriquiri has left the committee. Many thanks to Alicia and Rosangela for their commitment to ISBA.

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Finally, an update concerning ISBA 2022. After extensive negotiations under the leadership of for-

mer ISBA President Alexandra Schmidt, ISBA signed a contract to hold the 2022 ISBA World Meeting in Montreal, Canada from Saturday, June 25 to Friday, July 1, 2022. After a long period without many opportunities to visit Bayesian conferences, it will be very exciting and inspiring for all of us to attend two ISBA World Meetings in a row.

FROM THE EDITOR

- Maria DeYoreo -
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Welcome to the September 2020 issue of the *ISBA Bulletin*. Unfortunately my message from the March issue of the bulletin still holds true 6 months later. COVID-19 is still causing disruptions to everyday life, and uncertainty about the future. We wish all in the Bayesian community health and safety during this difficult time. Although we look forward to the pandemic being behind us, I hope that you all have been able to find some positive aspects of life during this time. For example, newfound flexibility of working remotely, more time to spend with family, developing stronger personal connections via phone calls, zoom chats, google hangouts, etc., more time for outdoor activities.

I will be moving on as Editor of the *ISBA Bulletin* at the end of this year, at which point there will be a search for a new Editor. Please keep that in mind and look for announcements in a couple of months when the search committee issues a call for recommendations!

Sending health, happiness, and best wishes for a vaccine!

FROM THE PROGRAM COUNCIL

- Athanasios Kottas -
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Looking forward to the Bayesian statistics community getting together again at conferences, the Program Council is working with the respective scientific committees to prepare for the ISBA 2021 and ISBA 2022 World Meetings.

ISBA 2022 is scheduled to be held in Montreal, Canada from June 26 to July 1, 2022. At this time, the plan remains for ISBA 2021 to be held as a physical conference in Kunming, China (during the week of June 28-July 2, 2021, with short courses on June 27, 2021). However, given the uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative plans are also considered. The final decision is expected within the next 1-2 months, and will be announced to the entire ISBA community. The invited sessions and plenary talks for ISBA 2021 have been determined. There will be a new call for Contributed Talks/Posters and Junior Researcher Travel Award applications. Submission forms and relevant details will become available on the World Meeting website at <https://bayesian.org/isba2020-home/> where the latest updates can also be found.

emph(Co-)Sponsorship/Endorsement Requests. The ISBA Program Council considers applications for financial sponsorship (or co-sponsorship) or non-financial endorsement of meetings. Detailed information on how to submit a request for either sponsorship or endorsement from ISBA can be found at <https://bayesian.org/events/request-sponsorshipendorsement/>.

Upcoming ISBA-sponsored/endorsed events:

1. ABC in Svalbard, April 12-13, 2021, Svalbard, Norway.
2. The 5th EAC-ISBA Conference: A Satellite Meeting of the 2021 ISBA World Meeting in Celebrating James O Berger's 70th Birthday, June 25-26, 2021, Dali, Yunnan, China.

3. BAYSM 2021, June 25-26, 2021, Kunming, China.
4. NSF-CBMS Conference on “Bayesian Forecasting and Dynamic Models”, August 2-6, 2021, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA, USA.
5. 11th BAYES-PHARMA Applied Bayesian Biostatistics Workshop (BAYES2020), Rockville, MD, USA (Postponed until September 2021).
6. 11th European Seminar on Bayesian Econometrics (ESOB), Madrid, Spain (Postponed to 2021).

UPDATES FROM BA

From the BA Editor

- Michele Guindani-

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- It is usual that the Editor-in-Chief of *Bayesian Analysis* provides a summary about the state of the journal at the ISBA World Meeting. Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to meet and discuss in-person this year. So, I will take advantage of this column to provide some data.
- *Bayesian Analysis* has certainly earned a standing in the views of many authors over the years. Hence, we believe that Bibliometric indexes do not provide an accurate measure of the work we do. At the same time, it is nice to share good news. The most recent bibliometric indexes improve on the already positive past metrics, and they keep showing that Bayesian Analysis is recognized among the top journals in Statistics & Probability. *Bayesian Analysis* has obtained a 2019 JCR Impact Factor of 2.696, that places it in the top 16 out of 124 journals in Statistics & Probability. Just to provide a reference, the *Journal of the American Statistical Association* has a score of 3.989 (4/124) and the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society - Series B* has an index of 3.965 (5/124). Other more long-standing and more blazoned journal outlets have obtained less glamorous results. The 2019 Article Influence Score index for *Bayesian Analysis* is 2.514 and ranks BA as 13th out of 124 journals covering Statistics & Probability. Let me emphasize again that the work of the members of the Editorial board is not aimed at optimizing these metrics. However, it is comforting to see that *Bayesian Analysis* is not at all a fringe journal and that the quality of the work we publish is being recognized.
- In terms of submissions, we have been experiencing an increase over the past few years. The acceptance rate in 2019 was set around 20%. The median time to first decision has been slightly less than 35 days in 2019. This figure speaks about the attentive first screening process of all the co-Editors and the AEs, and the overall efficiency of our review process. However, I can't deny we have some worrying outliers from time to time, as some submissions may take largely beyond the 12 weeks benchmark we have set to give a first feedback to the authors. For those instances, I apologize. The observed trend in 2020 suggests a further increase in submissions, and - unfortunately - a potential decrease in the acceptance rate. Our median time to first decision is also increasing, due to the taxing situation that the COVID-19 pandemic/syndemic has created for many members of the Editorial Board and for many referees. Despite this situation, I am confident we will continue delivering the quality and attentiveness that characterizes our journal's reviews.
- The **September 2020 issue** of *Bayesian Analysis* is now available [online](#). The issue features ten articles and one Discussion paper: *Bayesian Regression Tree Models for Causal Inference: Regularization, Confounding, and Heterogeneous Effects* by P. Richard Hahn, Jared S. Murray, and Carlos M. Carvalho. There are three thought-provoking Invited discussions, by Arman Oganisian

and Jason A. Roy; Georgia Papadogeorgou (Duke) and Fan Li (Duke); Stefan Wager (Stanford). In addition, there are 6 stimulating and engaging Contributed discussions. A 19 pages-long rejoinder concludes the Discussion. The manuscript can be downloaded [here](#). It is possible to watch the recording of the related Discussion Webinar on the [ISBA YouTube Channel](#).

- We welcome **public contributions** to the Discussion of the manuscript the manuscript *On a Class of Objective Priors from Scoring Rules* by Fabrizio Leisen, Cristiano Villa, and Stephen G. Walker, which will be featured as a **Discussion Paper in the December 2020** issue of the journal. You can find the [manuscript in the Advance publication section of the journal website](#). The contributions should be no more than two pages in length, using the [BA latex style](#). The contributions should be submitted to the journal using the [Electronic Journal Management System \(EJMS\)](#) submission page, before **November 3rd, 2020**.

j-ISBA

- Brenda Betancourt -

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In spite of the current difficulties, the first edition of the webinar series Junior Bayes Beyond the Borders (JB^3) was a success! We are also pleased to announce that the official j-ISBA conference Bayesian Young Statisticians Meeting (BAYSM) has now moved to an Online format (<https://j-isba.github.io/baysmo.html>), and will be held on November 17-18, 2020. This conference will provide a platform for the dissemination of excellent work by junior researchers in the field of Bayesian statistics and we invite everyone to join us! There is no registration fee for the conference but we encourage students and junior Bayesian within 5 years of having completed their degree to become members of the j-ISBA section (only \$5 usd per year).

Elections are also coming soon and we are honored to have two candidates for each of the two soon-to-be vacant positions: Chair-Elect and Treasurer. The nominees for the Chair-Elect position are Xenia Miscouridou (University of Oxford) and Sameer Deshpande (MIT), and for the Treasurer position are Sally Paganin (UC Berkley) and Diana Cai (Princeton University). We wish all of them good luck for the elections and encourage you to vote when the time comes. You can find their biography on the ISBA website: <https://bayesian.org/nominees/>.

Of course, j-ISBA is an open community and the work of the officers is often done jointly with the members. We are always happy to hear from our members of any opportunity to share experiences, having career-advice and interact. Don't be shy and participate in the j-ISBA life through our Facebook group!

NEWS FROM THE WORLD

-Francesco Denti-

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Conference Report

Lessons from JSM 2020

by David Banks

The pandemic is teaching us new ways to manage conferences, and the 2020 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) was a bold experiment. On April 9, the American Statistical Association decided that the health risks of an in-person meeting in Philadelphia were too great—it was necessary to become a virtual meeting. The amazing ASA staff scrambled to achieve that, and did a test run of their new conference platform at the Symposium on Data Science and Statistics (a smaller meeting with about 300 attendees). There were some initial wrinkles, but they were largely ironed out in time for the JSM, in which more than 5,000 statisticians participated.

Going virtual is great for the environment—nobody needs to travel by air to attend. The registration fees are lower and there are no hotel charges, which opens the conference up to more people, especially those who are retired, or who are students, or who have limited travel support from their college, business, or agency. But one misses the energy and excitement seeing old friends and making new ones. The JSM 2020 team tried to find ways to replicate some of that in-person experience by encouraging department chairs and agency heads to arrange private Zoom meetings for alumni or current/former staff members. We also experimented with randomly assigning people to small-group breakout rooms for 15 minute intervals during the opening reception and the new Fellows reception, to mimic the common JSM experience of getting swept up with a gang of mostly strangers and heading out to lunch or dinner together. I don't think that experiment worked very well, although Amy Herring disagrees, and she is always correct. Nonetheless, I advise ISBA to explore alternatives—perhaps a set of popular people who anchor the breakout rooms, and then people self-select the rooms into which they wish to drop and control how long they stay.

The poster sessions and contributed paper sessions were probably underattended. I think ISBA could address the poster problem through our traditional technique of combining the poster session with a glass, or two, of wine. But there is a problem for international conferences, which are spread over many time zones. Drinking wine at 8:00 a.m. is inconvenient, but Bayesians have learned to make sacrifices for our beliefs.

Some of the new capabilities are really great. Recording the talks enabled people to hear sessions that were scheduled for the same time slot. But ISBA does not do much parallelization, so perhaps that will be less advantageous than at JSM, which can have 38 sessions in the same time band. And C. R. Rao joined in the session celebrating his centenary, at which Sir David Cox spoke; probably neither would have happened at an in-person meeting.

Another lesson from the JSM experience is that one should not plan for too much virtual time on each day. Four to six hours is about all that people can enjoy when they are participating from home. It is a better experience to have a conference that runs for more, but shorter, days.

One thing that needs underscoring is that if ISBA decides to run a virtual conference, or to make a low-registration-fee virtual-attendance option a permanent part of its meetings, then we shall have to cultivate flexibility. This year, ISBA cancelled its meeting in Kunming, but JSM was able to provide a last-minute invited session for the Savage Award talks. Similarly, the organizers had to find solutions and workarounds when speakers' laptops failed or there were lapses in the recording. There are challenges of this kind at any conference, but these failure modes are new to us, and we need to have backup plans.

In short, the JSM went pretty well. I think it is possible to do even better, and I encourage ISBA to think about how to do it. My guess is that the pandemic will be here for a while, and we should be prepared for a new virtual reality.

Report about ISBA at JSM 2020

by Babak Shahbaba

As the ISBA representative, I worked closely with the representative from SBSS, Surya Tokdar, to organize several sessions at JSM 2020.

These included an invited papers session on complex biomedical systems, and several topic-contributed papers sessions on integrating heterogeneous data, Bayesian analysis of structured and high dimensional data, and Bayesian neural networks. These sessions were meant to reflect recent advances in the field of Bayesian Statistics. Additionally, because the ISBA World Meeting was canceled this year due to the ongoing pandemics, we decided to include the Savage Award in JSM 2020 instead.

Meetings and conferences

The COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing and affecting us all. The prolonged duration of this unfortunate situation has forced more and more conferences and workshops either to go virtual or be postponed. Below, we have collected some of the new changes.

Postponed events

The **EnviBayes** workshop has been postponed for one year. It will be held in Provo, Utah USA from September 30 to October 2, 2021. More information can be found at

<https://community.amstat.org/envr/events/envr2020workshop>

Unfortunately, the **BAYES2020: Bayesian Biostatistics** conference is canceled and delayed until September 2021. The virtual version of the meeting was also discarded for various practical reasons. Keep an eye on the conference website:

<https://www.bayes-pharma.org/>

Virtual Conferences and Workshops

The **Bayesian Young Statisticians Meeting: Online (BAYSM:O)**, a conference organized by the junior section (j-ISBA) of the International Society for Bayesian Analysis (ISBA), will take place online on November 17-18, 2020. This conference will provide a platform for the dissemination of excellent work by junior researchers in the field of Bayesian statistics, and allow them to interconnect with the Bayesian community.

<https://j-isba.github.io/baysmo.html>

The j-ISBA board encourages two types of submission: **submission of individual presentations**, or **submission of contributed sessions**. All sessions are scheduled for 75 minutes, each with three 20-minute talks followed by a brief discussion by a senior researcher as well as questions. The submission deadline is September 15, 2020, at 11:59 pm ET.

For any questions and comments, contact the j-ISBA board at jisba.section@gmail.com.

The **2020 Women in Statistics and Data Science Virtual Conference** will take place between September 30, 2020 and October 2, 2020.

<https://ww2.amstat.org/meetings/wds/2020/conferenceinfo.cfm>

The **2020 Women in Statistics and Data Science Conference** will highlight the achievements and career interests of women in statistics and data science. Senior, mid-level, and junior stars representing industrial, academic, and government communities will unite to present their life's work and share their perspectives on the role of women in today's statistics and data science fields

The **13th International Conference of the ERCIM WG on Computational and Methodological Statistics** (CMStatistics 2020) will take place virtually, 19-21 December 2020. Tutorials will also be given virtually on Friday 18th of December 2020.

http://www.cmstatistics.org/CMStatistics2020/important_dates.php

The deadlines for abstract submission for invited and organized sessions, and contributed abstract submission have been set for October 9, 2020.

The Bayesian nonparametric section of ISBA (**BNP-ISBA**) has organized a **series of monthly webinar**. The aim is to disseminate research progress made by distinguished scholars working in our vast area.

Webinars will take place on the first Wednesday of each month, starting in September of 2020. Check out the next webinar at

<https://bnp-isba.github.io/webinars.html>

And don't forget:

Postponement of the ISBA World Meeting: Due to the ongoing coronavirus epidemic, the 2020 ISBA World Meeting and its satellite events have now been postponed by one year. The new date of the World Meeting is now June 28-July 2, 2021, and the short courses will be on June 27, 2021.

<https://bayesian.org/isba2020-home/>

Due to the virus outbreak, the **Applied Bayesian Statistics School in Bayesian Causal Inference** has been postponed to 7-11 June 2021 in the same location in Firenze. New registrations can be held starting from November 1st, 2020.

<http://www.mi.imati.cnr.it/conferences/abs20/index.html>

The **2020 Orange County Biostatistics Symposium** will be conducted on Friday/Saturday, 16/17 October 2020. The location, as originally scheduled, is going to be the Allergan Auditorium and Theater, 2525 Dupont Drive, Irvine, CA.

<https://community.amstat.org/oclb/home>

Due to the uncertainty caused by the current situation with the COVID-19 outbreak, **European Seminar on Bayesian Econometrics (ESOBE) 2020** is postponed to 2021.

<https://esobe.org/>

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