

THE ISBA BULLETIN



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Sylvia Frühwirth-Schnatter -
president@bayesian.org

Dear ISBA Member,

I have reached the end of my year as ISBA President and it has been a rewarding experience. I have been incredibly honored to work with a great group of leaders and it was a particular pleasure to work with current Past-President Raquel Prado. In the name of all ISBA Executives, I would like to thank Raquel for her outstanding leadership and initiative and for devoting so much time and dedication to serving our society. As we are heading into the new year, I'm excited to continue working as Past-President together with Igor Prunenster as ISBA President and with Sudipto Banerjee as ISBA President-Elect for the thriving of our society. Thanks to our nominating committee and all ISBA sections, the ISBA elections have assembled an outstanding group of new officers. Many thanks to all candidates for their willingness to work on behalf of the Society. I would like to extend my thanks to all outgoing officers for their continued support of ISBA and say a warm welcome to all incoming officers. Let me express special thanks to the outgoing ISBA Board Members Alicia Carriquiry, Michele Guindani, Lurdes Inoue, and Surya Tokdar and a special welcome to the new ISBA Board Members Veronica Berrocal, Cathy W.S. Chen, David Dahl and Mario Perugia. In normal times, one of the highlights of my presidency would have been to attend the ISBA World Meeting in Kunming, Yunnan, in China earlier this year. I truly missed seeing all of you in person at our most important meeting or at any of the other conferences planned for 2020. Thousand thanks to the ISBA Program Council, specifi-

cally to Thanasis Kottas and Li Ma, for the diligent and thoughtful work they have put into preparing the postponed 2020 ISBA World Meeting and for transforming it into the 2021 ISBA World Meeting under these uncertain and difficult circumstances. In consultation with the ISBA Executive Committee, the Program Council has reached the decision to hold the 2021 ISBA World Meeting as a virtual conference. Further important news regarding the 2021 ISBA World Meetings are announced in the Program Council's column of the Bulletin. I deeply regret that it will not be possible to hold the 2021 World Meeting in Kunming. In the name of ISBA, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the Local Organizing Committee at Yunnan University, chaired by Niansheng Tang, and to Ming-Hui Chen (University of Connecticut) for all their effort and time devoted to preparing and organizing the first ISBA World Meeting in China. ISBA is immensely grateful to Yunnan University for their outstanding generosity as local host. It has been a longstanding strategic plan of ISBA to hold an ISBA World Meeting in China and we are currently exploring various options to make this possible in the future.

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A highlight for ISBA toward the end of this year was the online Bayesian Young Statisticians Meeting, organized on November 19-20 by the junior Section of ISBA (j-ISBA). Many thanks to Trevor Campbell, Roberta De Vito, Brenda Betancourt and Akihiko Nishimura for making this possible. The meeting featured many brilliant, well-prepared and inspiring talks. It is wonderful that ISBA has so much talent among its junior members. I hope that j-ISBA considers offering such virtual conferences beyond the Corona-crisis on a regular basis. Bayes beyond borders without having to care about travel funds is an outstanding opportunity for young researchers from all parts of the world. Important news regarding our society concern the ISBA Bulletin. After two years of dedicated service, Maria De Yoreo ends her term as Editor of the Bulletin. We greatly appreciate the wonderful job Maria did in this important role, many thanks! It is wonderful that Gregor Kastner who served as Associate Editor of the Bulletin for several years enthusiastically accepted the invitation of the Editor and Search Committee to take over as Editor for the period 2021-2023.

The year 2020 was a truly historic moment. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on all aspects of our lives has been dramatic, but we also learned new ways to conduct our work using new tools and new technology. With the incredible progress in developing effective Covid-19 vaccines, this truly stressful year is ending on a positive note. The past months have shown more than ever how valuable scientific research is and what it can contribute to the good of society. Writing this column on the last day of this challenging and unusual year, I am sending you, your families and your loved ones my best wishes for a happy and healthy 2021.

Sylvia Frühwirth-Schnatter

ISBA President 2020

FROM THE EDITOR

- Maria DeYoreo -
mdeyoreo@rand.org

Happy New Year to all! I hope you all had a restful and rejuvenating holiday season. This is my last time serving as *ISBA Bulletin* Editor. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you! I am very thankful to my fellow AEs for providing columns every three months, even under the chaos of the past year. They have been so great to work with. Gregor Kastner will be taking over as Editor beginning with the March issue, and given what an excellent job he has done with the software highlights, you are surely in for some interesting and enjoyable reading! Thank you Gregor! Congratulations also to Sylvia Frühwirth-Schnatter for ending her current term as ISBA President, and best wishes to Igor Pruenster. I hope that 2021 is a good year for all, and look forward to seeing everyone in person once meetings are able to move away from the virtual format.

FROM THE PROGRAM COUNCIL

- Athanasios Kottas -
program-council@bayesian.org

The Program Council has been working on plans for the ISBA 2021 and ISBA 2022 World Meetings, along with the respective Scientific Committees, and in consultation with the ISBA Executive Committee.

The ISBA Executive Committee and Program Council have decided to convert the ISBA 2021 World

Meeting to a virtual conference to be held during the week of June 28 - July 2, 2021. The current plan is to offer free attendance to the virtual conference. The Scientific Committee, chaired by Li Ma, will be working on adapting the program, in coordination with a virtual conference organizing committee. The organizing committee will be co-chaired by Ming-Hui Chen and Christian Robert and it will also include j-ISBA Section board members Roberta De Vito, Sally Paganin, and Xenia Miscouridou. We are grateful to Ming-Hui, Christian, Roberta, Sally and Xenia for agreeing to help with the virtual ISBA 2021! Once plans are finalized regarding the format of the virtual conference program, further details and calls for contributions to the program will be announced to the ISBA membership.

ISBA 2022 is scheduled to be held in Montreal, Canada from June 26 to July 1, 2022. The Scientific Committee, chaired by Botond Szabo, has started working on the conference program. We very much look forward to ISBA 2022 being held as a physical conference.

(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/>.

UPDATES FROM BA

From the BA Editor

- Michele Guindani-

micheleguindani@gmail.com

We welcome **public contributions** to the Discussion of the manuscript the manuscript *Centered Partition Processes: Informative Priors for Clustering* by Sally Paganin, Amy H. Herring, Andrew F. Olshan, and David B. Dunson, which will be featured as a **Discussion Paper in the March 2021** 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](#) and should be submitted to the journal using the [Electronic Journal Management System \(EJMS\)](#) submission page, before **February 23rd, 2021**.

An announcement for the public Webinar presentation will follow. As a reminder, all BA Discussion Webinars can be viewed on the [ISBA YouTube channel](#).

j-ISBA

- Brenda Betancourt -

bbetancourt@ufl.edu

Dear ISBA community, 2020 was a good year for j-ISBA in spite of the current challenges. The Online j-ISBA conference was a complete success and to end my last year as a board member, I would like to congratulate and introduce the new members of the j-ISBA board: Xenia Miscouridou (Chair-Elect) and Sally Paganin (Treasurer). The j-ISBA section would like to thank Trevor Campbell for his hard work and leadership as Chair during this year!

We look forward to a new year full of exciting activities. Stay tuned and join our Section! j-ISBA is an open community and we are always happy to hear from our members. Be part of the j-ISBA life through our Facebook group, our Twitter account or our blog (<https://jisbablog.wordpress.com/>)!

NEWS FROM THE WORLD

-Francesco Denti-

f.denti2@campus.unimib.it

Important Events and Conference Report

Professor Sir Adrian Smith awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from UFRJ, Brazil.

by *Dani Gamerman*

The title of Doctor Honoris Causa from UFRJ was awarded by Conselho Universitário (Consuni) - UFRJ, the Higher Council of Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, with a unanimous deliberation of the regular meeting of 12 September 2019. The idea of awarding the title came from Prof. Basilio Pereira, and I gladly agreed to help him with the preparations. Prof. Pereira himself is not a Bayesian, after being advised by Sir David Cox, but has always been keen on Bayesianity throughout his career. For example, he invited Adrian to visit UFRJ for three months in 1980 and has been in touch with him ever since. The awarding proposal was successively approved by the Department of Statistical Methods, the Institute of Mathematics, and the Center of Mathematical and Exact Sciences and support was also obtained from the Faculty of Medicine and the Heart Institute, to finally reach and get approval from Consuni.

Given the breaking out of the pandemic and the extra difficulty associated with long-distance flights, it was agreed to have the award ceremony on-line, which speeded up the preparations. The downside of this choice was the absence of the pomp and circumstance of gowns, medals, long speeches, and the audience that such ceremonies enable.

This ceremony took place on Friday, 4 December 2020 at 11 am (Brasilia time). It was inserted within the Colloquium commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Graduate Program in Cardiology at UFRJ, where Adrian was one of the invited lecturers, along with Professor Sir David Cox. A reasonable number of people, mostly statisticians from Brazil, attended the ceremony. In total, there were about 130 participants, among which academic authorities from Brazil and abroad, specially invited for the occasion, and the ISBA President-Elect Igor Pruenster.

Prof. Pereira and I made the presentation of why Sir Adrian was a more than suitable fit for this honorific title and expressed our honor in having UFRJ connected to such a scientist. Then the UFRJ Rector, an outstanding researcher in BioPhysics, reinforced our message with a more encompassing view of Science.

Sir Adrian used his speech time with a presentation of the exciting work currently being done at Turing, under his leadership. I missed a more informal speech from him, as we all know how illuminating, thought-provoking, and enthusiastic his talks are. It was somewhat fortunate that the ceremony took place in the very week he began his term as the president of the highly prestigious Royal Society, yet another accolade in his brilliant career.

The full session of the Cardiology workshop was recorded and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn1UpY4BaIk>. In the video, the award ceremony takes place around 3:09 and 3:50. For lovers of Statistics, the 1st hour contains a lecture by Professor Sir David Cox and the 2nd hour contains a lecture by Professor Fabio Cozman from USP, Brazil. Below pictures taken from the video.

j-ISBA – 2020 BAYSM: O

by *Roberta De Vito and Trevor Campbell*



UFRJ Rector, Prof. Denise Pires de Carvalho



Prof. Dani Gamerman



Prof. Basilio Pereira



The honoree, Prof. Sir Adrian F. M. Smith

The 2020 BAYSM: O was a great success. The conference had 12 different sessions, with three speakers and one discussant in each, for 48 speakers. The attendance was high, with around 60 in each of the sessions. Every talk in the 12 sessions was outstanding. It is terrific that ISBA has so much talent among its junior members. The session format – with juniors and an invited senior discussant at the end – worked well, creating meaningful interaction between junior and senior researchers and inspiring new ideas, research directions, and collaborations. Last but not least, although it was an online conference, it was very interactive, full of comments and brilliant ideas. It often felt like we were in person together again!

This online conference comes in the midst of a global pandemic that has been difficult for all of us. We, as J-ISBA, thought this could be the time to see positiveness and to share our research, thoughts, ideas with others, to enhance collaborations and ideas further. We plan to continue organizing a series of online conferences beyond the COVID-19 crisis that happens regularly. Bayes beyond borders without the barriers of obtaining travel funding is an outstanding opportunity for young researchers from all parts of the world.

Meetings and conferences

Postponed events

The **2020 Orange County Biostatistics Symposium**, originally scheduled on 16/17 October 2020, has been postponed. Based on the current situation and per health advisories, the organizing committee has decided to postpone the full Symposium to next year. The exact date of the 2021 Symposium

is to be decided by taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic and health authority guidelines. More information can be found at <https://community.amstat.org/oclb/home>

Conferences and Workshops

JSM (the Joint Statistical Meetings) is the largest gathering of statisticians and data scientists held in North America. The 2021 Joint Statistical Meetings will be held at the Washington State Convention Center, 705 Pike St., Seattle, WA 98101. The conference is scheduled on August 7-12, 2021.

From January 6 to February 2, 2021 the online submissions of topic contributed, roundtable and invited poster abstracts are open. The early registration will open on May 3, 2021. More info at <https://ww2.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2021/program.cfm>

And don't forget:

The Bayesian nonparametric section of ISBA (**BNP-ISBA**) has organized a **series of monthly webinars**. 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>

Postponement of the ISBA World Meeting: Due to the ongoing coronavirus epidemic, the 2020 ISBA World Meeting will be virtual, taking place during June 28-July 2, 2021.

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>

Due to the uncertainty caused by the current situation with the COVID-19 outbreak, **European Seminar on Bayesian Econometrics (ESOB)** 2020 is postponed to 2021. <https://esobe.org/>

The **EnviBayes** workshop 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. Keep an eye on the conference website for updates regarding BAYES2021: <https://www.bayes-pharma.org/>

Obituaries

Arianna Rosenbluth (1927–2020)

The last remaining author of the 1953 paper that introduced MCMC methods, Equation of State Calculations by Fast Computing Machines, passed away on 28 December 2020. Arianna Rosenbluth, née Wright, was born on 25 September, 1927. She completed her PhD in physics at Harvard at the age of 22 in 1949, with a thesis entitled *Some Aspects of Paramagnetic Relaxation*. She worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory from 1951 to 1956, where she wrote the 1953 paper mostly with her husband, Marshall Rosenbluth. She designed and implemented the associated code on the MANIAC I computer (although Augusta Teller worked on an initial version). The Rosenbluth wrote two subsequent papers by themselves, published in 1954 and 1955 in the *Journal of Chemical Physics*. [This short biography is based on the Wikipedia entry on Arianna W. Rosenbluth, a longer obituary to appear in the next issue of the Bulletin being in preparation.]

Hélène Massam (1949–2020)

We are sorry to report that our friend and colleague Hélène Massam passed away on August 22, 2020 after suffering a stroke. She was a professor of statistics at York University, Toronto, and a member of the initial editorial board of *Bayesian Analysis* (2004–09).

Born on January 10, 1949 in Marseille, France, Hélène was the beloved single child of Panayotis Kampouris and Oeanthi Colaitis. She grew up in harsh conditions in her home town and through toil and talent, ultimately gained admission to the École normale supérieure de Fontenay-Saint-Cloud. Having married geographer Bryan Massam in July 1969, she moved with him to Montréal, Canada, and undertook studies in mathematics at McGill University (BSc'71; MSc'73; PhD'77), where she specialized in optimization; her advisor was Sanjo Zlobec. The family then relocated to Ontario, where Hélène was successively a research associate (1977–78), a postdoctoral fellow (1978–81), and a lecturer (1981–84) at the University of Toronto. Her passion for statistics developed there at the contact of Don Fraser, who was her first major collaborator.

Hélène joined York University in 1984, was tenured in 1988 and promoted to full professorship in 1996. She remained affiliated with that institution for the rest of her career, though she was on leave without pay at the University of Virginia from 1997 to 2001. She loved to travel and did so extensively during her sabbaticals; she also enjoyed teaching and gave long series of lectures in Pau, Rome, and Sfax in addition to her regular duties.

Research-wise, Hélène first earned wide recognition for shedding light on the geometry of exponential families and for exploring both the structural properties of, and inferential issues surrounding, the rich class of Wishart distributions. With her coauthors, among whom Gérard Letac stands out as the closest, she studied Wishart laws on symmetric cones, considered Wishart quadratic and inverse regression, and investigated the normal-Wishart, the complex Wishart and its real analog. She further looked into the existence of non-central Wishart distributions with continuous shape parameter, designed simulation schemes for the hyper-inverse Wishart and the G-Wishart, etc. The 2007 Letac–Massam conjecture concerning the domain of multiple-shape parameters of Type I and II Wishart laws remains the object of investigation.

Bayesian analysis of graphical models also benefited greatly from Hélène's introduction of Wishart distributions for decomposable graphs, conjugate priors for non-decomposable graphs, reference priors for discrete decomposable graphical models, and flexible inference techniques for specific classes of graphical models. In recent years, she further developed the theory of, and inference for, discrete hierarchical models, addressed high-dimensional issues for the same, and applied graphical models, most notably in genomics.

Over the course of her career, Hélène authored nearly 70 research articles, including 11 in *The Annals of Statistics*. She advised 16 graduate students and 7 postdoctoral fellows. Her contributions to research and her qualities as a mentor, including to many young colleagues, were recognized through her election as a Fellow of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics in 2008. In addition to her involvement in launching *Bayesian Analysis*, she served as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of*



A photograph of H  l  ne Massam.

Multivariate Analysis (2010–13) and *The Annals of Statistics* (2015–19). At York, she played a role in the creation of the Statistics PhD program and the consulting service. Moreover, she organized numerous programs and workshops at the Fields Institute, the Statistical and Applied Mathematical Sciences Institute (SAMSI) and the Canadian Statistical Sciences Institute (CANSSI), among others.

H  l  ne always carried herself with great elegance, and was modest to a fault. She had a deep devotion and love for her family. She also had a passion for the mountains, hiking, literature and the performing arts. She leaves in mourning her two children (Alexandra and Laurent Massam), five grandchildren, and her companion of the past 12 years (G  rard). We grieve for their loss together with her many colleagues and friends.

Christian Genest, McGill University
Xin Gao, York University

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News of the World

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