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**Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS):  
A Cross-continent Human Network (Free Membership for Students)**

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As I am finishing my term as the IMS President and transitioning into the role of Past-President, I have been reflecting on the roles of IMS in an effort to attract new members into IMS. As stated at the IMS website (<http://imstat.org/>), "The purpose of this institute is to foster the development and dissemination of the theory and applications of statistics and probability". With the emergence of data science and the eminent role of probabilistic and statistical thinking and training in data science, it is important for IMS to attract more members, especially young people who are getting their degrees in statistics, probability, applied mathematics, computer science and electrical engineering, and other data science related fields. For such young people, a big part of their professional life after degree will be at their work place, but another big part is through professional societies such as IMS.

What is IMS? It is good to remember how IMS began. In fact, The Annals of Mathematical Statistics started in 1930 before IMS became an organization in 1935 in an effort by Carver (Professor of Statistics at University of Michigan) to have a home for mathematical statisticians separate from ASA. In 1938, the editorial board of the Annals consisted of Wilks (editor), Fisher, Neyman, Hotelling, Pearson, Darrow, Craig, Deming, von Mises, Rietz, Shewhart. The Annals was split into The Annals of Statistics and The Annals of Probability in 1973. Statistical Science, The Annals of Applied Probability, and The Annals of Applied Statistics were added later. In addition IMS cosponsors several journals with other societies like the Electronic Journal of Probability, the Electronic Journal of Statistics, the Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics, Probability Surveys, and Statistics Surveys. **From the very beginning, high-quality journals have been a central part of IMS. Today, IMS is much more. It runs major conferences and gives major awards in statistics and probability.**

IMS is a cross-continent human network of about 4000 members from North America, Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa, and South America. With the globalization of the world economy, the fact that IMS is cross-continent and moderately sized gives its members a huge advantage for meeting professionals from other cultures and places. A recent member survey was sent to all 4,561 active members at that time, and 1,492 responded. Among the respondents, 61.1% are from North America, 20.0% from Europe, 12.5% from Asia, 3.4% from Oceania, 1.7% from Africa, and 1.3% from South America; 80.0% male and 20.0% female; 53.2% checked the box of statistics, 47.3% for applied statistics while 14.3% for probability and 11.6% for

applied statistics (more information about the survey can be found in the article by IMS Treasurer Jean Opsomer in this issue of Bulletin). Most of IMS organization colleagues are volunteers including the President, Past President and President-Elect, Council and committee members. IMS runs on a lean and effective budget, with a paid executive director.

One indispensable (cross-continent) human network of IMS is people who are behind its premier journals. Every year, the IMS President appoints 1/3 members of IMS committees, including the publication committee (general policy), and the editor selection committee that appoints editors or co-editors for IMS journals. Journal editors appoint associate editors who then work with referees. The IMS support staff include the managing editor and VTeX colleagues who do the actual printing. **As readers of IMS journals, one could give back by working as referees and later as associate editors. Good-quality and timely referee reports put one on the list of potential associate editors. There are many other values added to a referee at a professional level: one gets inspired by ideas in the new papers refereed (often related to one's own research interests), one learns how to write papers better and how to evaluate others' works with feedback from associate editors, and one meets colleagues on paper first before meeting them in person.** It is worth noting that evaluating others' works in a fair and articulate manner is an important and integral part of a senior person's job in both industry and academia (e.g. hiring, and tenure reviews and award/recognition nominations).

The second indispensable (and cross-continent) human network of IMS is the people who are behind IMS conferences where people communicate and exchange ideas and meet colleagues in person. Every 4 years the IMS organizes its Annual meeting outside North America (2014 in Sydney). In other years it is joint with other societies, in odd years at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) and every year divisible by 4 at the World Congress, together with Bernoulli Society (2016 in Toronto). An important meeting is the IMS New Researchers Conference, which takes place each year immediately before the JSM (2014 in Boston). In addition IMS sponsors and cosponsors a large number of other meetings, among them the JSM in even years and the Conference on Stochastic Processes and its Applications (2014 in Buenos Aires, every year). IMS appoints organization committee members. IMS members could participate in the organization by proposing invited and contributed Sessions. **A young researcher could use this opportunity to organize sessions of interest to him/her and meet other researchers by inviting them. This is an opportunity to raise one's visibility in the community, obtain new ideas for research and teaching, and meet in person potential collaborators and reference letter writers.**

The third human network of IMS is through the IMS committees, which are appointed by the IMS president in consultation with the Past President and President Elect (with possible suggestions from the Council).

IMS gives prestigious awards such as Wald, Neyman, Rietz, and Le Cam and eight Medallion Lectures. **For advancements/promotions in many universities, these awards are highly recognized and valued and often are the basis for more than normal recognitions and salary increases. Moreover, professional service is expected for reviews and promotions in universities at all levels, and leadership in professional societies is often expected for senior faculty members. To ease into leadership roles in IMS, serving on IMS committees or council, or on editorial boards of IMS journals is a first step and IMS committees require membership.**

For a group of people with a shared interest, IMS has a special interest group structure (<http://imstat.org/groups/>) to allow a small human network form within IMS. Such an active group is on finance and it holds a conference every year (<http://www.ieor.berkeley.edu/~xinguo/FPS/>) and two other group-like IMS communities are IMS-China and IMS-Asia Pacific Rim, which hold regular conferences in the respective regions. IMS also offer joint memberships with Bernoulli Society ([www.bernoulli-society.org/](http://www.bernoulli-society.org/)) and International Society of Bayesian Analysis (ISBA) (<http://bayesian.org/>).

In summary, in the age of information technology, important decisions in our professional life are still made by humans (e.g. paper acceptance, hiring, grant awards, tenure decision). Human network is becoming more important or vital now than ever also because we are flooded with information. Trusted human opinions, in my view, are the best guides for us to use efficiently the finite amount of time and energy, that is, to decide on which papers to read and what talks to go to, for example. Through IMS conferences, committees, editorial boards, and IMS groups, one meets collaborators, potential reviewers, future employers (at job fairs) -- these people are potential evaluators (e.g. tenure reviews, promotion letter writers) and they could lead to job opportunities worldwide.

**IMS provides a premier human network of global nature. Join IMS and make it even better! It is free for students, and reduced rates for new graduates and for people with permanent residence in a number of countries designated by the IMS Council ([http://imstat.org/membership/designated\\_countries.htm](http://imstat.org/membership/designated_countries.htm)).**

Before signing off, I would like to bring your attention to an exciting change of nomination process for named and medallion lectures: starting in 2015, the committee will be open to nominations from its membership (see <http://imstat.org/awards/lectures/nominations.htm> for more information). Moreover, IMS has joined NISS and ASA to sponsor a NISS-ASA-IMS Writing Workshop at 2014 JSM (with a special half day for non-native speakers) and we expect a similar workshop at 2015 JSM.