

REPORT ON THE ISBIS SATELLITE MEETING HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH FROM 24-26 AUGUST 2009

Close to 100 delegates from 16 countries registered for this conference held at the Wallenberg Research Centre at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. The conference followed the ISI Session that was held the week before in Durban, South Africa. Contrary to expectations, the rain stayed away, making the stay in Stellenbosch a splendid one for delegates. Stellenbosch is generally labeled as 'the most beautiful part of South Africa' and the fine weather enabled all delegates to enjoy the winelands, mountains and general scenery in its fullest splendour. The social functions were held at two well-known wine estates namely Neethlingshof and Spier. The scenic and beautiful Neethlingshof and the nomad African Village at the Spier created an unforgettable experience for delegates that attended these functions. During the African dances, the wife of a delegate who was from Peru decided to show the African dancers that she can match them in their moves.

As far as the technical programme was concerned, the plenary sessions were filled by prominent speakers such as David Banks (Duke University, USA), Yves-Laurent Grize (Baloise Insurance, Switzerland), Nico Laubscher (Consultant, South Africa) and Jac Laubscher (Group Economist, SANLAM, South Africa). These talks all challenged the interfaces of statistics with business and industry. In the process the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the discipline of statistics and the profession of statistician was discussed and debated. This led to many interesting discussions throughout the conference. As always, it is clear that the science of statistics is alive and well, but that the profession of the statistician is under some threat.

Many other delegates provided excellent invited technical and practical presentations. None more so than Trevor Hastie, Bovas Abraham, Yulia Gel,

Dennis Lin, Max Finkelstein , Niël le Roux, Walter Zucchini and Ross Sparks among others. During these and other talks, Nozer Singpurwalla delighted the delegates with good humour and sharp comments.

As far as applications are concerned, the papers focused on two main themes, namely the areas of finance and risk and the area of experimental design and process control in manufacturing.

All in all the satellite meeting achieved several objectives of ISBIS, in particular international collaboration among statisticians and users of statistics in business and industry was fostered. The meeting also contributed significantly towards the advancement and exchange of knowledge in business, financial and industrial statistics. Most of all, relationships between statisticians from developing and developed countries were formed and strengthened.

A special word of thanks to the organisers of this excellent meeting! This was echoed by outgoing ISBIS president Nick Fisher as well as incoming ISBIS president Yves-Laurent Grize. The local organizing committee was Tertius de Wet, Paul Mostert and Willie Conradie.

Riaan de Jongh, ISBIS Council Member, South Africa.