

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SURVEY STATISTICIANS (IASS)

January 2018

I will do my best, but the IASS is really in all of our hands, not just mine, so I hope that you will get engaged with the work of the association and that together we can grow the IASS and increase its impact.

I can hardly believe that six months have already passed since I took over the reins from Steve Heeringa at the World Statistics Congress (WSC) last June. The week in Marrakesh was intensely productive. The first meeting I attended – half an hour after arriving in the country – was a joint meeting with the International Statistical Institute (ISI) Executive Committee and the Presidents of all the other associations of the ISI. This was an eye opener for me, not only giving me insight into how the ISI works, but also providing examples of good initiatives and great ideas from other associations that could inform what we do in the IASS. More of that later. We also held meetings of both the outgoing and incoming IASS Executive Committees and Steve and I had a meeting with ISI President Pedro Silva and Director of the ISI Permanent Office Ada van Krimpen to discuss how the permanent office can better support the IASS and how the IASS can better support the objectives of the ISI and of course, the IASS General Assembly took place.

A couple of important decisions were taken at the General Assembly. We decided to slightly increase the IASS membership dues. This is partly to pre-empt a likely increase that will be necessary when the ISI completes a review of their costs in administering the associations and partly a recognition that there is little or no slack in the IASS finances. One way to keep membership fees down, of course, is to spread the cost over more people. So, please take every opportunity to suggest to relevant colleagues that they should join the IASS. If your colleagues are skeptical as to why they should join, you could point them towards a short video that I made while in Marrakech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpkNt9liYe8>.

A second decision taken at the General Assembly was to reconstitute the IASS Council. This body ceased to formally exist when the IASS adopted new statutes in 2013, reflecting the move of the legislative seat of the association from France to the Netherlands. Unfortunately, to do this will take time as it constitutes an amendment to the statutes, something which can only be done by the General Assembly during a WSC, following a formal proposal with supporting arguments which must be circulated at least 30 days in advance. So, I will ensure that such a formal proposal is made in good time for WSC 2019!

The IASS statutes state that we should hold a General Assembly each Year, so I will therefore convene one in 2018. As well as meeting a formal requirement, this should help us to better keep in touch and keep up the momentum with our various activities. We will use web-based video-conferencing, which should hopefully enable a good number of members to participate. The date and time will be announced soon.

In September we put out a call for requests for support for workshops and conferences taking place in 2018.

The Executive Committee agreed that the IASS should support four events in 2018:

- Conference on Small Area Estimation (celebration of 75th birthday of Danny Pfefferman), Shanghai, June 2018.
<https://www.sae2018.com>
- Second International Conference on the Methodology of Longitudinal Surveys, Essex, July 2018.
<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/mols2>
- Baltic–Nordic–Ukrainian Workshop on Survey Statistics, Jelgava, Latvia, August 2018.
<https://wiki.helsinki.fi/display/BNU/Events>
- Francophone Survey Sampling Colloquium, Lyon, October 2018.
<http://sondages2018.sfds.asso.fr/>

You can find further details of these events elsewhere in this edition of the *Survey Statistician*. As well as providing modest financial support, our support of these events benefits both parties in other ways. Awareness of the IASS is increased through publicity to the participants and on the event website; and the event gains credibility from having the backing of a respected scientific association. If you are involved in organising an international conference or workshop in 2019, on a topic relevant to the IASS, look out for the call for requests for support later this year and please consider applying!

I am delighted that the ISI has been successful in again obtaining funds from the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building to support the participation of Statisticians from developing countries in conferences, workshops and short courses. The IASS will be applying to the ISI for some of these funds to be allocated to the above-mentioned events that we are supporting in 2018.

One of the first things I did as President was to set up an IASS twitter account. Communication with, and beyond, our global membership is vital. Follow us at @iass_isi.

While it is important to ensure that the IASS continues to function well, we should also remind ourselves from time to time why we do these things. We are living in particularly uncertain times at present. We read on a daily basis of threats to international security, threats to democracy and human rights, and indeed threats to the very future existence of the human race due to the failure of governments to respond adequately to climate change. In these circumstances, it is vital that high-quality, relevant survey statistics continue to be produced, disseminated and understood. Good statistics form the basis of informed debate and informed policy making. Ultimately, that is why we all do what we do.

I wish all IASS members a successful and productive 2018.

Peter Lynn,
IASS President