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## Past Presidents Testimonials on IASS

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### Abstract

To celebrate the 50th birthday of the International Association of Survey Statisticians (IASS), this paper reports past Presidents' personal experiences with the Association, offering an interesting angle that allows to read the history of IASS through the lives of its Presidents. Their view on the future of the Association is also provided. After a brief introduction, testimonials from fifteen past Presidents are reported.

*Keywords:* International Association of Survey Statisticians, History.

### 1 Introduction

The IASS is celebrating its 50th anniversary! Since its foundation in 1973, many changes have happened in survey research and many more are still to come. Such changes are reflected in the long history of the Association, under the lead of its Presidents. Their personal experience with the Association is intertwined with the survey research landscape and influenced the evolution of the Association itself.

It is thus interesting to hear of past Presidents' personal experiences with the Association and their view on the future of the IASS to adapt to new scenarios. To this purpose, we asked them the following three questions:

- 1) How and why did you get involved in the IASS?
- 2) Has the involvement in the IASS brought you any benefits in your career?
- 3) Which suggestions would you give to the IASS to make a strategy for the future?

We collected answers from fifteen past Presidents. They are reported in Section 2.

### 2 Testimonials

#### 2.1 *Monica Pratesi – Past President 2021-2023*

1) My involvement has been a natural process as a PhD student in Applied Statistics, and then junior researcher at the University of Florence, Italy. As a PhD student I had the possibility to attend lectures from legendary survey statisticians, as Leslie Kish, and to be in contact with many researchers and professors, members of the IASS.

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Since the 90s I have been participating in the ISI congresses and activities, Luigi Biggeri and Andrea Giommi had told me about the International Association of Survey Statisticians, I attended the meetings and then joined the IASS.

2) IASS is a network of researchers and as all networks gives you many advantages. Sometimes scientists are considered as isolated individuals, ignoring the network effects of collaboration. Involvement in the IASS has definitely launched me in an open network of collaboration. I do not consider only the network effects of productivity defined as paper counts, but I am convinced that the discussion during the scientific activities of the IASS (national and international conferences, sessions, seminars) has surely improved the prominence and the impact of my publications and research. All this has certainly allowed me to have an adequate CV in the selection and appointment in Italian Universities and various bodies of international NGOs, the European and Italian official statistical system and to be elected president of the IASS for the period 2021-2023 and, then, to be Director of the Department for Statistical Production of the National Institute of Italian Statistics (Istat) for the period 2022-2023.

3) My wish is that all objectives of the IASS 2022-23 strategic plan be achieved. I would stress the role of the representatives of the various countries to reinforce local participation and at the same time would continue and strengthen the organization of online activities. In my vision IASS is an important form of social capital and online webinars/activities could make the IASS a more “equally” distributed social capital that shapes scientific results and easily supports the dissemination and delivery of research on survey statistics.

Also, the creation of strong and successful partnerships with other scientific associations and between researchers and stakeholders will increase the value of IASS social capital.

## **2.2 Denise Silva – Past President 2019-2021**

1) My first contact with IASS was many years ago, in 1993, when I attended the 49<sup>th</sup> ISI World Statistics Congress in Florence. At that time, I was studying at the University of Southampton and my PhD supervisor, Prof. Fred Smith, was IASS Vice-President. On that occasion, I learned about the many experts and young professionals in our area who were members of the IASS community. The Association was known for promoting capacity building and for providing precious networking opportunities. After that, I made an effort to attend, not only the subsequent ISI World Statistics Congress, but also IASS sponsored conferences, such as IASS WSC satellite meetings, joint IASS-IAOS events and Small Area Estimation Conferences. More and more, I felt part of this community, a knowledge-sharing environment that fosters collaboration and empathy.

2) The IASS played a vital role on my professional development as an open window to the international statistical scenery and a pathway to learn and to exchange information on survey methods and practice. Through IASS forums and short courses, I met the authors whose papers I read, or would read, and had the chance to present my work. I also helped organise workshops and conferences in South America with IASS support and invited IASS colleagues. Moreover, I had the honour to contribute to IASS in more than one executive role where I learned about the functioning of international organisations, IASS and ISI, and improved my teamwork abilities in an international context.

3) Coming from a country that still faces social and digital inequality, I have always appreciated the importance IASS gives to bridging gaps and creating opportunities for learning and networking that stimulated the development of young statisticians around the world. In the last years, IASS has been able to provide a lively and welcoming virtual environment for the development of survey statistics. I hope IASS will promote initiatives to develop survey statistics communities in developing countries. Also, as part of the ISI family, I believe that activities to encourage collaboration between ISI associations and its various communities would be very welcome.

### **2.3 Peter Lynn – Past President 2017-2019**

As a young researcher starting out on my career in the late 1980s, my mentor Denise Lievesley suggested I should join the IASS. I enjoyed reading “The Survey Statistician” and eventually contributed to it with an article on substitution and with country reports in my role as country representative. Denise and Roger Jowell, Director of SCPR, where I worked at the time, regularly attended the ISI Sessions (as the WSC was known at that time) and came back with inspiring tales of foreign lands (and slide shows!) and of the work being done in statistical organisations around the world. From 1993 (Firenze) I started going regularly myself, always presenting a paper, listening to others, and joining the IASS assembly. It was inspiring to meet leading survey statisticians from many countries and to feel their enthusiasm for spreading knowledge and nurturing future generations. I think some of that enthusiasm may have rubbed off on me. During my time as IASS President (2017-2019) I was very aware that IASS membership was an aging cohort and that more needed to be done to ensure involvement of younger generations. We have made progress in that direction, including by supporting attendance at many international conferences and workshops. For the future, we should be alert to the need to communicate well the strengths of surveys and the important role they still have in society, to continue to share and spread good survey practice, and to encourage talented young people to work in this exciting field.

### **2.4 Steeve Heeringa – Past President 2015-2017**

1) Starting in 1975, I trained under Leslie Kish and Irene Hess at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research. In 1978, I joined Leslie and Irene as a member of the ISR faculty. Both Leslie and Irene were heavily involved in the early years of the IASS and regularly attended the biennial World Statistics Conferences (WSC) organized by the ISI. Based on their experiences as members of the IASS and those of my colleagues, Graham Kalton and Colm O’Muircheartaigh, I joined the IASS in the early 1980s. However, almost two decades passed before I attended my first WSC (Berlin, 2003). My first formal role was to join Graham and Colm in teaching the *Survey Sampling* short course at the 2003 (Berlin), 2005 (Sydney), 2007 (Lisbon) and 2009 (Durban) WSCs. During this same period, I also served as the Editor of the *Survey Statistician* (2004-2006) and was elected to the position of Scientific Secretary for 2007-2009. I organized the IASS short course program for the 2009 WSC and the ISI short course programs for the 2011 (Dublin) and 2013 (Hong Kong) conferences. I was elected IASS Vice-President/President Elect for 2011-2013 and as was the procedure at the time transitioned to the President role for 2013-2015.

2) For me, the greatest benefit of IASS membership and participation in the biennial ISI meetings has been the opportunity to meet and work with international colleagues at all levels—from leaders of national statistical offices to survey statisticians and methodologists who do the important day-to-day work of our international statistical community. Through Leslie’s, Graham’s and Colm’s influences, early on I was engaged in teaching international students in our Summer Program and consulting globally with government agencies and non-profit organizations. However, it was my membership and engagement in the IASS and ISI that have really exposed me to the global statistical community and the challenges and opportunities that we share.

3) More than any other national or regional professional organization, IASS (and the ISI) serves a unique and important role in building and maintaining our international network of survey statisticians. Success in this role requires regular, strong communication both internally among the organizations’ members but also externally with national statistical offices and decision-making bodies at all levels. I find that the recent IASS initiative to host webinars on important statistical topics is an excellent way to bring our community together and also reach new, younger members who otherwise may not realize the benefits of IASS membership. The webinars and conference support provided by the IASS also advance the important education/ capacity building goals of our organization.

## **2.5 Raymond Chambers – Past President 2011-2013**

1) Looking through my IASS related papers, and associated emails, I guess that I really started to get involved with both the IASS and the ISI about the time that I moved from Southampton to Wollongong. But my awareness of IASS and willingness to get involved in its activities was really set during my ten year stint in Southampton, where I was lucky enough to be part of a group that included Tim Holt, Fred Smith, Chris Skinner, Danny Pfeffermann and Pedro and Denise Silva, all of whom were actively involved in international statistical outreach and as a consequence were involved with both ISI and IASS to a greater or lesser extent. It was their commitment to this work that ensured that when describing to a friend why I agreed to stand as President-Elect of IASS in 2008 I said that it was my professional responsibility to do so.

2) It has brought many benefits to me personally because it has brought me into contact with so many survey statisticians around the world, through participation in short courses and conferences, organising IASS events, and steering the careers of young survey statisticians through prizes and travel awards. It has also allowed me to have an impact on the IASS through guiding it, together with my fantastic Executive Director, Catherine Meunier, in its transition from being an organisation somewhat outside the ISI family with an office in Libourne to one that is now completely integrated into the bigger world of the ISI in the Netherlands. Whether any of this brought benefits to my career is somewhat moot. I made the transition from a senior government statistics position to a senior academic one in the early 90s. My career after that (and especially after my move to Southampton) was definitely international in its outlook and IASS was definitely part of that. But whether it was internationally focussed because of IASS is much less certain. Southampton was international. Full stop.

3) I would strongly suggest that you read the last two paragraphs of my June 2013 letter to IASS members as outgoing President. The future that I described then is here now, and maybe is already part of the recent past. The IASS has implemented a number of strategic initiatives (I am thinking of its very successful webinar series) over the last few years. These clearly need to be continued, as well as the initiatives that support and progress the careers of younger survey statisticians. However, there is still the question of how the organisation adapts to a much more fluid data capture and analysis environment, particularly involving methodologies focussed on integrating data from registers, convenience samples and scientific surveys. Whether we like it or not, survey statisticians are now required to be data scientists, able to communicate new information as well as uncertainty about this information using sources that can be very much more complex than were described in the sampling texts of the last century. I believe the time has come for us to become less precise and more useful. Perhaps an important new strategic objective will be to identify best practices in this new environment and then to actively seek to popularise their use (online training courses?) by IASS members and more generally by people in government, business and academia who are responsible for data acquisition and analysis.

## **2.6 Susan Linacre – Past President 2009-2011**

1) I was encouraged to join the IASS by my colleagues at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a number of whom were already members. Someone senior organised the process, although funding of membership fees was an individual thing for each of us. I chose to join as I felt that joining a society with a common interest in developing our knowledge of survey design and estimation, as well as related issues, would be good for our work, for my career, and would be interesting from a networking perspective.

2) Involvement in the IASS has been beneficial in terms of statistical knowledge gained, networks formed and the experience of working with others on an international basis, including providing help to statisticians from developing countries. The statistical confidence that this has helped me build has been beneficial to my development and to my career.

3) As I have not been involved with the IASS in recent years, I am not well placed to provide suggestions for the future. One thing I used to wonder about, that seems likely to remain relevant, is whether the title of IASS still reflects the key interests of its members, or would be members. I have not had dealings with the IASS in recent years, but the integration of survey and non-survey data, and effective use of non-survey data seem to bring many big issues for today's methodologists. Maybe the common issue now revolves around statistical inference from incomplete data.

### **2.7 Pedro Silva – Past President 2007-2009**

1) I attended a 'Workshop on Survey Sampling in Developing Countries', held just before the Tokyo ISI Congress, in 1987. My participation was made possible by a grant to cover registration, travel, hotel, and meals provided by the IASS, thanks to donations secured to support this event by the IASS leadership. Prof. Tim Holt was my contact, and I cannot thank him and the IASS enough for that fantastic opportunity. It changed my life for good. After attending the event and the ISI Congress in Tokyo I found my community in the IASS and the ISI, and never left. I got involved because I was always made to feel welcome, met many colleagues who worked on topics that I was working on and/or interested in, and was supported in developing my career as a professional in this area. Such contacts were vital to help me deliver ideas and advance solutions for many challenges faced as part of my work on the Methodology Division in Brazil's national statistics institute.

2) I benefited immensely from joining the IASS and attending its sponsored sessions and short courses at the ISI World Statistics Congresses. The short courses allowed me to develop skills and expertise in areas which are not covered by regular university or academic education. In addition, I could learn from and take part in discussions with the best in the field. Later I was asked to work on Association functions, such as joining and then chairing scientific programme committees, where I developed collaboration and leadership skills in an international setting.

3) I have valued immensely the opportunity to attend an ISI Congress and related activities as my first ever trip abroad. Therefore, I hope that the IASS could engage in organising events where similar opportunities can be offered to the young members, particularly those from the developing world.

I also hope that it can encourage its members to continue sharing their knowledge by developing courses, publications and other learning materials that can reach the widest possible audiences around the world.

### **2.8 Gordon Brackstone – Past President 2005-2007**

THE IASS reaches 50!

The formation of IASS within the ISI umbrella in 1973 coincided with my own early days as a survey statistician at Statistics Canada, so to join was natural, perhaps influenced by the fact that my supervisor then was among the IASS founders.

The term "survey" was always broadly interpreted to include sample surveys, censuses, and the use of existing data sources, often administrative records, for statistical purposes. The new Association aimed to serve the interests of those concerned with the design and implementation of such surveys, particularly but not exclusively in government statistical agencies and in the survey research organisations that supported them, as well as the interests of those in academia researching and teaching statistical methods with application to surveys.

A decade later the proposal to create an association for Official Statistics under the ISI umbrella did raise some concerns about potential overlap between these two sections, given IASS's presence in the realm of official statistics. These were addressed and IAOS was formed in 1985. Since then the two associations have co-operated and flourished in parallel including many joint sessions at ISI meetings (WSCs).

In more recent years a crucial issue for IASS and its members has been the future role of the traditional "survey" under the outside pressures of "big data" from without and declining response rates from within. Improved timeliness is also expected. These pressures have, of course, been widely recognised and their implications for methodology and inference are being addressed by statistical Associations and Agencies across the world. Though our broad definition of "survey" could stretch to accommodate innovative usages of existing data sources as well as new creative methods of data acquisition, it remains to be seen whether the statisticians who end up designing and implementing these new data systems will still see themselves as "survey statisticians".

Having not been active in the profession for the past decade or so I am reluctant to comment on the future lest it be mistaken for wisdom.

## **2.9 Luigi Biggeri – Past President 2003-2005**

1) In 1973 I decided to participate in the 39th congress of the ISI since many invited and contributed paper sessions concerned the organization of statistical surveys, sample surveys and the evaluation of the quality of statistical information, research topics which I had been dealing with for some years. Slobodan S. Zarkovic and Leslie Kish had told me about the International Association of Survey Statisticians being established and given my interest, I attended the meetings and immediately joined the IASS since its foundation.

2) Involvement in the IASS has definitely benefited my career. By participating in all subsequent scientific activities of the IASS I have benefited from the teaching of many legendary survey statisticians, improving my research in the sector and thus increasing my reputation both nationally and internationally. The friendship with various talented young survey statisticians has allowed me to call them to hold seminars and short lecture cycles at the PhD in applied statistics of the statistics department of the University of Florence, which has thus become one of the most appreciated PhDs. All this has certainly allowed me to have an adequate CV in the selection and appointment in various bodies of the Italian official statistical system and to be elected president of the IASS for the period 2001-2003 and, finally, to be nominated president of the National Institute of Italian Statistics (Istat) for the period 2001-2009.

3) I have read and greatly appreciated the IASS strategic plan for the period 2022-2023. The wish is that all objectives can be achieved. From my point of view, I would stress the role of the representatives of the various countries more, by asking them to organize semi-annual or annual telematic meetings (or webinars) of the IASS members to discuss an activity plan for the development of the Association in the country.

## **2.10 Xavier Charoy – Past President 2001-2003**

1) I was involved in the IASS in 1985. I was then working in INSEE, dealing with international cooperation. Some years before, I had worked with Gérard Théodore, who was one of the founders of IASS and the first Executive Director of the Association, and with Jean-Louis Bodin who was the second one. The latter then asked me to become the third Executive Director.

I could not assume the function after 1988, when I was appointed overseas and then joined FAO.

When back in INSEE headquarters in 1993, I had no special activity with IASS until 1997, when I was appointed as Chairman of the Nominations Committee. I was then elected as President-elect in 1999 and became President in 2001.

2) My involvement in the IASS did not bring me any benefit in my career. It was accepted and encouraged by my hierarchy, nothing more.

3) I am now 84. I retired 23 years ago. I still had a few contacts with NSIs, mainly in Africa, sometimes through international organisations (AFRISTAT, FAO), often on questions of statistical training with the three (now four) French speaking statistical schools in Africa, but never on survey subjects. I am

unfortunately unable to make any suggestion for the future of IASS. Younger and still active persons might be able to do it, not me. Sorry.

### **2.11 Kirk Wolter – Past President 1999-2001**

1) All of us “stand on the shoulders of giants”, and my giants were Wayne Fuller, Barbara Bailar, and many others. As a PhD student at Iowa State University, I became aware of the important paper Wayne delivered at the first meeting of the IASS in Vienna, 1973. Later, as a young professional employee at the United States Census Bureau, I helped Barbara prepare for the IASS meetings in Manila, 1979 and Buenos Aires, 1981. With the twin goals of advancing my knowledge of survey statistics and learning about statistical practices in other countries, and to model the work of my giants, I naturally sought to become a member of IASS and to participate in future conferences and other association business. My first meeting was Madrid, 1983.

2) IASS involvement brought wonderful friendships with statisticians from around the world, with people I may otherwise never have met. Through IASS and the network of friendships fostered at association conferences and business meetings, I learned about survey methods and procedures in other countries and cultures, which has enriched my own practice of survey statistics in the United States.

3) There are big questions ahead, such as

- What is the future of survey research?
- What role should IASS play going forward?

I would offer the following suggestions to current and future leaders of the Association:

- Remain committed to both the theory and practice of survey research. Avoid imbalance in which one side or the other dominates.
- Remain open to new methods and provide a forum and other opportunities for development, dissemination, and discussion of new methods and for evaluation of their statistical properties. The profession faces a time of substantial change potentially elevating the importance of methods such as multiple modes of response, probability and nonprobability sampling, integration of survey data with business or administrative data, web data collection, nontraditional data, and natural language processing of textual information collected in surveys.
- Grapple with the tradeoffs inherent in the budget and technical challenges of the future.
- Attend to questionnaire design. Emphasis in real surveys increasingly shifts from methods of sampling and estimation to evaluation of nonsampling errors and total survey error, and to the validity of survey responses.
- Encourage collaboration between survey statisticians and scientists in other disciplines. Working together, we can discover, test and implement methods and technologies that enable collection of valid data that bear on the critical problems facing humanity in the decades ahead.

### **2.12 Nanjamma Chinnappa – Past President 1997-1999**

1) I became a member of the IASS in the late 1970s, when I started working as a Survey Statistician at Statistics Canada, Ottawa. As a survey Statistician in India and Canada, I was aware of the good work being done by the IASS in promoting the study and development of the theory and practice of sample surveys and censuses, and in publicizing research and good practices in Survey Statistics among statisticians, governments and the public all over the world. I therefore decided to become a member of the IASS and get involved in its efforts.

My official roles in the IASS were as

- President of the IASS, 1997-1999
- Chair of the Programme Committee for the scientific programme of the IASS at the 49th session of the International Statistical Institute, 1993
- Member of the IASS Council, 1991-1997.

As the President of the IASS in 1997-1999 I implemented the following initiatives:

- a) The establishment of the Cochran-Hansen prize for promising young Survey Statisticians from developing countries in 1999, in celebration of its 25th anniversary.
- b) Publication of 25 Years of the History of the IASS, which served as a useful document of the journey of the institution.
- c) IASS Jubilee Commemorative Volume – Landmark papers in Survey Statistics (2001).

2) I believe it has, because I came in contact with survey statisticians around the world when I attended IASS meetings, especially in my official roles. That helped me in gaining more visibility in the field and discussing and contributing to the efficiency and practicability of survey methods and practices.

3) I whole-heartedly endorse the IASS Strategy Document 2022-2023. I would add

- Initiating and supporting regular regional meetings or seminars devoted to specific aspects of surveys.
- Distributing its publications to statistical libraries to be suggested by country representatives in developing countries.
- Allowing members from developing countries to subscribe to Survey Methodology journals at reduced rates.

### **2.13 Dennis Trewin – Past President 1995-1997**

1) My boss at the time (Ken Foreman) was part of the Committee that established the IASS at the 1973 ISI Session. He encouraged me to join which I did.

2) Yes, it did. It enabled to establish relationships with many of the great survey statisticians. Leslie Kish and Ivan Fellegi are two examples. It also enabled me to keep abreast of developments of direct relevance to my own organisation through Conferences, publications and Newsletters. I will just mention one example. In Australia, we knew little about CATI until I was able to attend several CATI presentations at the 1983 ISI Session.

3) I think the main role of the IASS is to facilitate communication between its members and will remain so in the future. Traditionally, this has been through Conferences and their proceedings, publications like the Journal of Official Statistics and The Survey Statistician. Webinars have commenced in more recent years but it is important that they are recorded to enable those members who cannot attend the Webinar to also benefit. They are generally held at a time that is unfriendly for Australia. No doubt new technologies will provide additional options. However, it is extremely important to understand what works best for developing countries and to respond accordingly. Should we set up a network of experienced mentors to assist developing countries? I would certainly be willing to assist in this way.

### **2.14 Graham Kalton – Past President 1991-1993**

1) The first ISI meeting that I attended was the 1973 Congress in Vienna, where I presented an invited paper in a session on variance estimation and design effects organized by Leslie Kish. The IASS was established at that Congress, and the conference program included a sizable number of sessions and many impressive presentations on survey statistics. I was attracted by the formation of an international community of survey statisticians that covered both theory and practice of the subject. I joined IASS and I resolved to try to attend future Congresses.

2) My many contacts with survey statisticians around the world have broadened my outlook on the applications of survey statistics in different environments and on the variety of techniques being applied.

In addition, I have had a long-standing interest in training survey statisticians in countries that have less survey experience. On behalf of IASS, from 1991 to 2005 I co-presented short courses on “Survey Sampling in Developing Countries” at eight ISI sessions, six jointly with Colm O’



Muircheartaigh and two with Steve Heeringa. Notably, international organizations and others often funded the participation of statisticians from developing countries for these courses and for attendance at the ISI sessions.

I met Pali Lehohla, then the Statistician General of South Africa, at the 2005 ISI session in Sydney. We discussed the benefits of running a training program in survey methods in Africa for statisticians from a group of neighbouring countries. Pali followed up on our conversation and he arranged four courses in survey sampling and survey methods to be given in South Africa for statisticians from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. I helped structure the program and taught on it for a couple of years. I found all these training activities highly rewarding.

3) The membership of the IASS is disappointingly small given the considerable number of statisticians engaged in survey research around the world. To attract new members, I think that the IASS needs to expand its offering to its members, recognizing that few survey statisticians can afford to attend the ISI biennial sessions. I applaud the recent IASS initiatives in sponsoring conferences on special topics in different regions of the world and in supporting a series of web-based presentations on methodological issues in survey statistics. However, more needs to be done. One possibility is that the IASS could play a role in stimulating web-based training in survey methods, both statistical and methodological, perhaps seeking international funding to support the activity.

The IASS has had fruitful collaborations with the IAOS. The IASS could also usefully explore collaborations with the subsections for survey research that now operate in many national professional statistical associations.

### **2.15 Colm O'Muircheartaigh – Past President 1987-1989**

1) Leslie Kish (University of Michigan, USA) was a great champion of IASS. I had met Leslie when I attended his Sampling Program for Foreign Statisticians at the University of Michigan in 1968, and subsequently taught at the program from 1975 onwards. He encouraged me to submit a paper to the 1977 ISI Meeting in New Delhi; my paper was part of an IASS session on sampling in developing countries. Morris Hansen, who was then President of IASS, met with all the speakers at IASS sessions and encouraged us to join. Morris and Leslie (both US) were very active in those early days of IASS. Leslie Kish, in particular, used his international work to recruit statisticians from many countries.

2) Yes, indeed. Through IASS I met survey statisticians from all over the world and developed friendships and collaborations with many of them.

IASS was important in the development of the World Fertility Survey (WFS), encouraged methodological research and engaged with members of the national statistical agencies where the WFS data collections were carried out. IASS organized many sessions over the years dealing with the work of WFS.

Through an IASS paper that I gave at the 1981 sessions in Buenos Aires, I met a group of statisticians from the US Census Bureau, in particular Barbara Bailar and Kirk Wolter, both of whom later made important contributions to IASS. As a result, I developed a working relationship with the Bureau, and have continued to consult with them since that time.

It was also through IASS that I met an important group of (then) young Italian statisticians, of whom Luigi Biggeri was a key figure from the earliest stages. This group did important work in China (for FAO), and I was delighted to play a part in that work. These connections also led to my being invited to teach from time to time at the consortium of Italian universities with graduate programs in survey and social statistics (Firenze, Padova, Bologna, Perugia, Siena). These universities played a significant part in the development of international collaborations and in IASS itself. I would recognize particularly Luigi Fabbris (Padova), Carlo Filippucci (Bologna), Giuseppe Cicchitelli (Perugia) and Andrea Giommi (Firenze).

INSEE (France) played a fundamental role, providing the secretariat for IASS for a great number of years. Gerard Theodore and Xavier Charoy were both excellent Executive Directors and Anne-Marie Vespa provided outstanding administrative support while IASS was based in Paris.

3) IASS is probably the most important network of statisticians working in the public policy arena in the social sciences and has the potential to disseminate high quality methodology across the world.

To me, the key is to create a network within which survey statisticians can develop relationships across borders and across sub-disciplines, providing support to each other and developing, testing, and implementing methodologies. The IASS program should also have an educational component, providing materials helpful to statisticians who are working in environments where specialized training in surveys is not locally available. While the work of IASS may increasingly take place online, I feel that continuing to provide regular in-person opportunities will be important in building and maintaining the inter-personal relationships that provide a lasting foundation for collaboration. As the cost of attending the World Statistics Congress increases, there should be particular emphasis on having smaller-scale in-person research and training meetings in diverse regions.

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