When the IASE was launched as a new Section of the ISI two years ago, it was equipped with only a set of statutes and a caretaker team - the Interim Executive Committee. Since then, the Association has acquired a solid base of founding members, elected its first Executive Committee, and held a well-attended and productive scientific meeting prior to its first General Assembly in Italy last August. It is well on its way to being an important forum for interaction among those statisticians who are interested in the educational aspects of their subject. That such a forum is very welcome by many statisticians was much in evidence during the various discussions that took place at the meetings in Italy.

First Scientific Meeting

The meeting was held on August 23-24 at the Department of Statistical Science, University of Perugia, in the picturesque town of Perugia, Italy. Thanks to an efficient (and very hospitable) local organizing committee, headed by Professor Giuseppe Cicchitelli, the 160 or so participants enjoyed two full days of a well-organized and smoothly running program, which included: 14 invited papers, 36 contributed papers and 13 posters. The papers covered - in addition to classroom and curriculum problems in schools and universities - such topics as: training of government statisticians, the use of videos, training in consultancy, electronic communication as a tool, and statistical education in developing countries. Among the participants were 30 school teachers from various parts of Italy, and one session was devoted to the teaching of statistics in Italian schools.

Proceedings of the conference will be published in the next few months and will be mailed free of charge to the authors. Others will be charged only the cost of postage and handling.

The conference ended with a lively forum on Future Directions for the IASE. Among the many suggestions put forward by members were calls for regional meetings, coordination with national statistical groups, and identifying different interest groups within the membership.

First General Assembly

The first General Assembly of the IASE was held on August 27 during the 49th biennial Session of the ISI in Florence, Italy.
This is an electronic subscriber list intended to encourage discussion among subscribers to further:

(i) synthesis and critical appraisal of existing research in statistical education which, even if derived from other contexts, may still be of relevance to statistical educators within the health sciences, and

(ii) new research and publication initiatives in the field, and the development of appropriate research methodologies.

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or by writing to Jacqueline Dietz, Editor, JSE, Department of Statistics, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8203, USA.

A UNESCO PROJECT

Computer-Aided Undergraduate Mathematics at Arab Universities

A team of four professors at the University of Jordan is currently working on a UNESCO project on computer-aided instruction in the undergraduate mathematics curriculum. The project is administered by UNESCO's Regional Office for Science and Technology in the Arab States (ROSTAS), which is based in Cairo. The first phase of the project deals with Calculus, which makes it of value to students in a wide variety of disciplines in addition to those majoring in Mathematics and Statistics.

The aim of the first phase is to develop computer-aided teaching methods for the calculus course sequence. The team's work is based on MATHEMATICA software, with some modifications to suit the mode of presentation adopted by the team. The final report of the team will consist of three parts. One is a "Student's File", which represents material for students' self-learning through working and interacting with the computer. Another is a "Teacher's File", which represents material including instructions for the teacher with delineation of common difficulties which the student may face and suggested methods for overcoming these difficulties. The third part is an "Evaluation File", which includes indicators for measuring students' learning and achievement.

The team consists of Professors Mohammed A. Hamdan (Team Leader), Adnan Awad, Ghazi Hamzeh, and Mr. Turki Said.

BOOK REVIEW


The world of statistical education has been crying out for a book of this type. As the authors point out in their preface, there have been many papers in the area of probability teaching and learning but there has been no authoritative overview. I therefore had high hopes of this text.
requiring mere mortals like me to read each one through several times in order to grasp the point, and therefore very quickly losing the flow of the whole piece. The incidence of errors, particular in the examples, did nothing to help. For example (page 84);

"No. 3: The six children
Item. Shaughnessy (1981) posed 70, college students (in an introductory course in probability) the following question thereby varying an experiment by Kahneman and Tversky (1972).

The probability of having a baby boy is about 1/2. Which of these sequences are more likely to occur for having six children?

(A) BGGBGB   (B) BGGBGA   (C) about the same chance for each

Result.

(A) 70
(B) 3
(C) * 27 %

This is followed by two pages of discussion of the implications of this finding!

Mistakes such as these are easily spotted and it is, perhaps, unfair to highlight them, but they do detract from the overall impression of the content.

In conclusion, this is not a book for the fainthearted, but for those who are willing to persevere there are rich rewards. I am glad that I did in the end manage to read it and I am sure that it will be a text which I will dip into frequently as I pursue my own studies in the area.

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