

Letters to the Editor

Letters on any issue of interest to IMS members are welcome. Email your letters to the Editor at bulletin@imstat.org. The Editor's decision about whether to publish letters is final. Letters are submitted on the understanding that they may be edited before publication.

Waiting times "embarrassing"

Dear Editor:

I could not agree more with the sentiments expressed, and remedies proposed, by Professor Larry Wasserman [letter printed in the March/April issue of the *IMS Bulletin*]. The current system in place at most statistics journals cannot help but foster the attitude that statisticians have nothing to say that cannot wait another year.

An experience of my own makes the point.

I recently did some work with two electrical engineers. One had already had an article accepted (by an engineering journal); a researcher elsewhere had obtained a preprint, written an article in response, and had it accepted. All this in less than six months.

It was embarrassing to have to tell my co-workers that we will certainly wait six months or longer for our own submission on the subject—to a statistics journal claiming to be one of the quicker ones—to receive even a first review.

Experiences like this are not uncommon, and should be embarrassing to all in our profession.

Sincerely,

Professor Douglas P. Wiens

Dept of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences, U of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, is proud to announce to the statistics community that the former Department of Mathematical Sciences is now the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

"Mathematics" vs "Statistics"?

Dear Editor:

In his regular "Math Guy" feature on NPR's Weekend Edition, on Saturday May 18, Keith Devlin spoke about the role of "Bayesian mathematics" and "Bayesian mathematicians" in homeland security. I happened to be listening so emailed this response to NPR, which was read on the air on Saturday May 25:

"Keith Devlin's typically brilliant commentary about the role of mathematics in homeland security repeatedly emphasized the role of "Bayesian mathematics" and "Bayesian mathematicians" for updating prior threat assessments on the basis of the latest data in the most accurate manner possible. Unfortunately, however, there are no such things as "Bayesian mathematicians" and "Bayesian mathematics" - the correct terms are "Bayesian statistics" and "Bayesian statisticians". Statistics is a distinct discipline which combines techniques from mathematics, experimental design, and computer science to utilize incomplete and uncertain data in an optimally efficient manner. These techniques have been successfully applied to problems as diverse as the first field trials of the Salk polio vaccine, the population sizes of endangered species, and the Census undercount. I hope that Keith will give Statistics and statisticians their due credit in his next commentary."

I received a long and thoughtful reply directly from Keith, to which I also responded. He said that he chose "mathematics" over "statistics" because the word "statistics" conjures up lists of numbers to the layman, rather than the idea of a mathematical discipline. I completely agree with him, and have renewed my campaign to rename our discipline "Statistical Science".

Best wishes,

Professor Michael D. Perlman

Department of Statistics, University of Washington, Seattle

Project Euclid URL Correction

In the May/June issue there was an article highlighting the new free electronic access to recent journals for IMS members. The URL for Project Euclid should have read <http://projecteuclid.org>. Check out what is available using your member ID (from your IMS journal mailing label).

More information about Project Euclid and JSTOR is available on the IMS website at

www.imstat.org/publications/journals/access.phtml

