

2 December

*My eye was drawn to the Quote of the Month on the front cover of the November 1991 issue of Biometric Bulletin, "Statistics is the only profession which demands the right to make mistakes 5% of the time". It is good that the author remains anonymous and thus immune to reactions to the statement. Identification of the author's professional speciality would, however, have been helpful, to let us know how to react. For if the author is a statistician then the quote is a*

*tongue-in-cheek misinterpretation of the implications of using 5% levels of significance and 95% levels of confidence, and is to be humorous. Most likely though, the quote is simply the common, garden-variety misinterpretation of the implications of using 5% levels of significance and 95% levels of confidence, and should elicit sympathy! Which is it Editor: are we to laugh or to cry?*

**Graydon W. Bell**

(WNAR) Northern Arizona University,  
USA

Editor's note: I am afraid I do not know the source for this quote; can any member help? Quotes of the Month are generally humorous and that is how I took this one. ■

## Abstracts

Abstracts of papers presented at Region or Group meetings of the Biometric Society for publication in *Biometric Bulletin* should be sent to the Editor by the relevant Officers as soon as possible after the meeting, preferably in electronic form, i.e. on disk or by email. They should be presented in double-spacing in the current format. **The corresponding author's affiliation should include a full postal address with postcode/zip-code.** The relevant Officers should ensure that abstracts do not exceed 150 words or contain display formulae or multi-level symbols; due to constraints on space, abstracts not conforming to these restrictions may be edited accordingly.

## And now I really must be going

### From the Editor:

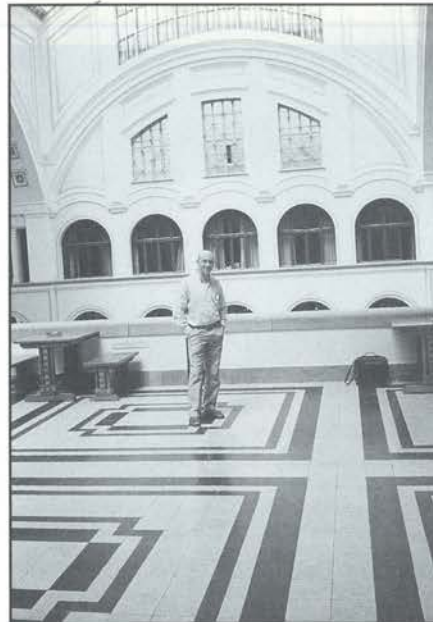
I had not planned to overstay my welcome by editing an extra issue but this was unavoidable! Now my term is at an end I thought it would be useful to review the last four years.

Firstly, I want to thank all those who have helped with *Biometric Bulletin* during my term as Editor. Primarily, my thanks go to Suzanne Clark, my purely voluntary editorial assistant. She has put in many hours of effort which have maintained quality, especially in the arduous and thankless task of proof-reading, and also in the origination of maps and figures. Likewise, Donald Preece has edited more abstracts (1021) than I dared hope when first I asked him. Also, I thank Mrs Christine Jaggard, who has provided secretarial assistance over the last four-and-a-half years. Many others have helped, both inside the Society and outside. Particular thanks are due to Elsie Thull in the Business Office. I have learned a lot and it has been a real pleasure to meet and get to know by correspondence many members of the Society from all over the world. I hope to keep in contact with all these many new friends. The main group of these are the Regional & Group Correspondents to *Biometric Bulletin*. Their reports form the core of the *Bulletin* and they have put in much effort and shown great warmth to me over the years. Their spirit has convinced me that we truly are a worldwide community of biometricians – a community not in name alone.

The average issue size seems to have gone up over the years and the previous issue was the largest thus far. However, it contained five-and-a-half pages of advertisements, and the income to the Society for advertisements in *Biometric Bulletin* during 1991 was just over US\$10,000. I hope the increase in advertising seen during 1991 continues; I think there is much potential advertising, particularly within the USA.

We are starting to see more correspondence in the 'Letters' section of *Biometric Bulletin*, but I have been puzzled why

so few members have picked up their pens during the last four years. Are Society members naturally reticent – or are we all overworked and too busy to write?



*The Editor at the beautiful Kossuth L. University, in Debrecen, Hungary. The hospitality I enjoyed during this visit was typical of the warmth and generosity of spirit of biometricians I have met, whilst Editor, from all over the world.*

At the start of my term Jonas Ellenberg became President of the Society. He had previously been Treasurer and maintained his financial interest in the Society's affairs, working closely with Janet Wittes, also of ENAR. Their far-ranging study of Society finances was vital, and led to the Executive Committee's document on 'Initiatives for Stability and Growth' in the February 1991 issue. The discussions arising from that document, particularly concerning a second Society journal and the abstracting journal *Biostatistica*, have yet to bear fruit, but sub-committees are continuing these discussions of what might be some of the most important developments in the Society in recent years.

Jonas Ellenberg's inaugural message to the Society as President, in the February 1988 issue, reflected the policy of internationalization begun by past-President Pierre Dagnelie. During the last four years, five new Groups have come into existence – in Kenya, Korea, Morocco, South Africa and Zimbabwe – as have two new Regions – the Hungarian and Indian. **In addition, the Spanish Group may soon qualify for Regional status.** I believe this shows a measure of success and feel that *Biometric Bulletin* has helped in this process by highlighting activities in areas of the world in which biometry is expanding. The important work of the Awards Fund Committee over the last four years in arranging statistical networks in South East Asia and in Eastern and Central Africa has helped greatly. I am sure that the new dues structure announced in February 1991 will help boost membership in less-developed countries. Overall, membership at the beginning of 1988 was 5965, whereas *Biometric Bulletin* is now mailed to 6200.

Outside our Society there have been changes too. The way in which science is funded and administered has changed in many countries, for example as documented on the back pages of the November 1988 and May 1989 issues. When I began my term as Editor we had no short-term appointments at Rothamsted; now we have six (over 20%). Even if the basis of funding changes for our clients and not ourselves, it still affects the way in which we work. I am not convinced that we have explored this issue sufficiently, as biometricians. Some other large statistical societies, for example ASA, RSS and SSA, are currently considering the need for some form of chartered membership. Over the last few years I, personally, have seen much more mathematical modelling by biologists at