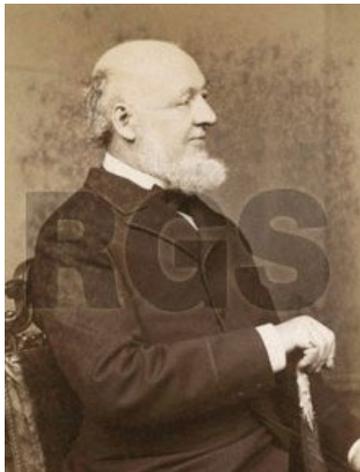


ISI turns 135 on 24 June 2020

This is the first of a series of articles dedicated to the 135th anniversary of the ISI

By Jean-Louis Bodin, former ISI President (1999-2001)

In June 1885, the *Statistical Society of London* organized its Golden Jubilee Meeting. The Society was created in 1834, but the Jubilee's celebration was postponed by one year because of the sudden death of the Duke of Albany, the fourth son of HM the Queen Victoria, on 28 March 1884. It should be noted that it was not until 31 January 1887, that a royal charter conferred on the *Statistical Society of London* its current and prestigious title of *Royal Statistical Society*. In preparing for the meeting, the need to recreate relationships between statisticians from all countries had been felt by several members of the Society. The same need had been felt by members of the *Société de Statistique de Paris* which also organized its Silver Jubilee Meeting in 1885. The presidents of these two societies, Sir Rawson W. Rawson and Léon Say, therefore decided to invite statisticians from other countries to the Jubilees of their societies and to organize them at the same time to facilitate the travels of their colleagues: from Monday 15 June to Thursday 19 June in Paris (17 foreign delegates from 10 countries), and from Monday 22 June to Wednesday 24 June in London (31 foreign delegates from 11 countries). In his opening speech on 15 June, Léon Say mentioned the possible creation of an international statistical association and the agenda of the third day of the London meeting (24 June) was entirely devoted to this proposal. Sir Rawson had previously asked Prof. Franz von Neumann-Spallart, member of the Imperial Statistical Commission of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and professor of statistics at the University of Vienna, Austria, to prepare a report proposing a possible organization of such an international association.



Sir Rawson W. Rawson



Luigi Bodio

So on 24 June 1885, it was decided to create an international statistical academy under the name of *International Statistical Institute* (although its only official name up to 1948 was the French equivalent *L'Institut International de Statistique!*). The name of 'Institute' prevailed over 'association' or 'society' because it seemed more appropriate for a body, one of the aims of which was to promote and foster the general appreciation of statistical science. Provisional rules and regulations were adopted during the meeting. A provisional bureau was appointed

with Sir Rawson W. Rawson as President, Emile Levasseur (France) and Franz von Neumann-Spallart as vice-Presidents, and Luigi Bodio (Director General of Statistics in Italy) as Secretary General (later Luigi Bodio was ISI President (1909 – 1920)). It was proposed to appoint 81 “full members” and 81 “associate members” from 23 countries (most were from Europe, and the others from Argentina, Brazil, Ottoman Empire and USA). The membership fee was set to 25 French francs, which corresponds to approximately 100 euros today.

It was also decided that the Institute would hold a session every second year. Luigi Bodio offered to host the ISI Secretariat in Rome and proposed to hold there the first ISI session in 1887.

In fact, the meeting held on 24 June 1885, was the result of a long history of statistical international cooperation started in 1851 that led to the creation of the ISI. This will be the theme of our next article.