

## ISI President's Message January 2014



Dear Colleagues:

I hope you have had a wonderful start to the New Year! We've had frigid temperatures here in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the coldest in over 20 years. Sometimes I wonder what a guy from Malaysia is doing in this part of the US in winter. But then I'm reminded of what a great campus town Ann Arbor is during the rest of the year!

I want to use this month's column to give you a few updates.

The ISI Executive Committee (EC) meets in person about three times a year. The new EC (that took over in Hong Kong) met face-to-face for the first time in November 2013 at the Permanent Office in The Hague. We also have monthly conference calls to make progress on important issues. The different time zones mean that some of us are waking up early for the call while others are getting ready for bed.

The major topic during our meetings has been the financial state of ISI. We are a non-profit, so our goal is not to increase revenue for its own sake. Rather, we need to be in a stable financial state and generate enough revenue to support key initiatives.

The biggest component of our costs is staff salary. Other significant ones include office costs, travel costs, and costs associated with special projects. We are working to reduce travel costs as much as possible. There is not much that can be done with staff costs as the size of our staff in the Permanent Office (PO) is already pretty small. The PO is struggling to provide the needed service to its members and other constituents. If anything, we have to hire people with more expertise in areas such as IT.

Our main sources of income are fees from individual and institutional memberships, publications, and return from investments. Unlike some other societies, we do not generate income from the World Statistics Congresses (WSC). The costs for the WSC are considerably more than the revenue, and the local organizers have to make up the difference as part of the agreement to host the WSC. (At this point, you will have lots of questions as to why this is so, and I'll cover this topic in more detail in one of the upcoming messages.)

Over the last few years, our costs have been higher than our income. Obviously this cannot continue, and it is urgent that we find ways to increase income. This topic has been consuming most of the EC's energy and attention over the last few months. We are planning a substantial membership drive aimed at three groups of membership: corporate, institutional (such as statistical agencies and research units), and individual. In terms of income, the most promising source is corporate membership. The challenge with this group, as with the others, is to offer sufficient value and benefits before we can approach the different groups. This is somewhat of a chicken-end-egg problem as we need resources to offer additional value and benefits. We are working on this and will give you updates as we make progress.

On other matters:

- Scientific Program for the Rio WSC: The deadline for submitting proposals for invited sessions is now over. We have received about 140 proposals and are expecting a few more from the Young Statisticians group. The Scientific Program Committee will begin discussions about the invited sessions in February, and final decisions will be made by June. The call for Special Topics Sessions will be announced soon.
- Young Statisticians' Meeting at the WSC: We have decided to fold the Young Statisticians' Satellite Meeting (that was held before the WSC for the previous WSCs) into the regular program for the Rio WSC. There were several reasons for this: a) attending the satellite meeting and the full WSC poses a burden on Young Statisticians; b) organizing a satellite right

before the WSC has become challenging; and c) some participants at the satellite have indicated that they prefer to be part of the main event.

- Sad News: I am sorry to have to end on a sad note. Some of you may have met or interacted with Hans Lucas who was the ISI Webmaster for many years. Hans passed away on January 17, 2014. He was only 50 years old. Hans was diagnosed with an illness last February and his condition deteriorated quickly over the last few months. He was a very caring person, dedicated to the ISI, and a dear friend to his colleagues at the Permanent Office. We will miss him.

I will have updates on other matters in next month's column.

Till next time ..... Vijay ([isi-president@umich.edu](mailto:isi-president@umich.edu))