# Radu's Rides: The Road Less Traveled

Contributing Editor Radu V. Craiu has been reflecting on the many ways in which we can all contribute—and it doesn't mean a binary choice between research *or* service:

The life of an academic is simultaneously short and long. Its shortness is rooted in the belief, certainly popular among the disciplines served by the *Bulletin,* that a researcher's best work is done before they turn grey at the temples. The most prestigious prizes in Mathematics (Fields Medal) and in Statistics (COPSS Presidents' Award) visibly embrace this belief as they are given to people under the age of 40. These awards and their winners did, and will continue to, nurture the collective imagination about the transformational power of genius in mathematics and statistics and make our students aspire to greatness.

Whether the research fire dims at 40 or later, there is little doubt that, for many, it does burn slower well before retirement, so that a career in academia can feel very long if one is not prepared to consider other ways to serve the community. There's a tired and rigid dichotomy among many academics between research and service. Popular wisdom places the purity of a research career in direct opposition to the political machinations of an ever-growing academic or professional bureaucracy.

Full disclosure: I confess that I too was once an ardent refuser of any administrative job… yet I find myself now wearing the Department Chair hat—pendulums don't swing much wider than that. Time, and gradual accumulation of experience with various types of service, made me realize that the stark and stereotypical split I just mentioned is false. Moreover, I contend that the term dichotomy should be replaced with *polychotomy,* since there are multiple ways we can contribute our accumulated knowledge and interests to the field. I also believe that Statistics and its more recent ramifications could benefit greatly from more of us branching out. Let me present a few roads that deserve a second look.

## Use your experience to nurture talent

Academics are doing this all the time, through teaching and student supervision, be it graduate or undergraduate. Less obvious, maybe,



is that one's accumulation of experience, with its strings of both successes and flops, can be used to mentor young colleagues. The range of possibilities is truly very rich, from helping a young colleague secure funding for their research, giving advice on research-related pitfalls and career hurdles, to forwarding their names to conference organizers and nominating them for awards. Call it pay-it-forward if you wish, since that's what the person or people who have helped you probably did. The *sine qua non* condition for this to work out well is to put your mentee's interests above yours.

## Work with scientists and advance their science

John Tukey really was right. We can do so much to help others with what we *already* know. My university has recently embarked on an ambitious program that promotes Data Science across disciplines. We are not the first nor the last to do it, but the same pattern observed elsewhere has emerged: the need for statistics expertise surpasses any expectations. Those involved in inter-disciplinary research know how hard it is to do it well. This is not an alternative to research *per se,* but it is a welcome deviation from the romantic ideal of scientists alone in their office banging their heads against the walls. Should be more fun, too.

## Teach better

Be that teacher who trains the crossing guard at a small customs point in Vermont who tells this passing professor how much he loved to learn Stats. And do it over and over again, as the field evolves and computing becomes an integral part of the equation, sacrificing neither rigour nor the ability to make your students' imagination soar. Exploding Data Science class sizes or the isolation produced by the virus *du jour* lead to non-traditional challenges that require new remedies. For instance, recognizing the alienation produced by this Summer's perfect storm, some of my colleagues have created an Independent Summer Statistics Community as a "platform on which to share, discuss and support each other" (if you want to learn more about this, visit https://www.statistics. utoronto.ca/news/independent-summer-statistics-community-beyond-coursework). The experiment's success is demonstrated by an overwhelmingly positive reaction from more than 600 students who signed up right away.

## Serve

Please, have a look around and see if everything is well in the world. Spoiler alert: it really is not. There is so much to do and

never enough time, so the most one can hope for is to pick up something that's broken and make it better. What I describe is not that different from research, but it is a path where one will likely influence many more people. Some of you may have experienced the benefits of great leadership in the past months, and I suspect some of you did not. You may have noticed significant differences between leaders who understand the trials and tribulations of conducting high-level research and/or the required effort that is hidden behind teaching a good class. When offered a chance to serve, even a little, consider the differences you have witnessed in your career and choose to be part of one too.

My invitation is certainly applicable to many scientific disciplines, but none are made more vulnerable by leadership sparsity than those situated at historical crossroads, such as the one we're living in. Rapid growth can come at the price of fragmentation, hype at the price of befuddlement and complacency.

Recently the American Statistical Association has advertised a new professional development project called "Preparing Statisticians and Data Scientists for Leadership: Influencing People and Projects". The first line in the advertising blurb states that, "the need for leadership from statisticians and data scientists is greater than ever." I could not agree more.

**NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR NORWOOD AWARD**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Public Health and Department of Biostatistics request nominations for the Janet L. Norwood Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Woman in the Statistical Sciences. Eligible individuals are women who:

- have completed their terminal degree
- have made extraordinary contributions and have an outstanding record of service to the statistical sciences, with emphasis on both their own scholarship and teaching and leadership of the field in general and women in particular
- are willing to deliver a lecture at the award ceremony on October 20

**How to Nominate**

Send a full curriculum vitae accompanied by a letter of not more than two pages, describing the nature of the candidate's contributions. Contributions may be in the area of development and evaluation of statistical methods, teaching of statistics, application of statistics, or any other activity that can arguably be said to have advanced the field of statistical science. Self-nominations are acceptable, and electronic submissions of nominations are encouraged.

Send nominations to **norwoodawd@uab.edu** by **August 17.** The winner will be announced by August 31.

**https://www.uab.edu/soph/home/news-events/awards/ other/janet-l-norwood-award**

# New Session Exchange Agreement with the Royal Statistical Society

Beginning in 2022, the IMS will allocate an IMS session at our Annual Meeting to be a joint IMS/RSS session in exchange for a joint RSS/IMS session at the RSS Annual Conference.

The IMS Annual Meeting in 2022 will be in London, UK, June 27–30 2022. The Program and Local Chair is Qiwei Yao. Details forthcoming.

# Third Akaike Memorial Lecture Award

The Institute of Statistical Mathematics (ISM) and the Japan Statistical Society (JSS) jointly created the Akaike Memorial Lecture Award to celebrate the outstanding achievements of the late Dr. Hirotugu Akaike, who greatly influenced a wide range of research by proposing the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and establishing a novel paradigm for statistical modeling, distinguished by its predictive point of view, and distinct from traditional statistical theory. The Akaike Memorial Lecture Award recognizes researchers who have achieved outstanding accomplishments that contribute to the field of statistical sciences.

Receiving the Third Akaike Award is **John Brian Copas**, Professor Emeritus, University of Warwick, UK. Professor Copas has had several achievements in statistical methodology with a focus on practical applications. His six papers were read before the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and published in *JRSS* with discussions. In 1987, he was awarded the Guy Medal in Silver. In recent years, he has been actively engaged in the study of meta-analysis methodology. The Copas selection model is widely used as one of the standard sensitivity analysis methods for assessing the impact of publication bias. Sadly, he will not be able to travel to Japan because of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, he is scheduled to deliver his award lecture online on September 9, 2020, at the plenary session of the Japanese Joint Statistical Meeting by Japanese Federation of Statistical Science Association (JFSSA) 2020 in Toyama Prefecture. Read more at https://www.ism.ac.jp/ura/press/ISM2020-06_e.html