

News

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19-th European Meeting of Statisticians

Barcelona, September 2–6, 1991

After a two years pause, the 19-th EMS was organized by the Universitat Polytechnica Catalunya, under the auspices of the Bernoulli Society and with the support of many sponsoring institutions, official as well as private ones.

Lectures and sessions took place in the Esade Business School situated in the modern, quiet and green part of the town. Opening lecture was read in the auditorium of the Facultat de Biologica. During the week, the participants could take a part in 16 invited paper sessions and numerous sessions of contributed papers. The coffee-breaks were mostly devoted to discussions and to the posters exhibition in the foyer of the Esade building.

Theoretical and applied contributions related to the different areas of statistics were presented. It is not possible to remind here complete list of themes, the large format of the conference included all important branches of contemporary mathematical statistics and connected theory of probability. Opening lecture was devoted to the state of the art named mathematical statistics. Professor W. R. van Zwet reviewed some of important developments in recent years, adding several critical remarks, but generally the speaker persuaded the auditory that there are reasons for optimism: "Statisticians spend an inordinate amount of time worrying about the relevance of their profession. ... However, the general theme will not be a prediction of doom, but the more cheerful message, that we should get on with the job and do what we do better than most other people, which is statistics."

The development is never uniform. Several areas of statistics are now in the stage of progress, or at least of revival. It could be said for instance about the robust regression, which brings every year a lot of new ideas as well as the successful solutions of applied problems. The same perhaps holds for development in nonparametric regression methodology and theory, with its emphasis to systematic revealing the dependence structure. There is also an area for the specialists in principal component analysis and their contribution to general progress. Some titles of invited lectures can illustrate the direction of development: Generalization of regression quantile ideas to nonparametric regression (S. Portnoy), Regression rank scores and their applications... (J. Jurečková), Analyzing samples of curves (A. Kneip) and others. Some areas are widening, leaving their specific features behind and adapting the results of other streams. The survival analysis is a typical example, now dealing with random processes models, utilizing the martingale theory and stochastic integrals. Prof. N. Keiding was invited to read the forum lecture, in which he gave a review of modern approaches to survival analysis.

Of course, some sessions evoked more ambiguous impression, the impression that the area is waiting for some inspiring hint or for a personality which would be able to find that inspiration. This time, no particular attention was paid to computational and graphic means, although it became an integral part of modern statistical methods.

Barcelona, one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean, is an ideal place for such an important event. Moreover, its mild and sunny climate contributed also to a good mood of the participants and to success of the Meeting. The scientific program of the EMS was traditionally completed by social events – and individual walks through the pleasant and architectonically original milieu of Barcelona. One has to mention the chamber concert in a gothic church, with the repertoire which pleased the heart of a Central-European: from Mozart to Dvořák.

The 19-th EMS is over, the following one is planned for September 1992 to the University of Bath, United Kingdom.

Petr Volf