

Special Section: Opportunities and Challenges for the Discipline

An Invitation: Editor’s Introduction to “Desired and Feared—What Do We Do Now and Over the Next 50 Years?”

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With enormous amounts of data being collected and complex processes being studied nowadays, opportunities for statisticians are virtually limitless. Most statisticians are involved in some of these opportunities (and, perhaps, occasionally suffer from being pulled into too many), regardless of whether they make a living in academia, industry, or government. This is truly a golden age for statisticians (and for others with quantitative interests and/or skills).

At a time that many statisticians flourish, so should statistics as a discipline. At some level this is true and there are many success stories for statistics. But just as individual statisticians can suffer from being pulled into too many activities, the discipline also seems to face serious challenges that result, among others, from an abundance of opportunities. Examples of challenges for the discipline can be found in the interesting articles “A Report on the Future of Statistics” (Lindsay, Kettenring, and Siegmund 2004, *Statistical Science*, 19, 387–413) and “What Is Statistics?” (Brown and Kass 2009, *The American Statistician*, 63, 105–123).

Challenges range from the discipline losing its cohesiveness, with individuals becoming more and more (narrowly?) specialized in different interdisciplinary areas to a need for more federal dollars to support statistical training and research. Other challenges include finding the best ways to interact with other disciplines through teaching and research, and how to modify

and modernize our programs in order to attract larger numbers of talented students to the discipline. *TAS* has recently published a number of different articles on some of these issues, including, but not limited to, the above referenced article by Brown and Kass and the article entitled “Desired and Feared—What Do We Do Now and Over the Next 50 Years” by Meng in this issue.

As Editor, I consider *TAS* to be an ideal forum for discussion of opportunities and challenges to the discipline. Contributions are welcome at any time and can be in the form of a short article or as a “Letter to the Editor” in response to an article. Ideas for special sections on issues of this nature are highly welcome. At this time I would like to invite contributions to a discussion of the article by Meng and will consider the most interesting of these contributions for publication in a special section of a later *TAS* issue. The chance that a contribution is included in this special section is better if I receive it within two months of the publication date of this article, if it offers an alternative perspective or idea or a substantial addition to the article, and if it is written clearly and concisely. Contributions should be submitted just as any other *TAS* article, with a cover letter that refers to the special section on the article by Meng.

—John Stufken, *TAS* Editor