



February 1986

1986: The 60th Birthday of WSS

WASHINGTON
STATISTICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

CALENDAR

February	4	Tuesday	A Historians View of the U.S. Statistical System's Turbulent Era: The 20's - 40's
February	13	Thursday	Estimating the Response Error Effects of Survey Questionnaire Design
March	6	Thursday	Reporting Standards for Survey Data in Basic Social Science Research
March	13	Thursday	An Application of Spatial Modeling for the Estimation of Census Nonsampling Variance

Applying to be a Statistician in the Federal Government
by Mary Grace Kovar, National Center for Health Statistics
and President, Washington Statistical Society

There are thousands of statisticians employed by the Federal government. There are probably close to a thousand who are members of the WSS alone. The WSS Newsletter is publishing articles this year designed to give members of WSS an idea of some of the interesting work in statistics and of how statistics are used in the Federal government. Every month the Newsletter carries announcements of government positions. Despite this, as far as I know, we have never published anything offering guidance on how to become a statistician in the Federal government.

The positions truly are open to applicants if they know how to apply, and there are a lot of interesting jobs. This article is designed to give you some idea of the mechanism so that when you see a civil service position advertised in the Newsletter, you are prepared to apply for it. It is often too late to complete the paperwork if you haven't done a lot of it before you see the announcement in the Newsletter.

There are two parts to the process. One is to obtain a Civil Service Rating. This puts your name on a list of qualified applicants (known as a register). The second is to apply for a specific position. The first is used by the personnel people to decide the grade and salary you are eligible for. The second is used by the people who want to hire someone to decide whether you are the person they want. There are standard government forms for each part.

WASHINGTON STATISTICAL SOCIETY PROGRAM CHAIRS

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Fred A. Vogel 447-3638
Gary Liberson 363-7140

Economics

Bette S. Mahoney 697-5655
Wray Smith 528-2772

Physical Sciences and Engineering

Seymour Selig 334-3522
Nozer Singpurwalla 676-7515

Public Health & Biostatistics

Jai Choi 436-7047
GooLoo Wunderlich 245-2100

Social & Demographic Statistics

Lee-Ann C. Hayek 357-1587
Donald J. Hernandez 763-7950

Statistical Computing

Harry Foxwell 872-8058
Ron Steele 475-3483

Short Courses

Virginia deWolf 275-5801
Josefina Lago 251-1500
Andrew A. White 436-7022

Methodology

Cathryn Dippo 523-1874
Mary Mulry-Liggan 763-7140

Newsletter Editor

Julia Oliver 252-5744

Employment

Felvin Kav 331-1153

Applying to be a Statistician in the Federal Government (Continued)

You can obtain all of these forms from the Federal Job Information Center, which is listed under "U.S. Government" in the telephone book. The telephone number for the Washington office is (202) 737-9616. They will send you the forms if you telephone.

All applicants must have a civil service rating. The rating is obtained by submitting: an Application for Federal Employment (OPM Form No. 1282), and an Occupation Supplement 1500 Form B (OPM Form No. 1203).

You want to apply for a Statistician Series.

You must send these forms to the personnel office that serves the area where you want to work (you can send copies to more than one office). The address of the Washington office, which is where you must send the forms if you want to work in this area, is: Office of Personnel Management, P.O. Box 52, Washington, D.C. 20044.

It usually takes 8-12 weeks after you apply to receive a rating which puts you on the register for a year. You can renew it.

The Civil Service Rating simply tells you what grade and salary you are eligible for. You still must apply for the specific positions that you are interested in or to the specific agencies. You do that with a Standard Form 171 (SF-171).

You should send a copy of your SF-171 when you apply for the rating so that it will be on file and ready to be sent to a personnel office when openings are announced. You should send a copy directly to the person or address that is given in the announcement in the WSS Newsletter. People send them to agencies where they think that they would like to work even though no opening has been announced. They also carry them when they visit to investigate possibilities.

Having the SF-171 ready and being able to say that you are on the register and rated at a specific level shows that you have done your research.

It sounds complicated but it's mostly a matter of reading the rules and following them. The Federal government won't rate you for a position if you don't fill out the forms correctly any more than a university will grant your degree if you haven't fulfilled the requirements. It is also a matter of taking the process seriously and selling yourself and your skills on those forms. The Office of Personnel Management will set your salary on the basis of the two forms you send them. Potential employers will decide whether you are the person they want on the basis of what is on that SF-171. It is worth doing them well.

There is one last point that can save you a lot of work if you know about it. You can photocopy the SF-171 as many times as you need to and use it over and over, but you must sign each copy. A photocopied signature is not legal. To avoid confusion, don't use black ink for your signature.

PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

TOPIC: A Historian's View of the U.S. Statistical System's Turbulent Era: The 20's - 40's
SPEAKER: Margo Conk, Mather Visiting Professor, Case Western Reserve University
CHAIR: Lynda T. Carlson, Department of Energy
DISCUSSANT: Ted Clements, Bureau of the Census
DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, February 4, 1986; 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Room BE-069, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
(Non-government employees must sign in at Guard desk)
ABSTRACT: Professor Conk has studied the role of the Census Bureau in the formation and evolution of the American government and society. Of special importance is the "golden age" of the 20's and 40's when the Bureau was rapidly expanding to meet substantial changes in the role and scope of the government in the U.S. economy.

TOPIC: Estimating the Response Error Effects of Survey Questionnaire Design
SPEAKERS: Monroe G. Sirken, National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and Gad Nathan, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem
CHAIR: Manning Feinleib, NCHS
DISCUSSANT: Joseph Waksberg, Westat, Inc.
DATE AND TIME: Thursday, February 13, 1986; 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Room 1-23, 3700 East-West Highway, Hyattsville, MD,
ABSTRACT: Statistical models are presented for estimating the response error effects of questionnaires in split panel surveys.

TOPIC: Reporting Standards for Survey Data in Basic Social Science Research
SPEAKER: Stanley Presser, National Science Foundation
DISCUSSANTS: Barbara Bailar, Bureau of the Census and Tad Cantril, Bureau of Social Science Research
DATE AND TIME: Thursday, March 6, 1986; 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: GAO Auditorium, 441 G Street, N.W., (call 523-1760 to obtain building entrance)
ABSTRACT: Disclosure practices in articles that draw on survey data are examined in four social science disciplines. The data comes from a content analysis of leading research journals in economics, political science, social psychology, and sociology in the years 1949 to 1980. The results suggest that social scientists are inattentive to methodological detail and indicate the need for a set of reporting standards.

TOPIC: An Application of Spatial Modeling for the Estimation of Census Nonsampling Variance
SPEAKER: Paul Biemer, Bureau of the Census
DISCUSSANT: Noel Cressie, Iowa State
DATE AND TIME: Thursday, March 13, 1986; 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: GAO Auditorium, 441 G Street, N.W. (call 523-1760 to obtain building entrance)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shiskin Award For Economic Statistics

Nominations are invited for the seventh annual Julius Shiskin Award in recognition of outstanding achievement in the field of economic statistics.

The Award is designed to honor an unusually original and important contribution in the development of economic statistics or in the use of economic statistics in interpreting the economy. The contribution could be in statistical research, in the development of statistical tools, in the application of computer techniques, in the use of economic statistics to analyze and interpret the economy, in the management of statistical programs, or in developing public understanding of measurement issues, to all of which Mr. Shiskin contributed. Either individuals or groups can be nominated.

The Award will be presented, with an honorarium of \$250, at the Washington Statistical Society Annual Dinner in June 1986. A nomination form may be obtained by writing to the Julius Shiskin Award Committee, c/o American Statistical Association, 806 - 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Completed nomination forms must be received by April 1, 1986.

Previous winners of the Award have been Estella Dagum of Statistics Canada for her work in seasonal adjustment, James Bonnen for his performance chairing the President's Reorganization Project for the Federal Statistical System, Edward Dension for his work at the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Brookings Institution, Beatrice Vaccara for her contributions at the Bureau of Industrial Economics, Geoffrey Moore for his research in measurement and analysis of business cycles, and David A. Pierce for his use of modern statistical techniques at the Federal Reserve Board.

Second Annual Census Research Conference Scheduled for March 23-26, 1986

Planning for the Census Bureau's Second Annual Research Conference (ARC II) at the Sheraton International Conference Center, Reston, Virginia is well underway. The theme for ARC II will be nonsampling error. Invited paper sessions include discussions on causes, measurement, and reducing the effects of nonsampling error; quality issues; nonsampling error considerations for longitudinal data; and public attitudes and survey response issues. Research in specific program areas will be discussed in sessions devoted to the 1990 Decennial Census, international economic input/output analysis, new methods of estimating household and population characteristics, economic census and survey evaluation studies, and research on the Survey of Income and Program Participation and the services sector of our economy. The program will also contain a track of four sessions on undercoverage which will include discussions of census undercount research and research into problems caused by undocumented immigration.

This year's Shirley Kallek Memorial Lecture will feature Professor James Durbin from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and dinner presentations by John G. Keane, Director of the Bureau of the Census, and Mr. Vincent P. Barabba, Executive Director of Market Research and Planning at General Motors (and former Director of the Bureau of the Census).

For additional information, write the Center for Survey Methods Research, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233. A limited supply of the Proceedings from ARC I are available on a first come/first served basis.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Seminar Series: Advance Topics in Survey Methodology

The USDA Graduate School's popular seminar series on Advanced Topics in Survey Methodology, first presented in the Fall of 1984, will be repeated in the Spring of this year. The series is intended for anyone who sponsors, designs, manages or works on any aspect of statistical surveys. It will provide insights into all phases of survey methodology, with leading practitioners as presenters and discussion leaders. Among the many topics to be included in the 1986 series are: total survey design, questionnaire development, interviewer training, treatment of missing data, quality control, record linkage and contracting for surveys. The seminar series is scheduled for Tuesday evenings from April 9 through June 11. The fee will be \$195. For a brochure and further information, call the USDA Graduate School office on (202) 447-5885.

Fellows Committee Seeks Suggestions

To encourage the nomination and selection of individuals from the Washington, D.C. area deserving recognition as Fellows in the American Statistical Association, WSS annually appoints a committee responsible for identifying such colleagues and ensuring that appropriate materials are prepared and presented to the ASA Committee on Fellows. The WSS Committee on ASA Fellows, which will hold its initial meeting in January, would welcome suggestions from members. Proposed nominees should be submitted to Katherine K. Wallman (chair of the committee for 1986) at COPAFS, Suite 440, 806 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 at the earliest possible date.

EMPLOYMENT COLUMN

Deadline for inserting notices is five (5) weeks before the publication date.

Send notices and request to:
Evelyn R. Kay
520 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037 202/331-1153

JOB OPENINGS

Statistician/Mathematician/or Analyst GS-7/12--Challenging position as member of a small team functioning as consultants to agency economists on statistical, mathematical, and econometric issues. Proficiency in statistical software required, especially SAS. Other packages supported include SPSSX, TROLL, and Speakeasy on an IBM mainframe and SORITEC, RATS, ESP, SPSS/PC-PLUS, SAS, GAUSS and LIMDEP on IBM-PC compatible personal computers. Ability to organize and conduct training classes and seminars on the use of statistical packages and the application of statistical techniques to a variety of problems is required. MS in Statistics, Mathematics, Operations Research Analysis or Economics with an emphasis on econometrics is desired. For more information, contact Charles Hallahan, Data Services Center/Economic Research Service/USDA, Room 240, 1301 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005-4788. (202) 786-1507.

Statistician (Survey)--one position open: GS 9/11/12 with promotion potential to GS12--at the Consumer Product Safety Commission office in Bethesda to analyze data on hazards associated with consumer products. Contact Charles Nicholls 492-6470.

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JOB OPENINGS (CONTINUED)

Sample Design Statistician--Experience in survey methodology (i.e., design, frames development, weighting and variance estimation) required. Interest in consulting and teaching in industry desired. Educational requirements: graduate degree in statistics or biostatistics. Send resume and salary history to Westat, Personnel Department DM., 1650 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850.

Mathematical Statistician--(GS-9 through 12): Several opportunities exist at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the interpretation of vehicle emission and fuels data, the modeling of air quality, and the analysis of policy decisions. The position is in the Data Management and Analysis Section of EPA's Office of Mobile Sources. The incumbent will be responsible for independent analysis of data and presentation of results. The office is particularly interested in a statistician with computer programming experience that has a creative and innovative mind. Send a completed SF-171 or resume to Dr. Barry Nussbaum, Environmental Protection Agency (EN-397F), 401 M Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460. For more information phone (202) 382-2637.

Assistant Professor, Computer and Information Systems--The Department of Statistics/Computer and Information Systems at the George Washington University has an opening for an Assistant Professor, tenure accruing, in the computer and information systems area. The position requires a Ph.D. in Computer Science or Ph.D. in Statistics with a minor or experience in Computer Science. Applicants for this position should show potential for excellence in teaching and research and have a working knowledge of, or an interest in, the interface of computer science and statistics, particularly statistical packages (statistical computing, data analysis, etc.). Interested candidates should apply to: The Chairman, Search Committee, c/o Professor S.W. Greenhouse, Department of Statistics/Computers and Information Systems, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. 20052.



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