sensitive" (a mouse is a graphics input device on PCs and modern workstations), so that clicking on an entry will cause the corresponding scatterplot to be displayed. Thus the convenient numerical summary that we have all come to know and love and suspect, is complemented by a graphical display that is available as needed. This is computing power working for us—it is what we should require software vendors to supply.

The second opportunity concerns so-called expert systems and how they attempt to embody statistical problem solving strategy. Our experience (Gale, 1986; Pregibon, 1986) with such systems is restricted to Polya's third step—carrying out the plan. (The first two steps involve the problem context to a sufficiently high degree that we do not expect rapid progress in bringing such systems to fruition.) Even this third step is challenging. Once we have the ability to encode a sequence of analysis steps into a software representation, we have a testing ground for strategies that use different sequences of steps or different techniques at each step. This suggests the following specific problem: Characterize the variability in the *process* of regression analysis. How might one go about solving the problem? Assuming that analytic solutions are intractable or not useful (overly simplified!), the only viable alternative is to appeal to computing technology. This includes both hardware to perform computations rapidly and software in which to represent the sequence of analysis steps and their associated techniques. Apart from our own attempt to bring computer power to bear on the problem (Lubinsky and Pregibon, 1988), we know of only one other serious attempt (Adams, 1990). Our journals and our textbooks are filled with an excessive amount of material on the *techniques* of data analysis. This energy should be applied to the *process* of data analysis. This poses an interesting challenge for the field, and computing technology provides a means to address it—who will heed the call?

Comment

Douglas A. Zahn

1. INTRODUCTION

This article is an important contribution to the literature on improving the quality of the services provided by the specialist statistician. The checklists and cases are useful to me; I will incorporate them in my practice and in the statistical consulting course my colleagues and I teach. I am confident that many others will also do this. I like the article's focus on avoiding trouble; it is reminiscent of old sayings such as "A stitch in time saves nine" or "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In the language of the quality movement, the author is encouraging us to move upstream in our process as we seek to improve its quality.

I have two concerns about this article. I agree that avoiding trouble deserves more attention as a strategy for improving the quality of the statistician's services. However, this article addresses only the statistical aspects of avoiding trouble. It does not address how the relationship between the statistician and scientist relates to avoiding trouble. It also does not address how one might go

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about systematically improving the quality of one's services. In the words of one client from whom I have learned much, "Mere knowledge itself will not change behavior." What, in addition to checklists and good advice, will it take to change a statistician's behavior so as to produce improved services?

2. PITFALLS AND RELATIONSHIPS

I propose that the most important step for the statistician to take for avoiding trouble is to establish a working relationship with the scientist. A key part of developing this cooperative relationship is remembering that generally the statistician is involved in a project as a guest of the scientist. Other aspects of developing this relationship include aligning on goals with the scientist, being honest and not putting down, deriding or denigrating the scientist in any way, overtly or covertly, consciously or unconsciously.

Reflecting on this and rereading the article has led me to be concerned that the article is sending the wrong message to its audience, less experienced specialist statistician practitioners. To my ears, the article has the flavor of post-dinner conversations over drinks about how I saved science from the onslaught of those poor clients. I may be overly