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Comment: Recollections about Harold Hotelling

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It was in 1936, I believe, when at a meeting of the American Statistical Association in Atlantic City, Harold Hotelling told some of us that a woman in the Mathematics Department at the University of Toronto had written to him for advice. The head of the department had decided that there should be in their curriculum a course on statistics or possibly it was statistical theory. He had delegated the job to her.

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None of the others wished to teach it. She was a woman, and new in the department, so she was elected to teach the course. She wrote to Professor Hotelling with the question, "What should I teach?" His reply to her was merely, in his kind way, "Teach what you know."

This principle pervaded all his work. He tried to stay within his limitations, although I would remark that his limitations were well beyond the horizon. He took the point of view that statistical theory should be taught by someone that knows statistical theory. If one studies bacteriology, he studies it with someone that knows bacteriology. He had profound faith and respect for people that know statistical theory. In my own book, *Out of the Crisis* (1986), the following quotation is at the head of the chapter on page 465.