

EDITORIAL

TRADITION, PROGRESS AND THE ANNALS OF STATISTICS

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The *Annals of Statistics* and its predecessor the *Annals of Mathematical Statistics* have provided invaluable outlets for research in mathematical statistics for half a century, and many important developments in statistics have been published in these journals. However, many of us believe that in recent years the *Annals of Statistics* has not reflected the broad scope of statistical science as well as it might, and has not placed sufficient emphasis on clear communication of statistical ideas. The result, in the minds of many, is a journal with rather narrow interests, remote from many avenues of statistical development, and a journal with an unnecessarily awkward style.

While some detachment and mathematical abstraction are inevitable if fundamental progress is to be made, an excess of these inhibits our involvement with and influence on the methodological developments in our science and its application, the ultimate goal of our research. It is well to recall that the purpose of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics is threefold: "to encourage the development, dissemination, and application of mathematical statistics." This purpose addresses the best tradition of statistics, in which research has flourished most when actively concerned with those practical problems requiring mathematical treatment—be it in astronomy, medicine, agriculture or any other field. If the Institute and the *Annals of Statistics* do not respect this tradition, and thus fail to actively and visibly involve themselves with the continuing progress of statistical technique in all areas of application, then their role of intellectual leadership will surely diminish.

With these thoughts in mind, it is this editor's intent that the *Annals of Statistics* now broaden its scope and significantly increase its involvement with the many stimulating problems of practical statistics. Thus, while we shall continue to recognise this journal's special role in the dissemination of important and interesting developments in mathematical statistics, we shall also especially welcome articles devoted to substantive application of mathematical statistics. The journal's primary emphasis will be on the continuing progress of statistical technique and philosophy. Therefore, general editorial policy will require that authors give special emphasis to underlying ideas and their statistical import, rather than to abstraction or formal mathematical manipulation. A major objective of our policy will be to ensure that the mathematically unsophisticated reader be able to understand the main results of published research in relation to the general philosophy and application of statistics.

Both readers and authors should be aware that the journal currently has a substantial publication backlog. In order to reduce the backlog, and to simultaneously broaden the scope and interest of the journal, the editorial board will inevitably apply more stringent publication standards. We believe that the result will be a stronger, livelier *Annals of Statistics*.