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The discipline of statistics has deep roots in classical mathematical analysis, from which it derives rigor, coherence, and clarity, and is also dependent on roots in substantive scientific areas for its historical foundation and continued vitality. In the last twenty years, computational developments have had profound consequences which should also be reflected in the *Annals*. Consequently, our policy is to continue to play a special role in presenting research at the forefront of mathematical statistics, especially the more important and deep advances in the theory underlying statistical science. At the same time, we also intend to publish papers relating to the role of statistics in interdisciplinary investigations of the major scientific and social problems of our time and to emphasize developments in computational methodology. Mathematical depth and difficulty will not be the principle criteria with respect to which submissions in the latter categories are evaluated. Fundamentally, we seek a broad spectrum of papers which intellectually enriches our profession.

Most papers should contain an introduction which presents a discussion of the context and importance of the issues they address and a clear, non-technical description of the main results. The introduction should be accessible to a wide range of readers. Thus, for example it may be appropriate in some papers to present special cases or examples prior to general, abstract formulations, while in other papers discussion of the general scientific context of a problem might be a helpful prelude to the body of the paper.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

We would like to take this opportunity, at the beginning of our term as co-editors, to share with you some of our plans and aspirations for the *Annals* over the next three years. In our view the *Annals* has been the preeminent statistical journal for several decades. Over this period of time the scope of statistical research has expanded greatly and its nature has altered considerably. Previous editors of the *Annals* have worked hard to keep the journal abreast of these changes but have been hampered by various factors, including the prodigious workload of managing its large volume of outstanding submissions. We hope that the new co-editorial structure will ease the weight of this burden and allow us to concentrate more of our efforts on aligning ourselves with the most creative developments in our discipline.

We have written a new statement of editorial policy, which appears at the bottom of this issue's title page. This statement suggests the changes we wish to institute, and some of the elements we do not wish to change.

Formal mathematical analysis has provided important foundations for our discipline, and should continue to do so in the future. The *Annals* has long had a leading role in this aspect of the subject, and this role should continue. Previous editors have implemented policies to the effect that statistical significance and innovation are the primary criteria for acceptance of manuscripts, rather than just mathematical rigor and depth alone. In reasserting this notion, we are therefore intending to continue progressing in already established directions.

At the same time we recognize the comprehensive changes that are affecting the discipline. Many of these result directly or indirectly from the impact of large-scale computational techniques. Concurrently, statistical concepts and methodology are also becoming an integral part of scientific developments in a broadening range of interdisciplinary areas. We will work to enable the *Annals* to take a leading part in these developments. We recognize the fact that effective presentation of some of this material may require manuscripts of a character somewhat different from the traditional format of Introduction, Theorem (or proposal), Proof (or verification), and Examples. We are eager to participate with our authors and editorial board in such directions and we encourage prospective authors to submit manuscripts meeting our goals even if the character of the article differs from the historical norms of the *Annals*.

In order to help enable some of these changes, the IMS has authorized a modest increase in the total number of pages to be published in this year's volume, and we anticipate that there will be further increases in future years. Along with this, the frequency of issues will be increased from four to six per year. This should help a little to make individual issues more manageable in bulk and in scope of coverage.

The *Annals* has always recognized a special responsibility to assist younger authors in presenting their work, partly as an aid to establishing their career in statistics. We intend to continue in this direction, and especially hope that we will be able to merge this desire with our goal of effective presentation of a broader scope of scientific developments involving statistics. The IMS Council has requested that we consider the possibility of instituting a system of blind refereeing. We have done so, but we feel the current system of refereeing to be preferable in several respects, including that of providing special assistance to younger authors.

An additional area of great concern is the length of time from submission to publication of accepted manuscripts. Of course, refereeing time is one significant component of this waiting time. Consequently we will be trying to more carefully monitor this part of the process. In addition, we intend to institute some other procedures in our internal handling of manuscripts to help improve this situation. We are also pleased that the Institute is taking steps to eliminate future publication delays and guarantee that the individual issues of the *Annals* will appear in their scheduled months.