



WSS NEWS

# WASHINGTON STATISTICAL SOCIETY

## NEWLY ELECTED TO WSS BOARD

The Washington Statistical Society was privileged to have an exceptional slate of candidates who volunteered their services and stood for election to the WSS Board this year. We would like to thank each of the candidates for volunteering despite the many other responsibilities they have. I would also urge each of you to consider whether you could serve the statistical community in the Washington area by volunteering for some activity with the WSS. If you are willing to serve in any capacity, please email President Keith Rust at [KeithRust@westat.com](mailto:KeithRust@westat.com) and let him know. There are always a host of activities that need volunteers.

We would like to congratulate the members who were elected based on the votes of the membership. They will join with the remaining members of the Board beginning this summer.

Congratulations to the newly-elected Board members!

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**President** – Nancy Bates

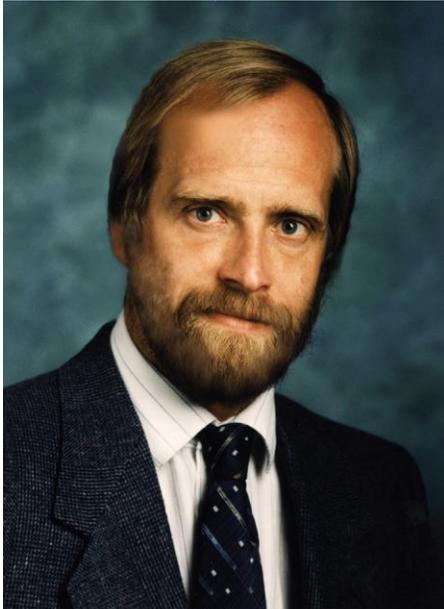
**Methodology** – Dan Liao

**Representative-at-Large** – John Finamore,  
Donsig Jang

**Treasurer** – Jane Li

~ J. Michael Brick  
Past-President and Chair of the Nomination  
Committee

## IN MEMORY OF DR. LESTER “RANDY” CURTIN



**August 4, 1951 – June 20, 2012**

On June 20<sup>th</sup> our beloved friend and colleague, Dr. Lester Curtin, passed away after battling cancer. Dr. Curtin, or “Randy” as he was known, was a devoted husband, father and CDC/NCHS bio-statistician. He is survived by his wife, Sally and their two children, Kevin and Daniel. He is also survived by three children from his first marriage, Jennifer Lynn and her husband Brian, Kimberly, and Steven. He is also survived by three brothers, grandchildren, nephews, and a niece.

Randy was a uniquely qualified and gifted individual. He was a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, an expert on sample design and analytic issues, an athlete, a mentor, and a trusted friend. His intellect, gentleness, wit and humor, good nature, smile, warm heart, and indomitable spirit will be missed.

Randy was born in Trenton, New Jersey as one of four boys. His family lived in several different States and even in Panama for a few years as his dad was relocated during his career with the IRS. At an early age he was proficient in academics, frustrating and confounding his teachers by finishing his class work and tests too quickly. He was also a member of the varsity wrestling team. After high school he entered the University of North Carolina (UNC) as an undergraduate where he continued to excel academically and to wrestle. After completing his Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics, Randy entered graduate school to continue his studies and earned a Doctorate in bio-statistics in 1978. While at the UNC he taught and mentored many fellow students. It would be remiss to mention that Randy was a Tar Heel through-and-through and would never miss a Tar Heel basketball game.

As an adult Randy became an avid runner displaying persistence and discipline as an endurance athlete. Randy participated in races and marathons. As only Randy would do, he decided to support a friend running an ultra-marathon, and without training, ended up completing the 50-miler with his friend. A feat he would repeat several times.

Professionally, Randy was a recognized expert for his work on childhood growth charts, longitudinal studies, standardized statistical software, vital statistics, and the design of complex sample health surveys. In the later 1970's Randy started working at the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in the Mortality Statistics Branch (MSB). The MSB was responsible for the production of the Monthly Vital Statistics Report, the annual volumes of Vital Statistics of the United States, implementation of the Ninth Revision of the ICD, and the decennial life tables for 1979-81. Randy made major contributions to these efforts, which resulted in analytically profound changes in the

way mortality data was analyzed on a monthly and annual basis, and the way in which analytic methodologies were documented in technical notes. Randy was also instrumental in developing new methodologies to detect changes in mortality trends based on monthly provisional data, and to depict state variation in mortality by cause of death.

During the early 1990's, Randy was asked to serve as Acting Director of the Division of Vital Statistics, where Randy had launched his professional career. He arrived at DVS facing a number of challenges; all of which he handled with his special and unique skills in the subject matter, in management, mentorship, and diplomacy.

Randy revised the methods for computing annual life tables (as released by CDC) and in particular he introduced methods for computing standard errors for the life table functions. His statistical research on direct standardization of rates resulted in CDC adopting a new standard population for mortality data in 2000, replacing the long used 1940 standard population. In a somewhat different area, but also similar to the above, Randy's insights for the development of standardized statistical software for use with complex sample surveys led to the development of SUDAAN by the Research Triangle Institute.

After leaving MSB, Randy served as the Chief of the Statistical Methods Staff in the Office of Research and Methodology (ORM); he also served as the Acting Director of ORM for several years. While Randy served in ORM, he worked tirelessly to mentor the ORM staff, displaying his strengths as a superb statistician and manager. During this period, Randy was instrumental in the redesign of National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). In addition, he revised the methodological underpinnings of the U.S. Childhood Growth Reference charts based on NHANES data. He applied his statistical expertise to provide expert guidance on the use of appropriate statistical methods for development and interpretation of the national growth curves that are used by physicians throughout the U.S. to track and monitor the growth of children.

Later in his career, Randy moved to the Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys as the lead survey statistician. Randy was instrumental in the myriad statistical issues of NHANES where he led the effort on analytic guidelines, weighting, redesign, calibration studies, and general statistical consulting. Further, Randy led the design effort for the National Institute of Child and Human Development's (NICHD) National Children's Study; the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's New York City Health and Nutrition Examination Survey; and he consulted on the design of the California Environmental Contaminants and Bio-Monitoring Program, Canadian Health Measures Survey, Oregon Health Study, and the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin.

Randy always had an open door policy. He was available to help on the most complex statistical issue, provide advice on a thesis / dissertation / manuscript, to design a study, or to speak about his UNC Tar Heel basketball team. He would work through your problem, derive a solution, and then explain it in plain English. He was a master at teaching.

~Ed Sondik (NCHS)

## SEMINAR

- Title:** **The Bayesian Paradigm for Quantifying Uncertainty**
- Speaker:** Nozer D. Singpurwalla, Distinguished Research Professor of Statistics, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- Chair/Organizer:** Wendy L. Martinez, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Date/Time:** **August 8, 2012, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.**
- Location:** Bureau of Labor Statistics, Conference Room 10  
To be placed on the seminar attendance list at the Bureau of Labor Statistics you need to e-mail your name, affiliation, and seminar name to [wss\\_seminar@bls.gov](mailto:wss_seminar@bls.gov) (underscore after 'wss') by noon at least 2 days in advance of the seminar or call 202-691-7524 and leave a message. Bring a photo ID to the seminar. BLS is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE. Use the Red Line to Union Station.
- Sponsor:** WSS Defense and National Security Section
- Abstract:** This talk is a conversational overview of the key philosophical and foundational essentials of the Bayesian paradigm for quantifying uncertainty and for decision making under uncertainty. The presentation should be accessible to those with limited or no background in probability and statistics, though those with such backgrounds should also benefit in the sense that several misconceptions as to what Bayesian inference is all about will be clarified.
- Recently there has been an explosion in the use of Bayesian methods, this explosion being mainly driven by computer scientists involved with data mining, classification, and imaging who have masterfully harnessed Bayesian ideas into workable tools. Similarly, with those involved with risk analysis and matters of homeland security. The aim of this talk is to shed light on the fundamental thinking which drives the tools.
- Point of Contact:** Wendy Martinez, [martinez.wendy@bls.gov](mailto:martinez.wendy@bls.gov)

## **CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIUMS**

**Event:** **32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of the International Association for Research in Income and Wealth (IARIW)**

**Date:** **August 5-11, 2012**

**Host:** Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Location:** Royal Sonesta Hotel, Boston, Massachusetts

**Description:** See next page

**Registration:** Is now open

**Information:**

(website) [www.iariw2012.com](http://www.iariw2012.com),  
(email) [IARIW2012@bea.gov](mailto:IARIW2012@bea.gov)



# SAVE THE DATE

Please join us for the 32nd General Conference of the IARIW

**WHEN  
WHERE**

**AUG. 5-11, 2012**

**Royal Sonesta Hotel, Boston, Massachusetts**

- Improved measures of economic welfare •
- Lessons learned from the financial crisis •

The conference provides a forum for statistical officials and experts from around the world to share information and ideas on how to develop new economic indicators that will help address some of the most important challenges confronting the global economy.

For more conference information and access to the program please visit [www.IARIW2012.com](http://www.IARIW2012.com)



**Event:** **2012 Morris Hansen Lecture**

**Date:** **October 9, 2012**

**Location:** USDA Jefferson Auditorium at 12th and Independence Ave., SW., Washington D.C.

**Description:** The 22nd ***Morris Hansen Lecture*** will be held **Tuesday, October 9, 2012**, at the USDA Jefferson Auditorium at 12th and Independence Ave., SW. The speaker will be ***Ken Prewitt***, who is known for his dynamic and provocative takes on the challenges and opportunities for the federal statistical system in the 21st century. He is vice president for the Office of Global Centers and Carnegie professor of public affairs at Columbia University, with appointments in the School of International and Public Affairs and the Department of Political Science. He is a former member of CNSTAT and current chair of the advisory committee to the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences. He served as director of the U.S. Census Bureau (1998-2001), director of the National Opinion Research Center, president of the Social Science Research Council, and senior vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. He earned his B.A. from Southern Methodist University, his M.A. from Washington University, and his Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University. From 1965 to 1982 he was a professor at the University of Chicago.

Margo Anderson, professor of history and urban studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and noted historian of the U.S. census, will be a discussant.

The lecture will be at 3:30 pm and a reception will follow at 5:30 pm. The lecture will be held at the Jefferson Auditorium of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's South Building (Independence Avenue, SW, between 12th and 14th Streets); Smithsonian Metro Stop (Blue/Orange Lines). A photo ID is required.

Further details will be forthcoming.

**Event:** **International Conference on Methods for Surveying and Enumerating Hard-to-Reach Populations**

**Date:** **October 31–November 3, 2012**

**Location:** Marriott New Orleans at the Convention Center,  
New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A.

**Description:**



The H2R 2012 conference will bring together survey methodologists, sociologists, statisticians, demographers, ethnographers, and other professionals from around the world to present new and innovative techniques for surveying hard-to-reach populations. Addressing both the statistical and survey design aspects of including hard-to-reach groups, researchers will report findings from censuses, surveys, and other research related to the identification, definition, measurement, and methodologies for surveying and enumerating undercounted populations.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Just Announced! Short Courses</b><br/>                 Social Media Research Methods<br/>                 Respondent-Driven Sampling<br/>                 Designing and Developing Instruments Across Cultures and Languages</p>  | <p><b>Identifying, Defining, and Measuring the Hard-to-Reach (H2R)</b><br/>                 Defining H2R populations<br/>                 Measuring undercounts for H2R groups<br/>                 Improving measurement with administrative records<br/>                 Sampling H2R populations</p>  |
| <p><b>Techniques and Methodologies</b><br/>                 Recruitment methods<br/>                 Targeting the H2R<br/>                 Use of social marketing and outreach campaigns<br/>                 Overcoming language and literacy barriers<br/>                 Use of community-based organizations<br/>                 Dealing with complex living and housing situations<br/>                 Tracking and tracing H2R populations</p> | <p><b>H2R Subpopulations</b><br/>                 Racial minorities<br/>                 Immigrant populations<br/>                 Indigenous populations<br/>                 Highly mobile and migrant populations<br/>                 Homeless and refugee populations<br/>                 Sexual minorities<br/>                 Populations affected by natural disasters<br/>                 Populations in zones of armed conflict<br/>                 Stigmatized populations<br/>                 Linguistic and cultural minorities</p> |

Additional information is available on conference website or by email.

**Website:** [www.amstat.org/meetings/h2r/2012](http://www.amstat.org/meetings/h2r/2012)

**Email:** [H2R2012@amstat.org](mailto:H2R2012@amstat.org)

## SHORT CLASSES

### Short Courses Sponsored by JPSM

Course and registration information for all JPSM-sponsored short courses listed below are available at [www.jpsm.org/shortcourses](http://www.jpsm.org/shortcourses).

#### **Mixing Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

**September 19, 2012** at Washington Marriott at Metro Center, Washington, DC

Payment and Registration Due by **September 5, 2012**

[https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html\\_content.cfm?CourseID=091912](https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html_content.cfm?CourseID=091912)

#### **Introduction to the Federal Statistical System**

**September 25, 2012** at Marriott Inn & Conference Center, Adelphi, MD

Payment and Registration Due by **September 11, 2012**

[https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html\\_content.cfm?CourseID=092512](https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html_content.cfm?CourseID=092512)

#### **Bayesian Inference for Surveys**

**October 4-5, 2012** at Crystal City Marriot, Arlington, VA

Payment and Registration Due by **September 20, 2012**

[https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html\\_content.cfm?CourseID=100412](https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html_content.cfm?CourseID=100412)

#### **Analysis and Presentation of Economic Data**

**October 11, 2012** at Bureau of Labor Statistics Conference Center, Washington, DC

Payment and Registration Due by **September 27, 2012**

[https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html\\_content.cfm?CourseID=101112](https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html_content.cfm?CourseID=101112)

#### **Introduction to Project Management for Surveys**

**November 8-9, 2012** at Marriott Inn and Conference Center, Adelphi, MD

Payment and Registration Due by **October 25, 2012**

[https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html\\_content.cfm?CourseID=110812](https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/html_content.cfm?CourseID=110812)

## Short Course Sponsored by WSS

### Introduction to Bayesian Inference and Calculation

#### Date/Location:

**September 5–6, 2012** at Bureau of Labor Statistics, Conference Center (across 1<sup>st</sup> Street from the Union Station Metro stop), 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Washington, D.C.

#### Registration:

To register for the course, go to: <https://www.123signup.com/register?id=sbkqn>

Registration due by **August 13, 2012**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Full-time students (with student ID with registration—only 5 student slots available) | \$70     |
| WSS members   | \$285    |
| All other registrants   | \$335    |
| With Link and Barker (2010) <b>Bayesian Inference</b> book purchase                   | add \$65 |

#### Topic:

This short course is a gentle introduction to Bayesian inference, intended for applied statisticians and data analysts. Bayesian inference is philosophically simple and mathematically appealing, but perhaps more importantly is ideally suited for fitting complex models, and addressing problems for which there are no classical (frequentist) solutions. Bayes' approach provides mathematically sensible methods of analysis without the need for asymptotic approximations, and a precise inferential system even when dealing with small sample sizes and limited data. A variety of data types and models will be presented, with emphasis on the unified approach provided by the Bayesian paradigm.

The workshop will consist of 8 sessions, with a healthy mix of lecture and hands-on training.

Participants are asked to bring laptops with program *OpenBUGS* installed. This program is available for free download at <http://www.openbugs.info/w/>.

**Who Should Attend:** This course is intended for anyone involved in the analysis and interpretation of data. Our presentation is intended for a fairly general audience, though basic knowledge of probability and statistics is assumed.

**About the instructor:** William A. Link has worked as Mathematical Statistician for the USGS Biological Research Division since 1987. His work has included modeling and analysis of count survey data, capture-recapture data, and development of demographic models.

**Text:** Course notes will be made available to participants. Some examples will be taken from

Link, W. A. and R. J. Barker. 2010. **Bayesian Inference, with ecological applications.** Elsevier/Academic, Boston, MA. xiii, 339 pp. [book info](#)

This text is NOT required for the course but can be purchased with the course.

**Schedule for Course:** The course will be held **September 5 and 6**. Registration will begin at 8:30 AM on Day 1 and the class will run from 9 AM to 4:30 PM both days. There will be coffee and Danish in the mornings before class and at the morning break, with beverages and cookies in the afternoon. Lunch will be provided both days.

#### Day 1

1. 9:00-10:30. Bayes Basics
  - Inverse probability.
  - Probability from frequentist and Bayesian perspective; posterior inference.
  - Prior distributions; conjugacy; informative and noninformative priors.
  - Why use Bayesian methods?
2. 10:45-12:15. Computing posterior distributions.
  - Simulation: CDF inversion, rejection sampling.
  - Metropolis-Hastings algorithm; operational considerations.
  - Gibbs sampling; Metropolis within Gibbs, slice sampling.
  - Derived parameters.
3. 1:15-2:45. Introduction to *OpenBUGS* (free software for *Bayes Using Gibbs Sampling*)
4. 3:00-4:30. Hierarchical models.
  - Latent data: describing and analyzing the data you wish you had.
  - Model checking.

#### Day 2

5. 9:00-10:30. Finite population sampling.
6. 10:45-12:15. Multimodel inference: including model selection and criticism.
7. 1:15-2:45. OpenBUGS examples
8. 3:00-4:30. Sample problems and workshop, odds and ends, Q&A.

For more information on this course, please contact Brian Meekins: [meekins.brian@bls.gov](mailto:meekins.brian@bls.gov)

# CONGRATULATIONS AWARD WINNER!

## 2012 Gertrude Cox Award

The Washington Statistical Society (WSS) and RTI International are pleased to announce that **Amy Herring, Associate Professor, Department of Biostatistics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**, has been chosen as this year's recipient of the Gertrude M. Cox Award. Since receiving her ScD in Statistics from the Harvard University in 2000, Dr. Herring has made many noteworthy contributions in biostatistical analysis, specifically in the use of Bayesian methods to shed light on a number of important health issues such as the relationship between prenatal indicators and birth outcomes. She received the Award at the WSS Annual Dinner Meeting and gave the Keynote Address, "Beyond age at first sex: modeling patterns of emerging sexual behavior in adolescents and young adults".

The Award celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Established in 2003 through a joint agreement between WSS and RTI, the award recognizes statisticians in early to mid-career who have made significant contributions to statistical practice.

The award is in memory of Gertrude M. Cox (1900-1978), who in the 1950s, when Head of the Department of Experimental Statistics at North Carolina State College, played a key role in establishing Mathematical Statistics and Biostatistics Departments at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Statistical Division at the then newly founded not-for-profit RTI. She served as president of the ASA in 1957.

This award is made possible by funding from RTI, and the recipient is chosen by a six person committee - three each from RTI and WSS. This year's committee from RTI consists of Marcus Berzofsky, Phil Kott, and Karol Krotki (Co-Chair), and from WSS Jonaki Bose (Co-Chair), Michael Brick, and Keith Rust. The award consists of a \$1,000 honorarium, travel expenses to attend the WSS dinner, and a commemorating plaque containing the WSS logo. Past recipients have been, in chronological order: Sharon Lohr, Alan Zaslavsky, Tom Belin, Vance Berger, Francesca Domenici, Thomas Lumley, Jean Opsomer, Michael Elliott, and Nilanjan Chatterjee.



**Other Board Members:**

|   |                |  |                   |                |  |
|---|----------------|--|-------------------|----------------|--|
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| <b>Web Master</b>                                 |                |  |                   |                |  |
| Dan Jacobs  | (301) 405-6383 | <a href="mailto:jacobs@mdsg.umd.edu">jacobs@mdsg.umd.edu</a>                                 |                   |                |  |
| <b>Curtis Jacobs Memorial Committee</b>           |                |  |                   |                |  |
| Tom Krenzke                                       | (301) 251-4203 | <a href="mailto:tomkrenzke@westat.com">tomkrenzke@westat.com</a>                             |                   |                |  |
| <b>Quantitative Literacy Poster Competition</b>   |                |  |                   |                |  |
| Barnali Das                                       | (301) 279-4593 | <a href="mailto:barnalidas@westat.com">barnalidas@westat.com</a>                             |                   |                |  |
| <b>Science Fair Coordinator</b>                   |                |  |                   |                |  |
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| <b>Quantitative Literacy Workshop Coordinator</b> |                |  |                   |                |  |
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