



Classification Society

— Formerly the Classification Society of North America (CSNA) —

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Editorial

Dear Classification Society members,

our annual meeting in St. Louis is just five weeks away — and there are still some openings for abstracts or invited sessions! So, if you are interested, please, contact Bill Shannon immediately (Tel. 314-704-8725). See you all in St. Louis!

Warmest regards,

Frieder

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1. Classification Society Annual Meeting, 2009, St. Louis, June 10–13

The Classification Society will have its Annual Meeting 2009 in St. Louis, MO, June 11–13 (organization: Bill Shannon, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO (Tel. 314-704-8725; WSHANNON@dom.wustl.edu). Registration is open and can be made through

<http://www.classification-society.org/cs09/>

Four outstanding keynote addresses cover a wide range of topics:

- *Symbolic Data Analysis* by Lynne Billard, University of Georgia
- *Document Clustering and Social Networks* by Ed Wegman, George Mason University
- *Quantitative Marketing* by Erin Tanenbaum, Nielsen Claritas Company
- *Statistical Issues in Agent Based Models* by David Banks, Duke University

There are still openings for submitted abstracts and invited sessions!
If interested, then please contact Bill Shannon immediately to discuss.

2. Report on IFCS 2009 (by Nema Dean and Rebecca Nugent)

The 11th Conference of the International Federation of Classification Societies and 33rd annual conference of the German Classification Society - Gesellschaft für Klassifikation (GfKl) were combined into a single conference taking place at the University of Technology of Dresden, Germany, March 13-18, 2009. Official attendance was 356 with a very high standard of talks throughout. Organizing the conference were Claus Weihs (Chair) and Local Organizing Committee: Werner Esswein, Andreas Hilbert and Hermann Locarek-Junge.

Prior to the conference itself the half-day tutorials were a great success, being well organized, presented and of great interest. The conference was kicked off by an opening ceremony with welcoming speeches given by the presidents of both the IFCS and GfKl societies and local organizers from the hosting university. For those who would not be taking the conference tour of the city, a short video about Dresden gave a pleasant taste of what they were missing. For those who did take the tour, the video gave an idea of what Dresden would have looked like in sunshine (an unfortunately scarce quantity for the duration of the conference - no blame for this should be attached to the organizing committee). In addition, the presentation of the Chikio Hayashi Awards was made to the recipients: Ulas Akkucuk, Javier Arroyo, Martijn Kagie, Rebecca Nugent, Katrijn Van Deun and Matthijs J. Warrens as well as the overall best paper award to Bernard Haasdonk and Elzbieta Pekalska for “Classification with Kernel Mahalanobis Distance Classifiers” and young researcher best paper award to Wiebke Petersen for “Linear Coding of Nonlinear Hierarchies: Revitalization of an Ancient Classification Method”.

Having gotten all of the ceremonial aspects out of the way, the conference talks were started off with one of the plenary speakers (all universally excellent), Ulrike von Luxburg, who gave a brilliant and lively presentation on clustering stability, provoking many interesting questions at the discussion section. She spoke about theoretical results on stability-based methods looking at reproducibility of clustering results. This led neatly to the next session on Clustering: Bias and Stability. Space does not allow us to praise all individual sessions/speakers but they were of generally high quality and organization.

The conference themes covered a wide variety of both theoretical and application-driven aspects of clustering and classification. Applications ranged from business intelligence to high-dimensional genomics. In statistical musicology, plenary speaker Taylan Cemgil gave his audience quite the jolt after lunch on Tuesday by blasting music excerpts on full volume over the speakers. He almost certainly had the most awake and attentive post-lunch audience of the conference (it is the opinion of these writers that Stevie Wonder should be included in all plenary sessions). He made a strong case for Bayesian hierarchical models being one of the most natural techniques for various problems of coding, restoration, transcription, separation, identification or resynthesis of music.

From talks to more practical matters, conference attendees were kept well caffeinated and their sugar-levels high by the excellent coffee/tea and chocolate biscuits available at all times on the ground floor of the conference building (seriously, we have never had so many chocolate biscuits). Local food was good and the servers forgiving of limited German skills (although the local Pizza joint didn't know what hit them). The bus and walking tour of Dresden took in almost all of the attractions of the capital of the Free State of Saxony. The tour guides were extremely well versed in the history of the landmarks and that history came into play again at the conference dinner that evening on the boat when attendees were honored by a visit from Dresden "royalty" in full period costume. It being St. Patrick's Day, celebration took place in the traditional style . . . with excellent wine and German beer.

Those wishing to either check themselves out or vicariously enjoy the fun had by others should look on the Conference web site (<http://www.ifcs2009.de>) for the photos posted there.

Papers of the conference will be published in a post-conference proceedings volume in the series *Studies in Classification, Data Analysis and Knowledge Organization* with Springer Verlag as well as a special edition of the *Journal of Classification* after having passed a refereeing process.

The IFCS Council accepted the bid made by Fionn Murtagh, David Wishart and David Hand to organize the next IFCS conference in 2011 at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Mark your calendar for July 10–17 2011 for IFCS 2011. There is a preliminary web page available now at: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/management/ifcs2011>. The University of St. Andrews is Scotland's oldest university, founded in 1411 by the medieval Scottish Church and King James I of Scotland. Its sixcentenary will commence in 2011. St. Andrews is famed for the town's beauty and good weather (for Scotland!) as well as the excellent golfing available there. Join us there for another round!

3. Report on SLDS 2009 (by Fionn Murtagh)

The Symposium on Learning and Data Science (SLDS 2009) took place at the University of Paris-Dauphine on Wednesday to Friday, April 1–3 2009. As an historical aside, the University of Paris-Dauphine inhabits buildings initially built for NATO — that France rejoined in the days immediately following SLDS 2009. The conference was organized by Mireille Gettler Summa, Myriam Touati, Bernard Goldfarb and Catherine Pardoux, from CEREMADE (Centre de Recherche en Mathématiques de la Décision), at the University of Paris-Dauphine. There were 111 registered participants, but many talks and presentations seemingly attracted a much larger audience, turning SLDS 2009 into a most memorable event — also due to its special appeal to young researchers. There was an Early Career Researchers Challenge, consisting of three alternative problems, with data sets, from politics,

health and marketing.

The inaugural presentation was given by Jean-Paul Benzécri: “De omni re scibili, et quibusdam aliis (About every knowable thing, and even certain other things)”. Benzécri challenged the orthodox view of space and (maybe even) time as continuous phenomena; instead, a discrete framework might be more appropriate (as employed, for example, in quantum mechanics). Benzécri promoted a perspective that conceptualizes space and time as originating from an at most ordinal structure. As an example of how we can pass from the discrete to the continuous, he mentioned the embedding of the factor space inherent to correspondence analysis. Alexey Chervonenkis spoke on “Conditions of the uniform convergence of empirical averages to their expectations”. The session and the day were a little late in starting which led to Alexey’s introductory quip that he was late just as Russian General Kutusov had been late for the Battle of Waterloo! Edwin Diday dedicated his extensive overview of symbolic data analysis and spatial classification to Suzanne Winsberg. Another session was held in homage to Pierre Bourdieu and to Henry Rouanet. The presentations by Frédéric Lebaron and by Brigitte Le Roux dealt with applications to sociology, including questionnaire analysis. The final presentation was from Vladimir Vapnik, who gave his talk by video link from Columbia University. He emphasized the crucial role of the “teacher” in machine learning — a concept allowing for incorporating hidden information into the learning process. I will not deal with other seminal presentations here, preferring to note that proceedings are planned in the near future.

All in all, this Symposium gathered many leading exponents of the viewpoints and working approaches in data analysis of the Benzécri, Bourdieu, and Kolmogorov tradition, among others. Application themes ranged over textual analysis, surveys and questionnaire analysis, risk in financial data modeling (hugely topical, of course), and handling imprecise and uncertain information in new ways.

4. The Classification Society on *LinkedIn* (by Fionn Murtagh)

LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com, is a social network with a strong, but not exclusively business-orientation, and about 35 million registered users.

The Classification Society is represented on *LinkedIn* as a Group. You can register easily for *LinkedIn* and then for the Classification Society. There is no need to use premium services; hence, for the vast majority of users, *LinkedIn* is a free platform, offering email and focused contact services. Various levels of contact are facilitated by *LinkedIn*. You can add acquaintances to your contact network, and so connect up easily through email. Or you can keep quiet if you so wish, get on with your activities but have summaries of what is happening in groups or to contacts emailed to you on a periodic basis.

Insofar as one's contacts are well-organized, *LinkedIn* may be useful for independent consultants. It can be useful for crossing boundaries, not least between research and the commercial or other (public service, for example) uses of research. One other facet of *LinkedIn* that I personally find interesting is the contact it provides with past acquaintances and former work colleagues. It is to be seen if the Classification Society group on *LinkedIn* provides a useful role to its members. Time will tell! Currently there are 35 members in this group.

5. Classification Society Distinguished Dissertation Award 2009

The 2009 Distinguished Dissertation Award winner is Dr. Innar Liiv for his dissertation "Pattern Discovery Using Seriation and Matrix Reordering: A Unified View, Extensions and an Application to Inventory Management" defended at Tallinn University of Technology under supervision of Professor Rein Kuusik, in August 2008.

Dr. Georgi Nalbantov received an Honorable Mention for his thesis "Essays on Some Recent Penalization Methods with Applications in Finance and Marketing", Erasmus University Rotterdam. All seven nominations were of excellent quality and are listed at <http://www.classification-society.org/csna>.

In 2009 the Award totals US\$500 in book vouchers from Chapman and Hall/CRC and the winner is invited to make a presentation in a special plenary session at the Classification Society's 2009 Annual Meeting.

6. Important Conference Dates

(1) IMPS 2009 — International Meeting of the Psychometric Society, July 20–24, 2009, St. Johns College, Cambridge, UK;
<http://www.psychometrika.org/meeting/2009/leaflet.pdf>

(2) KDIR 2009 — International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Information Retrieval, October 6–8, 2009, Madeira, Portugal;
<http://www.ickd.ic3k.org>

(3) IICAI 2009 — Fourth Indian International Conference on Artificial Intelligence, December 16–18, 2009, Tumkur, India;
www.iiconference.org

(4) COMPSTAT 2010 — 19th International Conference on Computational Statistics, August 22–27, 2010, Paris, France;
<http://www.compstat2010.fr/>