



## ENBIS Perspectives

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This essay has been prepared for the benefit of the ENBIS membership. It summarizes personal discussions between the authors that we decided to share, hopefully to trigger better understanding, more discussion and new ideas.

### Background

The original idea of forming an applied statistics organization in Europe was developed via a series of email exchanges among a small group of statisticians living and working in Europe during the fall of 1998 and Spring of 1999. Professor Bo Bergman who hosted the 1999 ISI satellite conference on industrial statistics in Linköping, Sweden, August 19-20, suggested that a special workshop be organized on August 21 to discuss the viability of the idea and further steps to be taken. This workshop, led by Soren Bisgaard, was attended by about 20 statisticians several of whom later would play prominent roles in getting ENBIS organized. The next formal event was a two-day weekend workshop in Eindhoven February 26-27, 2000 hosted by Wim Senden of EURANDOM where it was decided to call the organization ENBIS. At this meeting, the original mission and vision of ENBIS was discussed and formulated, and a founding board was elected chaired by Soren Bisgaard. The board consisted of Ronald Does, treasurer, Eva Riccomagno, secretary, Henry Wynn, Jeroen de Mast (webmaster), Alessandro Di Bucchianico (co-webmaster), Maria Ramalhoto, John Shade, Ulrike Groemping, Oyvind Langsrud, Oystein Evandt, Tony Greenfield, and Dave Stewardson. During this meeting possible sources of funding for starting ENBIS and how ENBIS should be administrated were discussed. In particular it was discussed how to go about raising money from the EU or other similar organizations and how to administratively manage this new entity. Several fundamental decisions were reached at that meeting. (1) It was decided to use the word "network" rather than society to make ENBIS less formal and not to appear as competition to other societies and initiatives, a very sensitive issue at the time; (2) ENBIS should be a low cost internet based organization exploiting to the fullest, possible advantage of the internet, in all its activities; (3) rather than waiting for possible funding we should go ahead in bootstrap mode. As a result of the latter point Professor Ronald Does offered to take on the administrative burden via his organization IBIS and offered to organize a founding Kickoff conference in Amsterdam, December 11, 2000. Later, it was decided to raise initial funds through teaching a 3 day short course on Design of Experiments. The course was taught by Soren Bisgaard on December 12-14 in Eindhoven and generously hosted and arranged for free by EURANDOM. The kickoff conference attracted approximately 70 statisticians and statistical practitioners from all over Europe and the workshop attracted 21 paying customers. Both events were entirely based on volunteer efforts and were financially very successful. The significant proceeds generated this way allowed ENBIS to invest in a website developed by Jeroen de Mast with assistance from a commercial firm and in paying for attorney assistance for drafting the formal legal incorporation documents of ENBIS, done by Ronald Does. After circulation

among the founding committee, the incorporation documents were signed June 29, 2001 and ENBIS was formally founded as a not-for-profit Society with administrative home in the Netherlands. Later, 800K Euros were raised through successful application for an FP5 "Growth" Thematic Network project led by Dave Stewardson. Ron Kenett happened to be a reviewer of the proposal for the commission and immediately saw the need and potential and convinced the others of its value. Pro-ENBIS helped fund much of the earlier ENBIS meetings and activities.

ENBIS was officially founded on 29/6/2001 as "an autonomous Society having as its objective the development and improvement of statistical methods, and their application, throughout Europe, all this in the widest sense of the words"

The modus operandis of the society is described in the statutes as follows:

*"ENBIS shall try to accomplish this objective in particular by*

- a. fostering and facilitating the application and understanding of statistical methods to the benefit of European business and industry,*
- b. providing a forum for the dynamic exchange of ideas and facilitate networking among statistical practitioners (a statistical practitioner is any person using statistical methods whether formally trained or not),*
- c. nurturing interactions and professional development of statistical practitioners regionally and internationally;*
- d. as well as by all other legal means, which may further the objective of ENBIS."*

At inception, the following Mission and Vision where established:

## **Mission**

The mission of ENBIS was agreed to be to:

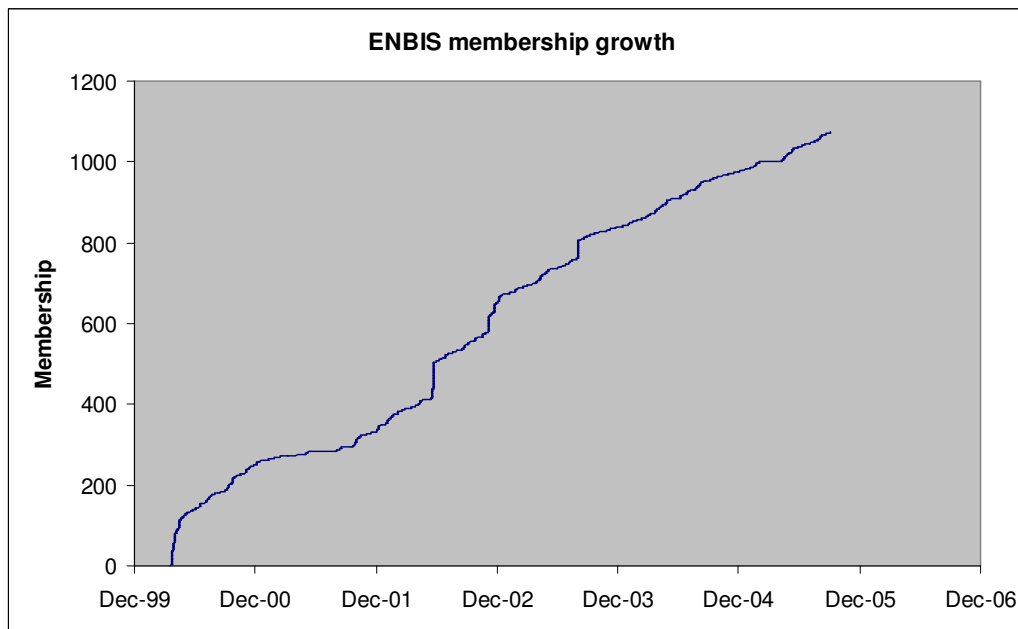
*Foster and facilitate the application and understanding of statistical methods to the benefit of European business and industry,  
Provide a forum for the dynamic exchange of ideas and facilitate networking among statistical practitioners (a statistical practitioner is any person using statistical methods whether formally trained or not),  
Nurture interactions and professional development of statistical practitioners regionally and internationally.*

## **Vision**

ENBIS has adopted the subsequent points as its vision.

*To promote the widespread use of sound science driven, applied statistical methods in European business and industry,  
That membership consists primarily of statistical practitioners from business and industry,  
To emphasize multidisciplinary problem solving involving statistics,  
To facilitate the rapid transfer of statistical methods and related technologies to and from business and industry,  
To link academic teaching and research in statistics with industrial and business practice,  
To facilitate and sponsor continuing professional development,  
To keep its membership up to date in the field of statistics and related technologies,  
To seek collaborative agreements with related organizations.  
ENBIS is a web based society.*

Four years later, after holding successful annual conferences in Oslo (2001), Rimini (2002), Barcelona (2003), Copenhagen (2004) and Newcastle (2005). In 2005 the society had over 1141 registered members (see figure 1), in August 2006 the number is 1182.



## Topics of discussion

In various email exchanges between the various contributors to this document several topics were discussed. RSK organized them into topics of discussion and incorporated the essential parts of the email contents. The objective is to reflect the views of the contributors in an adequate, coherent and focused way.

### ***1. Can-do, entrepreneurial attitude***

SB: The reason ENBIS succeeded and rapidly took off was because of a can-do, entrepreneurial attitude of the founders and very specifically the IBIS people (Ronald and Jeroen). We were not trying to do a "perfect" job but simply to get started -- provide a "product" that worked (The good old Juran quality concept of delivering what customers perceive as quality as opposed to what the engineers imagined would be quality).

SB: Another reason for the early success was a certain degree of decisiveness. Democracy, debate and open discussions are important and should always be held up as the guiding principles for how ENBIS should run. However, there have been situations in the early days of ENBIS where decisions had to be made and where debate could have continued indefinitely. This would not have been productive and frankly not fair to the people that volunteered their precious time to the cause. Thus a certain degree of decisiveness was important for getting ENBIS started. As ENBIS matures, as you (RSK) suggested, this will likely be less important or even less productive. However, we will need to maintain a respect for other people's time and not waste it with long discussions that go on for ever. This is a fine balance and will require tact and leadership.

FR: I think people should be involved as much as possible, trying to combine democracy and effectiveness. The person in charge of decision (president, usually) should try to be very direct, telling what the problems are and what the solutions could be according to him/her, trying to summarise again after the first comments and reach a conclusion (even with a vote or his/her decision) within a reasonable time.

AC: I fully agree with Søren's view, and I think this is one of the benefits we can bring our members: Experiencing this attitude and bringing it back to workplaces where statistics sometimes maybe is more associated with an attitude of theoretical perfection. So in my opinion, we should really maintain this attitude carefully.

## ***2. Interaction of Industry and academia and with other societies***

RSK: let me point out the unique position of ENBIS as a platform combining theory and application. It should have an appeal to both academics and practitioners. This is why I was particularly pleased to have in ENBIS5 both a session on algebraic statistics and several on statistical consulting.

SB: This was by design. It was very important to the founders that ENBIS would be a vehicle for building bridge between theory and practice.

RD: I am working for the Institute for Business and Industrial Statistics. This is a consultancy firm owned by the University of Amsterdam. The interaction between scientific research on the one hand, and the application of statistics via our consultancy work on the other is the core of the institute. This is reflected in the type of people that work for the institute, which are young persons having strong ambitions in both the academic world but also in business and industry.

The interaction between science and application is also how our articles originated. One foot in practice, the other in academy: that is how we practice our profession. ENBIS has contributed in many ways to this philosophy.

FR. I am afraid that ENBIS is slightly shifting towards academy. Services to people in industry should be provided (the current ideas are continuing education, joint funding for which we have two committees. I would like to have statistical books for practitioners and Wiley would be interested in discussing them but nobody from ENBIS showed interest in writing something).

## ***3. Volunteerism***

SB: What we need is a wider circle of people willing to do work for free with a high likelihood of personal but perhaps less tangible benefits down stream. When I look back I can only feel an extreme satisfaction of how many good friendships I have gained through ENBIS. Every hour spend has been worth it!

SB: We also fundamentally based it on the attitude of being willing to do voluntary work. If I help an old lady across the street, I feel good about it. I don't need to be paid for it. Indeed I

would not derive the same satisfaction if I did. Similarly I derive a lot of satisfaction from seeing ENBIS hosting meeting with close to 200 people from all over Europe. I

increasingly hear that people want to be paid for the work or even for attending the meetings. I fundamentally disagree. If we go with that model we will soon corrupt the spirit of ENBIS. People with opportunistic motives will be attracted to ENBIS. The general tone will change and we will run a real risk of infighting and the possibility of running events that will either bankrupt or put ENBIS at great risk.

RD: We have worked for ENBIS for free because we knew that its mission and vision were unique. The benefits were really great. It has introduced us in a complete new world. We have made many friends from all over Europe and abroad. In such a situation you do not want to be paid.

RSK: This core value of ENBIS has to be brought forward some more. Members must understand what it brings. Organizing the workshops in ENBIS5 was particularly painful in this respect and I am not sure everybody was happy with my response that, at the most, and with enough participants, conference registration fees would be waved for the organizer.

SB: I would suggest a formula where there will be a minimum (break—even point) below which the workshops will be cancelled, say a week before the date. The breakeven point should be calculated so that the workshop organized will be allowed to have his/hers out of pocket expenses covered. If the workshop is run and the revenues can cover the expenses then as a general policy workshop organizers should have their expenses covered. I do not think we should pay the organizers for running the workshop. This should be on a volunteer basis and if well done will clearly have a benefit to the organizers/instructors anyway. I can also go along with a waved conference fee but it should be remembered that the conference fee is not all profit. It goes to cover real expenses that are proportional to the number of people attending the conference.

RD: Running a workshop for free means that you are highly involved with ENBIS. Of course your out of pocket costs could be paid. The surplus is put in the George Box Fund: an initiative to enable young people (who cannot afford these expenses) to attend ENBIS conferences for instance.

RSK: Once people show interest in registering as members, they should press an "accept" radio button indicating they read and understood the above. This is not obvious.

Quote from JL 19/9: when people are volunteering their time we should bear in mind that there is a hidden cost of supporting anything and we should be clear that the time volunteered may be being paid by someone, particularly where people work for an institution. And we are always at risk of someone's situation changing - family, job, etc. I am not suggesting that we should have a paid secretariat as that would place at risk the ethos of ENBIS but that we should respect people's time and minimise the call on that resource \*even more\* than if we were paying them.

SB: I agree. One way to respect this is to honor those who volunteer and that we are extremely responsible and careful in our use of the money generated by the volunteers and don't use these funds for frivolous or narrow interest purposes.

FR: I agree with the great opportunity offered by ENBIS to meet people. I knew none of you and I am very pleased of having met you and many other great people. I have

been trying to solicit people to participate and I have found a hardcore group which is made of wonderful people, committed to ENBIS, but it is too small! Even people serving in some committee stop working for ENBIS after the duty is over. We need to act to keep these people and promote local/group initiatives. Interest groups were one possible way to have more volunteers but they are doing almost nothing. The same applies to the national representatives. We (Shirley and I, as the two last Presidents) have been trying to get them involved, sending them messages and providing various possibilities but the result has been close to 0. I am definitely against "wasting" money gained with the hard work of our volunteers. I think we should not pay honorariums, etc. Regarding courses, I think that no reward (except annual conference registration fee, at most!) should be given to the people giving courses at the annual meetings. In my mind, we should give more courses, organised by local representatives with the help by a central group at ENBIS. In this case, more consistent rewards could be thought, but not now!

AC: Several people mention the word "friendship". It may become a challenge to maintain this as a bearing pillar in a rapidly growing organisation. On the other hand, it is probably the strongest reward a society ever can offer. It also links into Søren's important point later on that we need to prevent cliqueness. My personal attitude on this is unambiguous: I maintained contact to ENBIS when quitting the statistician's job because of the people.

#### **4. Members involvement**

RSK: There is an underlying assumption that we want more involvement of the membership. I think that there is a core of loyal members but, on the list, there are many registered ENBIS members not showing at conferences and not being active at all. The interest groups, for example, are pretty dormant between conferences. If we want more, we need to better understand customer perceived added value. The workshops seem to be one way to go.

RD: It is time that a new generation takes over the responsibilities in ENBIS. I have been director and treasurer of this network for about seven years. That is of course much too long. After the pioneering phase we need new blood to continue with ENBIS. If we do not find volunteers then I am pessimistic about the future.

RSK: Member participation between conferences is a goal by itself - how to encourage it is a major endeavor. Fabrizio seems keen on pushing this issue forward and deserves full support.

FR: I think we should promote young people as much as possible. Ronald's suggestion of having Jeroen chairing the annual meeting has been a risky decision but it has been a great one! Young people as vice presidents and in the committees would be great. RSK is right; I try to fill the gap between the two conferences with spring workshop, newsletter and courses (maybe in conjunction with other conferences, e.g. MMR2007). I think information is important as well and website, messages to members and newsletter are important, as well. If you read my opening statement in September 2005, you can read my ideas about involvement.

## **5. Workshops and conferences**

SB: If someone does a workshop for ENBIS, and what they present is useful, then the workshop is essentially free marketing for them. I have done it many times for ASQ and always received many offers for consulting afterwards.

SB: My vision was that ENBIS should consider applied statistics as a wide enterprise where there should be room for such things like consulting, statistical computing, graphics, etc that the traditional statistical societies don't care for very much. Thus I would support workshops with that in mind. I would not think it would be wise to conduct workshops on probability theory etc. Not because it is not good stuff, but because the other societies do these things so well. It is not a good idea to open a lemonade stand across the street from another lemonade stand. Likewise we should not get in the business of doing what is already done well by other societies but find a niche of our own and serve that well.

SB: We need to work out some minimum standards and then enforce them. Juran would call that quality control.

SB: One way the academics could help themselves would be through teaching workshops.

SB: Conferences are getting too expensive. Did we have any East Europeans attending the last few conferences except for next year's organizers? We have seen a real inflation from the first year in Oslo where we fought very hard to keep the expenses at a minimum to the latest conferences. If we could get our hands on the numbers it would be interesting to see graphically how much inflation we have experienced. One way to combat this inflation is to make rigorous budgets for the conferences and then manage the planning very carefully. I think we could do a better job at this.

RSK: Workshops offered at ENBIS should be allowed to carry out the ENBIS logo, implying an ENBIS endorsement. When these workshops are offered elsewhere they should be labeled "ENBIS workshop on ....." in order to promote the ENBIS "brand". Some of the workshops however were not up to standards because of lack of preparation or lack of understanding what a workshop is about.

RSK: Ideally workshops would be run by teams combining an academic and someone working in industry or as an independent consultant. Instituting quality control here has not been easy in ENBIS5. There are also different approaches and one should walk between the drops. There are even differences in terms that lead to misunderstandings. Here again, the way to go forward is through modeling or "by example". The workshop of Soren with Sue-Ellen on statistical consulting should also be used that way. I am glad to note that this workshop will be offered again at the ASQ annual conference. Moreover Soren is considering calling it *the ENBIS workshop on statistical consulting*. A great service indeed to ENBIS that is gradually becoming a recognized "brand".

RSK: There is room for a dedicated task force to look at outreach initiatives vs Eastern Europe. The conference in Wroclaw gives a unique opportunity to push this forward.

JL: Promote training down to the company level in collaboration with universities and other institutes.

FR: I think we should bring our philosophy in our conferences and also in others. At MMR2007 in Glasgow, a mathematical conference, we are planning a workshop one day before, that I will organize, which should be more industry-driven.

AC: Søren mentions that we need to work out some minimum standards. I agree - here's an issue to work on. How are we going to go about assuring quality?

## **6. Core values and mission**

SB: Mission statements are useful when one wants to develop a focus and especially to find out what not to do. It was our (at least Ronald's and mine) idea that ENBIS should serve a different mission from the existing statistics and probability societies. We should carve out a unique mission and a niche not covered by any other European organization.

SB: My vision was that ENBIS should be the meeting ground for theory and application, a network for exchange between users, researchers and educators of business and industrial statistics. And to clarify, I have retained my membership of ASA and RSS because I like their mission's as well and enjoy their meeting and publications. When I need bread I go to the baker and when I need fish I go to the fishmonger. I don't think fish is better than bread or vice versa.

SB: What I am now to say will undoubtedly be misunderstood, but I don't know how to say it without being somewhat direct and it is important. The mission and vision we originally formulated has on occasion either overtly or covertly been under attack or at least seriously challenged. Applied statistics is a field in its own right with its own culture and norms. The mission we have developed should be taken very seriously. If we let go and get too closely aligned with mathematics in either of its forms we may run the risk of being a "me too" organization. I love and respect mathematics and cannot learn enough. But ENBIS is not a mathematics society. It is a statistics society! What we judge as "good" and "useful" is different from the criteria used in mathematics and other related fields. Not better. Just different! Let us all work together to value, guard and preserve the original ENBIS mission.

RSK: Some discussion on this would help solidify the ENBIS "genetic code". It would also set expectations so that people would better understand the organizational code.

## **7. ENBIS differentiating factors**

SB: ENBIS should be a very modern organization without any of the old baggage from the past. All members should have an equal status and there should in particular be opportunities for young members to get involved and learn how to make presentations, organize sessions, sit on or chair committees and become officers. Gray hair should not be the ticket to entrance on boards and to become an officer, on the contrary.



SB: ENBIS should be welcoming to new members. We should work hard to prevent cliqueness.

SB: The website is vital for our operations and our low cost business model.

RSK: ENBIS offers a unique opportunity for application oriented individuals. To me, at least, there is no other similar organization, hence my interest. A particular pleasure for me was to hear David Cox discuss how he "descended" to academia from industry - and he means this 100%.

RSK: One key difference between academics and independents is that academics are used to get funded through grants and independents have a business approach to funding. Somehow ENBIS should combine both.

RSK: Initiating some ENBIS based research on statistical consulting would allow for constructive synergies.

RD: We should make plans to use the George Box Fund. One way could be to start a research project within Europe. A subject could be: How to become the most innovative continent?

JL: A cross between a training organisation with leading instructors and a repertoire of courses and material, and a learned society

## ***8. Industrial statistics perspectives***

SB: focus on innovation, incremental and breakthrough, in product development and service; information and learning are key's in a knowledge society. We are the quintessential knowledge workers!

## ***9. Other issues***

SB: As ENBIS matures it will be important to institute more systems, checks and balances. Along with a more democratic structure and new faces entering the governing committees, a very welcome trend of course, there is also a real danger that new people that may not fully appreciate the risk to ENBIS's finances we may face. For example, new people not so familiar with how things work may organize events or initiatives that potentially could bring ENBIS in danger. To be frank ENBIS has succeeded primarily because of one thing: The very firm and responsible financial management exercised from Amsterdam. We have many wonderful members that have volunteered a lot of their time and effort. These efforts have been and should always be very welcome. ENBIS needs these kinds of people and their initiatives. However, some members have a clear understanding of economics and others don't. Some have very wonderful ideas. But sometimes these ideas may turn out not to be workable. Sometimes we may want to take a risk on a new exciting initiative. However, this should always be a calculated risk with budgets and control and never a blind gamble that potentially could bring ENBIS in trouble. Therefore for ENBIS to succeed we will need to continue to have very firm financial management, budgets and control. This firmness may not always be popular but it is necessary if ENBIS is to stay on a safe course into the future.

SB: Journals. Since the early days of ENBIS we have had a lot of discussions about creating an ENBIS journal. I have resisted it from the beginning. The reason is that all the existing applied statistics journals I am familiar with are in financial trouble and have dwindling subscription numbers. We should there not start a new journal but rather use the opportunity to be involved with and support existing journals.

SB: membership fee. In the early days of ENBIS we had a lot of discussions about charging a membership fee. I was concerned that if we charged a fee but had no or very few services to offer we would kill ENBIS's growth. I was also concerned that Eastern European members would not be able to pay. My initial suggestion was to go with a "British Museum policy" of asking people to contribute a "fee" in whatever size they could afford. I don't think that idea ever took root. Some people were of the opinion that ENBIS would never be taken seriously if we did not charge a fee. My claim was that this was "all theory and no data" because what could be more serious than people coming to our conferences and paying big bucks to attend. I think we can now demonstrate with real data that it is indeed possible to run a serious organization on carefully managed conferences that generate enough of a profit to pay the bills combined with volunteer efforts to keep the cost down. Thus what we have developed is a different business model adapted to the European environment where people are not used to have personal memberships. Instead we can in many cases rely on that the ENBIS members company or organization is willing to pay for the conferences they attend.

RD: I have contacts with another young society which charges a membership fee. After one year they do not have more than 100 members and the fiscal year has ended with a serious loss. If you do not charge a fee you have to depend on your own members. If they take part on an activity they should pay (with a little extra to cover the running costs). I also think that it is easier to explain that tasks within the network should be done for free.

FR: I think new initiatives should be properly prepared and we have to learn from the first Spring Workshop. Some errors were committed and I think we are working more carefully on the second workshop, i.e. more people involved in the organization, more precise theme, etc. I am one who thinks that subscription fee could be useful to promote more initiatives but I understand that NOW it is better to increase our basis and establish our leadership in the European context. I tried to introduce the possibility of donating money to ENBIS along with the registration to the conferences but technical reasons have not allowed it.

RSK: As coordinator of this document and president elect I would like to add some comments trying to summarize the above discussions.

## A Six Point Summary

### 1. Funding

This is of course a key issue. ENBIS workshops and the annual conference have proved a good source of revenues. There are currently eight corporate sponsors who pay 500 Euro Annually. Increasing corporate sponsorships and revenues from workshops/conferences, EU funding and donations should get high priority.

### 2. Scope

Quoting Soren again "ENBIS should be the meeting ground for theory and application, a network for exchange between users, researchers and educators of business and industrial statistics". "ENBIS should consider applied statistics as a wide enterprise where there should be room for such things like consulting, statistical computing, graphics, etc that the traditional statistical societies don't care for very much". This is indeed our differentiating factor.

### 3. Decision process

As a society relying on volunteers we need to be very careful with decision making. We need decisiveness, participation and visibility. Being elected or appointed is accepting a responsibility that cannot be simply dropped at will. We need to ensure continuity and this assumes that "succession planning" takes place. The process of president elect, president and past president is well designed and achieves these goals.

### 4. Membership

Since membership is free we need to create some way to test the commitment of our membership. The fact that we are not lacking volunteers to elected positions is one good sign. Having so many members contribute time to prepare and deliver workshops is another.

### 5. Publications

The ENBIS magazine within SCW and the quarterly ENBIS news are our key publications. I recommend you download the dozen ENBIS magazine articles published so far (<http://www.enbis.org/newsletter/overview.html>) and review them as a set. It is impressive indeed and makes for unusually clear reading material on a wide range of statistical topics. We all owe a great deal to Tony Greenfield for editing these articles and making available to us his journalistic talent.

### 6. Web

ENBIS has been set as a web based society. Jeroen de Mast and Alessandro Di Bucchianico were the first web master and cowebmasters. Later JL took over from Alessandro. We now have two talented and dedicated members assuming these responsibilities (Winfried Theis and Peter Goos) with help, if needed, from JL and Jeroen de Mast and I look forward to expanding our capabilities in this area.

In sum, ENBIS is a unique society with unique individuals. Working with the Exec Committee under the leadership of Fabrizio Ruggeri, the president for 2005-2006, has been a great experience demonstrating what teamwork and participation can achieve. I look forward to serve the society and its members as president in 2006-2007.