

## **The 7th World Congress In Probability and Statistics Report by the Program Committee Chair, Ruth Williams**

The 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Probability and Statistics, jointly sponsored by the Bernoulli Society (BS) and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS), took place at the National University of Singapore from July 14 to 19, 2008. This meeting incorporated the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Bernoulli Society with the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics.

The Program Committee (PC), consisting of 21 members, was chaired by myself, Ruth Williams. The local organization of the meeting was conducted jointly by the Department of Statistics and Applied Probability, the Department of Mathematics and the Institute for Mathematical Sciences, of the National University of Singapore. The chair of the Local Organizing Committee was Louis Chen. (The members of the Program Committee, the Local Organizing Committee and the Singapore Secretariat are listed at the end of this report.)

The 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Singapore ran for 5 and a half days hosting at least 570 participants from 55 countries. The program featured 13 main speakers: Martin Barlow (IMS Medallion Lecture), Richard Durrett (IMS Wald Lectures), Jianqing Fan (BS Laplace Lecture), Alice Guionnet (BS Levy Lecture), Mark Low (IMS Medallion Lecture), Zhi-Ming Ma (IMS Medallion Lecture), Peter McCullagh (IMS Neyman Lecture), Douglas Nychka (Public Lecture), Oded Schramm (BS-IMS Special Lecture), David Spiegelhalter (BS Bernoulli Lecture), Alain-Sol Sznitman (BS Kolmogorov Lecture), Elizabeth Thompson (BS Tukey Lecture), and Wendelin Werner (BS-IMS Special Lecture/Medallion Lecture). There were 34 invited sessions, 82 contributed sessions and 3 poster sessions, with 471 associated abstracts. There were two panel discussions on challenges and opportunities in probability and in statistics. In addition, there was an "In Memoriam" session to honor the contributions and service of two BS past Presidents (David Kendall and Chris Heyde) and one IMS past President (Samuel Karlin), who unfortunately all passed away within the preceding year. The social events included a welcome reception, a special reception (to honor Fields Medalist Wendelin Werner), an afternoon excursion and a banquet.

As I heard from many participants during the conference, the local organization was superb, ranging from the punctual bus transportation, through the abundance of good food, to the excellent lecture facilities. The willingness of the many local helpers to assist, no matter how unusual the request or how short the notice, was particularly appreciated. Having such a wonderful team in Singapore certainly made my job as Program Chair much easier.

The purpose of this report is to summarize, for the assistance of future program chairs, how the program for the 7<sup>th</sup> World was developed and, in particular, to outline the steps taken by the Program Committee. However, this report is meant merely as a guide, since, as Wilfrid Kendall (Program Chair for the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress) pointed out in his very useful report, every Congress should and will be different.

## **Background.**

This series of conferences started in 1986 with the first Bernoulli Society World Congress held in Tashkent (Soviet Union). Beginning with the second Congress held in Uppsala (Sweden) in 1990, these conferences have been jointly organized by the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics. Subsequent Congresses held prior to the seventh were located in Chapel Hill (North Carolina, USA, 1994), Vienna (Austria, 1996), Guanajuato (Mexico, 2000) and Barcelona (Spain, 2004). [The fourth World Congress in Vienna was brought forward by two years to avoid clashing with the International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM).] The Congresses are now held once every four years (two years out of phase with the ICM).

These joint meetings of the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics have steadily grown in importance over the years. They feature the latest scientific developments in probability and statistics and their applications. In recognition of their prominence as major international events in probability and statistics, commencing with the Singapore meeting it was decided to henceforth refer to each of these meetings as the “nth World Congress in Probability and Statistics, jointly sponsored by the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics”, with the appropriate choice of n. The Singapore Congress was the first to use this new name, being the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Probability and Statistics.

## **Crafting the Program for the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress.**

### *The Charge.*

My work for the Congress began on March 6, 2006 when I accepted the invitation of the Presidents of the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics at the time, Professors Peter Jagers and Thomas Kurtz, to chair the joint program committee for the Congress to be held in Singapore in July 2008.

The Program Committee was to be responsible for the overall structure of the scientific program and especially for arranging the invited sessions. A subcommittee of the program committee was to be responsible for selecting the speakers for the Bernoulli Society named invited lectures (Bernoulli, Kolmogorov, Laplace, Levy and Tukey lectures); the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress was to include the inaugural Tukey lecture. The speakers for the IMS named and IMS Medallion lectures were to be selected by the IMS Committee on Special lectures; indeed, due to the advanced IMS schedule for selecting Medallion lecturers, the Medallion lecturers for the Congress were known shortly after I was appointed. As the Congress Program Chair, I served on the IMS Special Lectures Committee that selected the speakers for the IMS named lectures (Wald and Neyman) for the Congress. This link, and some intentional overlap between the Congress Program Committee and the IMS Special Lectures Committee, enhanced communication regarding the selection of the invited speakers for all of the named lectures.

Throughout the two plus years building up to the Congress, I worked in close collaboration with the Local Organizing Committee Chair, Louis Chen, in arranging the

scientific program. I also provided input on various general decisions concerning local arrangements, registration, the web page, and advertising. However, the many details involved in executing these aspects, as well as the production of the program book and processing of contributed papers and posters, were handled by the local organizers.

### *The Previous Congress.*

Before I started on my tasks, I read the very helpful report of the previous Congress Chair, Wilfrid Kendall, which is available at <http://www.imstat.org/program/imsannual04report.pdf>.

I also arranged to talk with Wilfrid, in person, at a conference that we would both attend in July 2006. In this conversation, Wilfrid conveyed many useful tips that benefited me in the subsequent two years. Wilfrid also kindly provided me with (non-confidential) samples of significant email messages that he had sent in executing his charge as Program Chair for the 2004 Congress. All of this provided me with a very valuable preview of many aspects of the program organization.

### *Forming the Program Committee.*

My first tasks as Program Chair were to appoint the Program Committee and to appoint a subcommittee to select the speakers for the Bernoulli Society named lectures. In consultation with Andrew Nobel (IMS Program Secretary) and Arnaldo Frigessi (Bernoulli Society Scientific Secretary), who in turn consulted with the Executive Committees of the two societies, I formulated the membership of the Program Committee. Early on, I invited Andrew Nobel and Arnaldo Frigessi, as well as the Chair of the Local Organizing Committee, Louis Chen, to be members of the Program Committee. Their suggestions for other program committee members and their advice throughout the organization of the Congress were invaluable. In parallel to the formulation of the Program Committee, and in consultation with Arnaldo Frigessi and Peter Jagers (BS President), I selected a subgroup of 8 names, augmented with Peter Jagers as an ex-officio member, to form the subcommittee. In constructing the committees, I was especially mindful of having some overlap in membership between the IMS Committee on Special Lectures and the Program Committee (as well as with the subcommittee for BS Named Lectures). The committee lists were approved by mid June, after which I started the process of emailing invitations to join the committee(s). As this was already into the summer travel season in the Northern Hemisphere, contacting all potential members took some time. By the end of July the committees were ready to start work. A webpage with a welcome message and the names of the Program Committee members was posted by the local organizers in Singapore in early August 2006. (The members of the Program Committee, with members of the subcommittee indicated, are given at the end of this report.)

In the following, PC will be used as an abbreviation for Program Committee.

### *Selection of Main Speakers.*

I emailed the subcommittee of the PC on August 5, 2006, to initiate the process of selecting speakers for the five Bernoulli Society named lectures:

- Bernoulli lecture (in applications either in statistics or in probability)
- Kolmogorov lecture (in probability)
- Levy lecture (sponsored by Elsevier) in stochastic processes
- Laplace lecture (in statistics)
- Tukey lecture (in statistics).

In that email I provided information about past speakers and indicated the names of the IMS Medallion lecturers (Martin Barlow, Zhi-Ming Ma, Mark Low, Wendelin Werner) for the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress, as these were already known at that time, having been selected by the IMS Special Lectures Committee earlier in 2006. I asked subcommittee members to send initial suggestions (along with a sentence or two about each name) for the five BS named lectures to me by September 24, 2006. This allowed committee members time to collect suggestions and information, and it took into account the fact that many members were still involved in “summer” travel during August-September 2006. While the deliberations of the committee were confidential, members were encouraged to look broadly and to seek suggestions and information from others. By early October 2006, the subcommittee had a good list of suggestions. In addition, we had the new knowledge that the Medallion lecturer, Wendelin Werner, had in August 2006 become the first mathematician trained in probability to receive the Fields Medal. (Werner was awarded the Fields Medal for his revolutionary work on stochastic Loewner evolution (SLE) and the geometry of two-dimensional Brownian motion, much of which was done in collaboration with Oded Schramm and Gregory Lawler.) Over the next two months the committee discussed the suggestions for speakers for the BS named lectures and brainstormed about ways to celebrate the award of the first Fields medal to a probabilist.

Although the subcommittee did not meet in person, and a conference call amongst 9 people seemed impossible due to the time zone disparities, towards the end of October, I did call each subcommittee member individually to talk about the list of suggestions and other ideas. These calls turned out to be very useful and helped tremendously with the process of coming to consensus. By mid November 2006, the subcommittee had come to a consensus and had finalized the list of speakers for the 5 BS named lectures. In addition, it had fixed on a proposal to highlight Wendelin Werner’s Medallion lecture as a joint BS-IMS Special Lecture and to invite Oded Schramm, as the inventor of SLE, to give an accompanying BS-IMS Special Lecture. The subcommittee further endorsed a proposal to hold a special reception in honor of Wendelin Werner’s award of the Fields Medal and to link the BS-IMS Special Lectures to an invited session on SLE (an invited session topic that the PC was already considering). The speaker proposals were subsequently affirmed by the BS Executive (for the BS and joint BS-IMS lectures) and the IMS Executive (for the joint BS-IMS lectures). Invitation letters were issued by the BS President for the BS lectures and jointly by the BS and IMS Presidents for the two joint BS-IMS lectures. These letters contained commitments concerning financial support for travel and accommodation for the speakers and so the letters were formulated in consultation with the Local Program Committee chair, Louis Chen. By mid January 2007 all of the Medallion, BS named and BS-IMS joint lecture speakers were finalized.

The IMS Wald and Neyman lecturers were subsequently selected by the IMS Committee on Special Lectures. I served as a member of the IMS Committee on Special Lectures in

2007 to facilitate communication concerning the selection of speakers for the Congress. This, plus overlap in the membership of the Congress subcommittee with the IMS Committee, was very useful. The Wald and Neyman lecturers were finalized in mid May 2007 and the full list of the main speakers for the Congress was made public on the Congress website shortly thereafter. Although the IMS Committee on Special Lectures worked very efficiently and effectively under the leadership of its excellent chair, Irene Gijbels, it was appointed rather late for the needs of the Congress. If the IMS named speakers could have been known several months earlier, it would have been of considerable added benefit to advertising the Congress and to organizing the invited sessions.

Although the above scheme was made to work with considerable effort on the part of the committee members and chairs involved, for future Congresses, an alternative that would provide greater flexibility and more coherence in crafting the Congress program would be for the BS and IMS to establish a joint BS-IMS committee to select the invited speakers for all of the named BS and IMS lectures to be presented at the Congress. It would be very helpful if such a committee could have considerable overlap with the Program Committee for the Congress (see the section on the next Congress for more on this point).

#### *Invited Sessions.*

The main task of the PC was to select topics and organizers for the invited sessions. On August 6, 2006, I emailed the Program Committee to initiate this process. Each invited session was to consist of 3 talks of 30 minutes each in length, with 5 minutes for interchange between the talks. We aimed for about 33 invited sessions with a balance of probability, statistics and applications. Prompted by a suggestion from the Local Organizing Committee Chair, Louis Chen, the Program Committee was also asked to make suggestions for a possible public lecture at the Congress. PC members were asked to keep the deliberations of the committee confidential. The procedure for selecting the invited sessions is outlined below.

Each PC member was asked to suggest two to four topics of current research interest in probability, statistics or their applications that would be stimulating topics for invited sessions. PC members were asked to provide one or two sentences to support each suggestion and to also suggest names of two potential organizers for each session (one preferred and one alternate). Committee members were asked NOT to contact potential organizers at this early stage. Following a protocol established for the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress, members of the Program Committee were not to be organizers of invited sessions although they could eventually be invited to speak in such a session by the session organizer. Suggestions were due by September 21, 2006.

I organized the suggestions into topics (with subtopics within each topic) and committee members commented by email on this list. I incorporated this commentary in a revised list of topics. This list was sent out for a vote at the end of December with votes due by January 15, 2007. This first round of voting and subsequent discussion resulted in 26 topics for invited sessions. There was considerable discussion, modification and addition to the remaining topics to try to achieve a suitable balance in the program. Further voting and discussion resulted in a final list of invited sessions for the Congress. The discussion

and voting process also produced an ordered set of 2-3 potential organizers for each session.

The process of selecting the invited sessions took quite some time. However, I felt that the email discussions of the PC were very constructive and important. One advantage of our timing was that we were able to make the final decisions about invited sessions with knowledge of most of the main invited speakers (all except the Wald and Neyman lecturers). This helped us in linking some invited sessions to the topics of expertise of the main speakers to provide a more cohesive program. (To distribute the organization of invited sessions as broadly as possible, we mostly avoided inviting main speakers to organize invited sessions.) While the PC was able to take into account some suggestions sent to it from outside the committee, there were a few suggestions that arrived after the invited sessions had been finalized. Given the lead time involved, for future Congresses, it would seem to be a good idea to place notices in the IMS Bulletin and Bernoulli News at least two years in advance of the Congress to solicit suggestions for invited sessions so that these might be given full consideration by the PC.

Once the Program Committee had agreed on the final list of sessions, at the beginning of April, 2007, I began issuing invitations to potential organizers. In making invitations, I sometimes called on PC members to help recruit organizers or to suggest alternates as needed. By the mid summer of 2007, the organizers for the invited sessions were settled. I had session organizers email me their lists of speakers, once their sessions were complete. I collected these and when a substantial fraction of the sessions were complete, I passed this information on to the local organizers for posting on the website. As the remaining sessions came in, I passed that information on to the Singapore organizers. Many organizers were able to pull together their invited sessions quickly. However, as with the 2004 Barcelona Congress, a few sessions took quite a long time to complete.

In the end we had 34 invited sessions with topics split fairly evenly between the three areas of probability, statistics and applications. (Of course, some topics fell into more than one category and so this division was approximate and in any event, overlap between areas was viewed as a plus.) This tripartite division was recommended by Wilfrid Kendall in his 2004 report. In my opinion, it worked well for the 2008 Congress.

### *Public Lecture.*

After settling the invited sessions, the PC turned to the idea of having a public lecture. A variety of suggestions for speakers for a public lecture had emerged during the discussions about invited sessions. The PC decided that a lecture related to climate would be highly desirable with Douglas Nychka as speaker. With the blessing of the PC, Louis Chen was able to deliver the invitation of the PC in person to Douglas Nychka while Louis was visiting the US National Center for Atmospheric Research in mid April 2007. We were delighted when Douglas Nychka accepted. His very informative and accessible lecture was ultimately titled "Climate past, climate present and climate future: A tale from a statistician". This public lecture was also linked to two invited sessions "Statistics for Understanding Numerical Models of Climate Change" organized by Jim Zidek and

“Geophysical Models: Inference, Prediction and Interpretation” organized by Douglas Nychka.

*Further Advice.*

By the end of April 2007, the main work of the program committee was complete. However, I consulted with the committee on various issues as they arose over the coming year. In particular, in April 2008, the PC was consulted concerning the unusual event that three prominent figures in Probability and Statistics, who had also been past Presidents of the BS or the IMS, had unfortunately passed away within the past six months: Chris Heyde (passed away March 6, 2008), Sam Karlin (passed away in January 2008), and David Kendall (passed away in October 2007). David Kendall was the BS's first president, Chris Heyde had served as president of the BS, and Sam Karlin had served as president of the IMS. The PC settled on the idea of holding an “In Memoriam” session to recognize the achievements and contributions of these three. The PC viewed this as a one-time exceptional event, marking the near simultaneous loss of three prominent figures in the field who had also served as leaders of the BS/IMS.

The advice and expertise of the PC was invaluable in crafting the meeting that finally took place in July 2008. I also continued to work with the local organizers over the ensuing year in arranging various details of the program.

*Site Visit and Program Schedule.*

In November 2007, I visited Singapore to meet with the local organizers and to review the facilities for the Congress. Although I had been working with Louis Chen and some of the local organizers by email for about a year and a half, this site visit was very valuable for establishing personal rapport with the other members of the Local Organizing Committee and the Secretariat in Singapore, and also in providing me with a detailed overview of what the facilities and logistics would be like. While I was in Singapore, jointly with the Local Organizing Committee, we drafted an outline of the program, including the placement of the main speakers and of blocks of time for invited and contributed talks, as well as time slots for various IMS and Bernoulli Society committee meetings. This draft schedule was subsequently circulated by email to the main invited speakers and the executives of the Bernoulli Society and the IMS for comment. The invited speakers were asked to submit abstracts and a photo for posting on the web page at that time. In early 2008, in email collaboration with the local organizers, I drafted the schedule of the invited sessions. The draft schedule was circulated on February 19, 2008 to the invited session organizers for comment about possible conflicts. Session organizers were also asked at this time to remind invited session speakers to submit their abstracts by March 15, 2008. In hindsight, if this draft of the schedule (with all of the invited speaker and invited session slots) could have been set earlier, say by the end of November 2007, that would have allowed more time for checking by session organizers for conflicts and more time to advertise the schedule on the webpage.

### *Contributed Sessions and Session Chairs.*

The local organizing committee took charge of handling and arranging into sessions all of the contributed papers and posters. The local organizers also arranged for the session chairs, except in circumstances where the organizers of invited sessions would chair their sessions or had arranged for chairs.

### *Miscellaneous.*

Advertising for the Congress was done through the Congress webpage (sited at National University of Singapore), through posters distributed with the IMS Bulletin and Bernoulli News and mailed to various institutions, and through articles and notices in the IMS Bulletin and Bernoulli News.

The design of the posters (for the first and second announcements) was done in Singapore, and the printing was done both by IMS and in Singapore. The posters printed by IMS were distributed with the IMS Bulletin and Bernoulli News, and those printed in Singapore were sent to mathematical sciences institutes and academic departments of mathematics and of statistics worldwide with the newsletter "Imprints" of the Institute for Mathematical Sciences of the National University of Singapore. The posters for the first announcement were ready by the end of August 2007 and those for the second announcement were ready by the middle of March 2008. This timetable allowed for substantial print advertising of the Congress before the actual meeting took place.

Contributions to help defray travel costs of some Congress participants were provided by IMS Laha travel awards, by a US National Science Foundation travel grant for junior US participants, and by the local organizers for some participants from China, India and Southeast Asia. In addition, the IMS Childcare Initiative provided some assistance towards child care expenses for IMS members attending the Congress. This support was very helpful, especially to junior researchers. I am grateful to Rick Durrett for volunteering to submit a proposal to the US National Science Foundation for the NSF travel grant support.

Apart from the Bernoulli Society and IMS, which were the sponsoring societies, other sponsors for the Congress were the National University of Singapore, the Singapore Tourism Board, Saw Swee Hock, the Lee Foundation, World Scientific, the Singapore Management University, and Elsevier.

### **The Next World Congress In Probability and Statistics.**

The 8<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Probability and Statistics, jointly sponsored by the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, will be held in 2012 at a location that is yet to be determined. A new addition for that conference will be the Doob Lecture, a joint BS-IMS lecture, sponsored by the Illinois Journal of Mathematics. In this section, I will focus on a few issues that I feel are of special importance for the next (and any future) Congress.

For the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress, the regular main speakers were selected in three phases involving the selection of speakers for the IMS Medallion lectures, the BS named lectures, and then the IMS named lectures. While this process was helped by having overlap in the membership of the IMS Special Lectures Committee with that of the Congress Program subcommittee for BS Named Lectures, this segmentation of the selection process had one major drawback --- it did not allow a single committee to have an overall view of the program when selecting the main speakers. One possible further improvement of the process would be to have a joint BS-IMS committee to select the speakers for both the named BS and IMS lectures, including the new BS-IMS Doob lecture. (As the selection of the IMS Medallion lecturers is on an advanced schedule, these may well be known before the Congress Program Committee is formed. Also, Medallion lecturers are selected for several meetings, of which the Congress is just one. Accordingly, it may be best to leave the choice of the Medallion lecturers with the IMS Committee on Special Lectures.) I would like to encourage the BS and the IMS to consider forming a joint committee to select the speakers for the named lectures for the next Congress. I think it would be highly desirable for such a committee to have substantial overlap with the Congress Program Committee and to include the Chair of the PC as well as the Chair of the local organizing committee in its membership. (Such overlap could be achieved by appointing this joint committee concurrently with the Program Committee. I would recommend that the BS and IMS Executives as well as the Chair of the PC be involved in this process.) In my view, such a joint committee to select the named speakers has the best chance to produce a rich, diverse and coherent main speaker program.

In his 2004 report, Wilfrid Kendall had pointed to an issue of concern, namely, the growing size of the Congress. Although there were not quite as many participants in Singapore (570+) as in Barcelona (700+), there were nearly as many invited and contributed sessions in Singapore (116 talk sessions plus 3 poster sessions in Singapore vs. 122 talk sessions in Barcelona). In Singapore, one typically had 4 invited sessions along with 6-8 contributed sessions, all in parallel. I did hear some concerns about having so many invited sessions in parallel (and especially of one afternoon where several related sessions were unfortunately in parallel). Also, some invited sessions had sparse attendance while others had large audiences, despite the fact that there were excellent world class speakers all around. I don't think there is an easy solution here – the diversity of the high quality invited sessions, with half an hour allocated to each speaker to develop their topic in some depth, is a significant attractant for participants and narrowing the list of invited sessions to 34 already involved difficult choices. The issue of competing invited sessions is likely to continue to be a challenge for future program chairs. For contributed presentations, poster sessions may be an additional avenue to explore further in the future. In Singapore, we had a few posters displayed in the common areas in the afternoons of three days. The set of displayed posters changed from day-to-day. Attracting an audience for posters is the major challenge with this form of presentation. A format that may be worth experimenting with is one I have seen used successfully at some other conferences. For this, a session (usually in the late afternoon) is set aside for the exclusive display of all posters. Such sessions typically have some refreshments provided to create a social atmosphere. This requires a large space to set up

posters (this was not readily available in Singapore). Whether this format is feasible for any given Congress will depend on the local facilities available.

The feature of a public lecture was an experiment for this Congress. The public lecture was beautifully prepared and presented by Doug Nychka. However, despite the fact that the topic of “Climate” was a very timely one, and despite prior experience in Singapore with public lectures, most of the attendees were Congress participants and their families. For future congresses featuring public lectures, I would recommend that extra special care needs to be given to attracting the “public” to such lectures.

It would be very useful to have an archival site, maintained either by the IMS or the BS, that lists the key features of past Congresses, including main speakers and titles and topics and organizers of invited sessions, and which has links to the sites of past Congresses. The local organizers for the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress have indicated that they will keep the website from that Congress available as an archival site (the current site is at <http://www.ims.nus.edu.sg/Programs/wc2008/index.htm>).

This is an excellent start, but a central web location for all Congresses (with links to individual Congress sites or their archived content) would be of added benefit and could serve as an important resource for the probability and statistics community, not to mention organizers of future Congresses.

I did receive various comments to the effect that, despite the increasing diversity in subject matter in probability and statistics, a strength of the Congress was its ability to link probability and statistics. To help bring these communities together more, one participant suggested that more invited sessions might begin with a survey talk. Another possibility might be to have some sessions devoted to surveys of particularly active or new research areas.

## **Conclusion.**

In general, I have received very positive feedback about the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Probability and Statistics. The few consistent suggestions for improvement that I received have been described in the body of this report. The success of the meeting was due to the combined and sustained efforts of many. Firstly, I am grateful to the members of the Program Committee (and of the subcommittee) for all of their hard work and constructive advice in crafting the scientific program for the meeting. Secondly, I thank the main speakers, and the organizers and speakers for the invited sessions and panels, for providing a stimulating range of topics and presentations which formed the scientific core of the meeting. Thirdly, I would like to thank the BS and IMS executives and staffs who helped in diverse ways to bring the program for the meeting together and to help in advertising it. Fourthly, I cannot emphasize enough the superb job done by the local organizers in hosting the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Probability and Statistics, which was the first of this series to be held in the Asia-Pacific region. I am especially grateful to Louis Chen (chair), as well as Anthony Kuk (co-chair) and Kwok Pui Choi (local organizing secretary), for their roles in the excellent team of local organizers. Finally, thanks to all of the participants for making this a splendid meeting.

I conclude by thanking the Bernoulli Society and the IMS for inviting me to Chair the Program Committee for the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Probability and Statistics: I was honored to do so and found it a very interesting and worthwhile experience.

Ruth J. Williams  
University of California, San Diego  
October 30, 2008

### **Program Committee**

Vivek Borkar (Tata Institute, India)  
Peter Bühlmann\* (ETH Zürich, Switzerland)  
Louis Chen\* (National University of Singapore, Singapore)  
Jim Fill (Johns Hopkins University, USA)  
Arnoldo Frigessi\* (University of Oslo, Norway)  
Peter Green (University of Bristol, UK)  
Peter Hall\* (University of Melbourne, Australia)  
Steve Lalley (University of Chicago, USA)  
Petr Lansky (Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic)  
Jean-François Le Gall\* (ENS and University of Paris XI, France)  
Makoto Maejima (Keio University, Japan)  
Andrew Nobel (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA)  
Marta Sanz-Solé (University of Barcelona, Spain)  
Qi-Man Shao (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, China and University of Oregon, USA)  
Bernard Silverman\* (University of Oxford, UK)  
Mike Steel (University of Canterbury, New Zealand)  
Maria Eulalia Vares\* (CBPF, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)  
Ruth Williams\* (University of California at San Diego, USA) (chair)  
Keith Worsley (McGill University, Canada)  
Henry Wynn (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK)  
Bin Yu (University of California at Berkeley, USA)

\*indicates a member of the subcommittee to select BS invited speakers (Peter Jagers, as BS President, was also an ex-officio member of the subcommittee)

### **Local Organizing Committee**

Bruce Brown (National University of Singapore)  
Yiu Man Chan (National University of Singapore)  
Sanjay Chaudhuri (National University of Singapore)  
Louis Chen (National University of Singapore) (Chair)  
Zehua Chen (National University of Singapore)  
Kwok Pui Choi (National University of Singapore) (Organizing Secretary)  
Tin Chiu Chua (National University of Singapore)  
Fah Fatt Gan (National University of Singapore)  
Anthony Kuk (National University of Singapore) (Co-chair)  
Koon Shing Kwong (Singapore Management University)  
Denis Leung (Singapore Management University)  
Wei Liem Loh (National University of Singapore)

### **Secretariat**

Stella Pang (National University of Singapore)  
Claire Tan (National University of Singapore)  
Irene Tan (National University of Singapore)  
Ket Ling Tay (National University of Singapore)