ICRSA 2003

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June 2, 2003

Figure 1: Group picture of the participants of the International Conference on Reliability and Survival Analysis (ICRSA) 2003 held during May 21–24, 2003 at the University of South Carolina, Columbia. This was taken in front of the Longstreet Theatre on the campus of the University.

The International Conference on Reliability and Survival Analysis 2003 (ICRSA) was held on the campus of the University of South Carolina (USC) at Columbia during May 21–24, 2003. This conference was organized by the Department of Statistics and the Center for Reliability and Quality Sciences of USC, with the three authors spearheading the organization of this event, with help on the local arrangements from the Continuing Education of USC. Travel grant support was provided by the National Science Foundation, the Army Research Office, and the National Institutes of Health through the National Cancer Institute. These travel grants provided partial support to participants, especially graduate students and invited speakers. The funds for a conference mixer were provided by the College of Science and Mathematics of USC.

Inspite of the double threat of war and SARS, there were still 202 registered participants, with 39 of these participants residing outside the United States. Among the participants, 32 were graduate students. Figure 1 is the group picture of conference participants which was taken during the second day. The conference was formally opened by Dr. Jerome Odom, Provost of USC, and Dr. Andrew Sorensen, President of USC.

The conference major goals were to enable active researchers in the areas of reliability and survival analysis to present current and future research in order that there could be some synthesis in these two areas, which have common grounds but which seem to develop almost independently of each other, and to enable young researchers and graduate students to interact with the research leaders of the two fields. Both objectives were achieved. The plenary talks of the conference were given by Professor Lee-Jen Wei of Harvard University, Professor Jerry Lawless of the University of Waterloo, Canada, Professor Myles Hollander of Florida State University, Professor Ross Prentice of the University of Washington and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Professor Nozer Singpurwalla of George Washington University, and Professor Henry Block of the University of Pittsburgh. Pictures of these plenary speakers while delivering their lectures are in Figure 2. There were 30 invited sessions organized by the Scientific Program Committee on a varied range of topics, with each session having three speakers who each gave a 30-minute presentation. There were in addition six sessions with contributed talks, with each speaker in these sessions giving a 22-minute talk. Poster presentations were also given by 11 participants, mostly graduate students.

Among the themes of the sessions are dynamic models of failure time data; Bayesian methods in survival analysis and reliability; accelerated testing; frailty models in survival analysis; software reliability; semiparamet-

ric and longitudinal models; reliability and quality; degradation models; goodness-of-fit; Weibull-related models; resampling and computer-intensive procedures; nonparametrics; recurrent event modelling; stress-strength testing and Bayes methods in repair models; competing risks; multivariate failure time data; residual life functions; quality of life issues; optimal treatment strategies with survival outcomes; adaptive designs; coherent systems and reliability classes; risk modelling; survival analysis and demography; and failure rates of mixtures. A copy of the final program and abstract book of the conference, as well as links to some talks that were presented and pictures from the conference, can be found at the website: http://www.stat.sc.edu/~padgett/ICRSA2003/.

Feedback has been very positive, with the participants complimenting the organizers for a very well-organized conference, excellent scientific program and speakers, and enjoyable social events.

An interesting footnote is that Dr. Wayne Nelson of the United States and Professor Odd Aalen of Norway, who are credited with the Nelson-Aalen estimator of the cumulative hazard function, met for the first time in this conference. The picture in Figure 3 shows them listening to a talk by Dr. Tom Scheike of Denmark in a session organized by Professor Aalen.

Figure 2: Plenary speakers giving their lectures. Panel 1: LJ Wei; Panel 2: Jerry Lawless; Panel 3: Myles Hollander; Panel 4: Ross Prentice; Panel 5: Nozer Singpurwalla; Panel 6: Henry Block.

Figure 3: Wayne Nelson (silver-haired) and Odd Aalen (beside the projector) sitting beside each other while listening to Thomas Scheike's talk on 'Modelling, estimation and inference with time-varying effects in survival analysis.'