

Pre-conference discussions 4 March 2006

Prior to the presentation of conference papers, members and delegates held an informal discussion on the role and future of Radical Statistics. Troika members Geoffrey Rendle and Janet Shapiro chaired the discussions; the summary below is taken from their minutes.

The agenda for discussion listed six questions:

1. What is RadStats for?
2. The on-line discussion group
3. The future of subgroups
4. Getting more members
5. Radstats newsletter / journal
6. Networking with other organisations

1. What is RadStats for?

General agreement that this was not a fruitful question to discuss; 'RadStats is what RadStats does' was the general conclusion.

2. The on-line discussion group and web-site

The RadStats website is what we most discussed. Two approaches were suggested for expanding the website.

- Post material that would be useful for teaching statistics students to evaluate material –there is a shortage of material that encourages critical skills rather than technical methods. The material should be stable and structured, dealing with political questions but in order to develop critical skills rather than to debate the latest burning issue.
- Use new technology so that the website can host policy discussions, enabling members to add their own views (e.g. a blog).

A blog like this could be our way into the media. So this led into a discussion about getting more material into the media. Two alternative approaches.

- Prepare RadStats press releases e.g. when we know legislation creates an opportunity.
- Publicise a list of contacts, so that journalists can contact RadStats. But they would want to have a single contact point. The contact would have to be able to forward queries to RadStats interest groups and guarantee a rapid response.

Group 2 noted the E-mail list was lively, but did not produce enough published output.

Either way, we need to agree rules about moderation or who can be a spokesman using the RadStats name. Ludi Simpson reminded the AGM of the procedure for this [see below]. We also need to cultivate a list of correspondents likely to be sympathetic e.g. Simon Briscoe at the FT.

Is the aim publicity for RadStats as an organisation, or is it getting our viewpoint highlighted in the media? (This assumes that we have a 'viewpoint' – it can be valuable just to demonstrate that a question has no clear-cut answer.)

3. The future of subgroups

A key person needs to be nominated for a sub-group. Suggested groups were: Race/population movement - could be based on 'Migration Watch', Education (this includes many topical issues), Health. Alison is the nominal leader for the latter group and had asked on the email list for crucial work to be done on Health Statistics but with no response so far.

Briefing papers on critical issues were suggested. These could be relatively quick to produce, could go on the web-site and thus gather interested people together

4. Getting more members

- We know from experience that exchanging leaflets with like-minded organisations boosts membership. Draw on our financial reserves to fund this. 'Scientists for Global Responsibility' (SGR) was mentioned (see <http://www.sgr.org.uk/>).
- Advertise in sympathetic journals.
- Distribute our leaflets at conferences of sympathetic organisations – even better, could we tailor our leaflet so that it appeals to people with a particular interest, to target relevant events. Later: such text on specific topics could have many uses e.g. posters. Encourage use of the discussion list – give guidance that encourages relevant usable material.
- Use the RSS. *Significance* and *RSS News* could well take our publicity materials on membership or press releases.
- Take a poster to conferences e.g. the RSS conference.

Members will be encouraged by a good service. Journals arriving late, two in one envelope is off-putting.

To get more members, we need a **new general leaflet**, and to advertise in other publications such as Health Matters.

5. Radstats newsletter / journal

[Not discussed in the first group.]

6. Networking with other organisations

It was suggested that we organise a seminar, shared with another organisation between AGMs, this could be a day meeting on a particular topic.

Annual General Meeting Minutes

March 4th 2006

Chair: Mike Quiggin; Minutes: Janet Shapiro

Apologies from Ivan Rappaport, Dave Gordon, David Symes, Amanda Root

Minutes 2005

2005 minutes accepted as a correct record of last year's AGM

Matters arising

No matters arising not otherwise covered in the agenda.

Membership report

The membership report prepared by David Symes was circulated. A drop in membership numbers was noted with regret. It was resolved that RadStats should be promoted, particularly through other journals.

Treasurer's report

Janet Shapiro gave her report as Treasurer. David Byrne had audited the account as a true record, and endorsed the treasurer's comments that core funds were being eroded. There was a similar deficit to that incurred last year, except that some costs had been deducted in the 2005 accounts because of delays in producing the newsletters. The group needed to conduct a membership drive for which a new general leaflet would be produced, that should include the Bank sort-code and account number to ease payment.

An **increase of the subscription** to £15 was proposed to take effect in January 2007, with all members becoming due to pay simultaneously. It was agreed that for low-waged the subscription would be £6. In general the Troika were given the task of arranging how the changes were to come into effect, and to consider other promotional offers, drawing attention to the good value of RadStats membership.

Membership drive

The Troika should approach organisations for Statisticians, and other professional publications such as Red Pepper and Health Matters, in which articles promoting the Radical Statistics Group could be placed. John Bibby suggested a mailing to schools.

RS Editors' report

Lee Williamson reported last year's publications: #88 Labour Market Statistics (guest editor Mike Quiggin) and the Conference Issue #89, that were delivered in December 2005. The miscellaneous issue 'Marking 30 years' was delivered in January 2006 with help from Geoffrey Rendle and Janet Shapiro. Lee outlined the work involved but noted that she stepped down as an editor in December 2005. The meeting thanked her for her hard work. Ivan Rappaport was continuing as editor and a co-editor was needed. Alan Marshall, Manchester University, volunteered to replace Lee

Williamson. Alan was welcomed. Janet reported that there was an urgent need for more contributions, and that newsletter publications were drifting towards the end of each year. We needed to schedule very much more in advance.

Future publications scheduled were

- Conference issue #91, (guest editor Shailen Nandy)
- Special issue on Housing #92, (guest editor David Byrne).

The meeting agreed that articles for #91 should be with Shailen by April/May 2006 for a summer distribution, and contributions for #92 should be with David by July for distribution in September November.

Ludi Simpson suggested that full responsibility should be assigned to the guest editor of a special issue. The Troika and Editors should discuss how this would work in practice.

A future newsletter could focus on 'Migration Watch'. The Troika should help Alan investigate contributions for a third newsletter.

E-mail report

Alison Macfarlane reported on the Email list. Alison was concerned that much wasted effort went into long messages. She suggested that it would be useful for contributors to produce a brief that could be posted on the jiscmail notice-board for others to consider seriously. Others maintained that the debate on the list was useful and lively.

Web-site report

Robin Rice reported that she was willing to take items for the Radical Statistics web page. It was suggested that the web page could contain briefing papers on special issues, lists of publications produced by RadStats members, profiles of RadStats members, teaching & learning materials, highlights for articles - with contents pages for newsletters not yet fully available. Thus, the web page could inform members of RadStats activity. John Bibby suggested that people should contact the Troika with what they wanted displayed.

For clarification of how a briefing paper could be vetted, the recognized procedure was that the 2 or 3 members producing it would request the approval of a Troika member (Ludi Simpson)

Troika elections

Mike Quiggin announced that he was standing down from the Troika. Mike was thanked for his work. Lee Williamson volunteered to join the Troika, that would now consist of in order of joining the Troika: Janet Shapiro, Geoffrey Rendle, Shailen Nandy and Lee Williamson.

Future of RadStats & Sub-groups

There had been two informal discussions on Saturday morning. Geoffrey Rendle and Janet Shapiro reported on these discussions.

Discussion arising in AGM.

A number of briefing statements were promised:

Pensions: Will McFarlane, Jay Ginn and Janet Shapiro

Health issues: Alison Macfarlane

Migration Watch: Ludi Simpson Jamie and *another?*

Essay Competition

Janet reported that posters were available and that members were asked to help publicise this opportunity as we had very prestigious judges. John Bibby suggested a school mailing possibility.

Next Year's Conference *Government Statistics and Governance*

Ray Thomas had ideas for speakers and topics. Geoffrey Rendle offered to organise this in London.

Procedures for Sub-Groups

A reference to sub-groups can be found in RadStats newsletter #50 (Spring 1992) pages 35-36, available at:

<http://www.radstats.org.uk/no050/commentary.pdf>.

These two pages had other text under headings of 'What does a subgroup do? Where does it start? Who else might be interested? How does a subgroup raise funds if they're needed? Who can I turn to for advice?' It was written by Ludi Simpson after discussion at the Troika who were keen to point out that they would not expect to ratify each step taken by a subgroup. The next conference recorded that (RS51) "*Rules of subgroups: Draft (see RS50) circulated but no chance to consider it fully, so will be used as guidelines for the time being without being formal rules.*" So, guidelines they remain!

Are there any rules for subgroups?

Well, Radical Statistics doesn't have a constitution as such. It is action-oriented, based around the activities that its subgroups do and not around a political platform. So this is a bit chicken and egg: you make up the rules that promote the work needed to be done! However, the following guidelines have been agreed by the Conference or the Troika at one time or another, to ensure that all members can participate in subgroups, and that publications do not use the name Radical Statistics without some clearing:

1. Meetings should be open to all members, and usually are advertised outside the membership.
2. Public products that carry the name Radical Statistics or one of its subgroups are OK-ed by the Troika, to ensure wild or personal assertions are not given the group's name.
3. Public products of a subgroup are normally worked on by more than one member.

4. Aims, activities and products of a subgroup should fall within the concerns of the Radical Statistics Group as given in the promotional leaflet.
5. Subgroup activities are regularly reported in the Newsletter, and to the Annual conference.”

Treasurer’s Report

While the deficit appears to be much lower than during 2004-2005, the full costs of producing newsletters are not included, owing to delays in publication. Some £2,000 costs for 2005 will appear in the 2006 accounts.

There is a continuing trend of costs exceeding income. It is recommended that we attract more members and increase the subscription.

Janet Shapiro, January 2006

Auditor’s comments

I have inspected the RadStats books for the last financial year and in my view they are completely in order and the accounts are a true indication of the present financial position of the Radical Statistics Group.

I have only one observation to make which is simply to reiterate a point made by the Treasurer. The group is running down its reserves and this is an ongoing process. It would seem necessary to do either or both of increase subscriptions or recruit more members. The alternative of reducing expenditure would not seem viable since expenditure runs at a level which is necessary for the maintenance of the activities of the group.

David Byrne

22nd February 2006

RADICAL STATISTICS GROUP

NET WORTH

As at 31st December 2005

	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
BANK BALANCES					
Current Account	£1,356.48	£506.27	£345.88	£1,021.00	£1,154.00
14 Day Deposit	£8,160.09	£9,569.07	£11,395.62	£13,334.00	£10,714.00
Instant Deposit				£0.00	£2,344.00
TOTAL	£9,516.57	£10,075.34	£11,741.50	£14,355.00	£14,212.00

INCREASE IN NET WORTH

bank balances at 1st Jan 2005	£10,075.34	£11,741.50	£14,462.39	£14,212.00	£13,285.00
bank balances at 31st Dec 2005	£9,516.57	£10,075.34	£11,741.50	£14,355.00	£14,212.00
Net Income for Year	-£558.77	-£1,666.16	-£2,720.89	£143.00	£927.00

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
for the year ending 31 December 2005**

	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
	£	£	£	£	£
GENERAL INCOME					
Subscriptions	£2,179.00	£2,659.00	£2,916.00	£2,925.00	£3,940.00
Conference Fees	£705.02	£1,125.00	£601.50	£341.00	£1,312.00
Publications				£16.00	£312.00
Other	£224.00	£302.00	£212.00	£46.00	£165.00
subtotal	£3,108.02	£4,086.00	£3,729.50	£3,328.00	£5,729.00
INTEREST RECEIVED	£91.02	£173.45	£203.73	£276.00	£439.00
TOTAL INCOME	£3,199.04	£4,259.45	£3,933.23	£3,604.00	£6,168.00
EXPENDITURE					
Conference costs	£700.33	£839.79	£708.91	£433.00	£818.00
Radstats Newsletter	£1,178.45	£3,104.76	£1,815.30	£1,605.00	£2,847.00
Administrative costs	£943.10	£1,547.44	£534.36	£526.00	£1,367.00
Central publications				£0.00	£180.00
Bank charges	£27.18	£33.62	£104.80	£24.00	£29.00
Other	£178.75	£400.00	£3,490.75	£874.00	
Essay	£730.00				
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£3,757.81	£5,925.61	£6,654.12	£3,462.00	£5,241.00
NET INCOME	-£558.77	-£1,666.16	-£2,720.89	£142.00	£927.00