

## News, Comment and Reviews

### **Review of *Statistics: a Graphic Guide*, by Eileen Magnello and Borin Van Loon, Icon books, 2009.**

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This delightful book introduces both statistics and the history of statistics from tabulation and the calculation of averages in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, through measures of variation and association and the estimation of population parameters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to t-tests and the analysis of variance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The combination of Eileen Magnello's understanding of the history and Borin Van Loon's entertaining illustrations (including recognisable portraits/caricatures of the main historical protagonists) make a book that is both charming and educational. Unfortunately there are a number of errors and inaccuracies in the statistical content.

Before reading this book I had not realised how the Darwinian theory of evolution depended on and contributed to the awareness of statistical variation, nor the extent to which the normal distribution unduly dominated statistical thought and practice until Pearson demonstrated that many natural populations could be better described by other families of distributions.

I hope that Magnello and Von Loon will bring out a corrected edition; meanwhile, if I asked students to read this book, I would offer a small reward for every error they identified in the text. I have sent Eileen Magnello a list of possible errors, inaccuracies and over-optimistic statements.